



LOOKING AHEAD

What the Bible tells us about the future (eschatology)

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PART 6: HEAVEN

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:1-3

A. Different views of what happens after death¹

- Christian Science: Death is not real; heaven is a state of mind.
- Jehovah's Witnesses: The 144,000 live as spirits in heaven. The rest of the righteous live on earth. Salvation is described as a gift from God but is said to be unattainable without good works (e.g. preaching) that are prompted by faith (Wikipedia).
- Islam: Paradise includes a garden populated with maidens ("companions")² designed by Allah to provide sexual pleasures to righteous men.
- Buddhism: People do not have their own individual souls or spirits, but their desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person.
- Mormonism: Eventually everyone goes to one of three "heavenly" kingdoms, with some achieving godhood. Apostates and murderers go to "outer darkness."

B. Is Heaven a real place?

- Heaven is the real place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless. It is in heaven where God most fully reveals his glory and where angels, other heavenly creatures, and redeemed saints all worship him (Grudem).
- It is where Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1)
- Heaven is a real place, not just a state of mind (Geisler-313).

C. Where is heaven?

- Heaven may be somewhere in a far corner of the universe, shrouded from human view behind a cloud of God's glory, or in an entirely different physical dimension (Geisler 313).

¹ Rose Publishing, "Christianity, Cults, & Religions," 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008.

² Surah 33:33; 37:48-49; 38:52; 44:54; 52:20; 55:56-58, 70-76; 56:22-23, 35-38; 78:33 (Mohammad).

³ There are no biblical references to celestial, terrestrial, or teletial heavens or of three degrees of glory in heaven.

- But it is important to remember that God is always near us when we call on Him (James 4:8), and we are encouraged to “draw near” to Him (Hebrews 10:1, 22).
- Perhaps God has intentionally covered its location in mystery, for it is more important for us to focus on the God of heaven than the description or location of it. It is more important to know the why than the where (Got Questions Ministries).

D. Fourteen things we know about heaven

- Heaven is only for those who have been **born-again** (John 3:3).⁴
- Heaven's beauty and wonder will be beyond our **imagination** (1 Cor. 2:9).
- Heaven will be filled with **singing** (Rev. 5:13).
- A **Holy City, Jerusalem**, will come down out of heaven (Rev. 21:10).
- The gates of heaven will **never be closed** (Rev. 21:25a).
- There will be **no night** in heaven (Rev. 21:25b; 22:5).
- **“Nothing impure** will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.” (Rev. 21:27).
- Heaven will have a **river of life** flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb—it will flow down the middle of the great street of the city (Rev. 22:1).
- On each side of the river the tree of life will stand, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit **every month** (Rev. 22:2).
- The leaves of the tree will be for the **healing**⁵ of the nations (Rev. 22:2b).
- We will see God's **face**, and his **name** will be on our foreheads (Rev. 22:4).
- All things in heaven and on earth will be together under one head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10).
- In eternity we will be made perfect and complete—we will no longer need the **spiritual gifts** (1 Cor. 13:10).
- No longer will there be any **curse** (Rev. 22:3).⁶

E. The Bottom Line

These fourteen things are revealed to “unfasten” you from this present life of sin and struggle...and to fix your focus on your eternal home in heaven with God!

⁴ Heaven is also occupied by good angels (Rev. 7:11; 12:7, 9; 14:10).

⁵ Why will nations require healing in heaven? It could be the leaves will have properties that will help people maintain health and energy (Alcorn 250). Another view is that John appears to be quoting from Ezekiel 47:12, where water from the temple produces trees with healing leaves. He is not implying that there will be illness in the new earth, he is emphasizing that the water of life produces health and strength wherever it goes (Life Application Bible 2333).

⁶ Nothing accursed will be in God's presence (Life Application Bible 2333).