

By Dr. John E. Russell

**Text:** Revelation 21:4-6

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.  
Revelation 21:4-6, KJV

Introduction

God has a wonderful plan for those who will accept his salvation through Christ Jesus. The culmination of that plan is a restored immortal being who lives in perfect harmony with his creator. What will it be like to live with God in heaven? God answers these questions from his Word, the Bible. (This will be a brief teaching on Heaven. Later, LORD willing, we will present more detailed studies in eschatology—the doctrine of last things.)

1 What Is Heaven?

**Heaven** (1.) *Definitions.* The phrase "heaven and earth" is used to indicate the whole universe (Gen. 1:1; Jer. 23:24; Acts 17:24). According to the Jewish notion there were three heavens,—

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(a) The firmament, as "fowls of the heaven" (Gen. 2:19; 7:3, 23; Ps. 8:8, etc.), "the eagles of heaven" (Lam. 4:19), etc.

(b) The starry heavens (Deut. 17:3; Jer. 8:2; Matt. 24:29).

(c) "The heaven of heavens," or "the third heaven" (Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 115:16; 148:4; 2 Cor. 12:2).

(2.)

*Meaning of words in the original*

(a) The usual Hebrew word for "heavens" is *shamayim*

, a plural form meaning "heights," "elevations" (Gen. 1:1; 2:1).

(b) The Hebrew word

*marom*

is also used (Ps. 68:18; 93:4; 102:19, etc.) as equivalent to *shamayim*

, "high places," "heights."

(c) Heb.

*galgal*

, literally a "wheel," is rendered "heaven" in Ps. 77:18 (A.S.V., "whirlwind").

(d) Heb.

*shahak*

, rendered "sky" (Deut. 33:26; Job 37:18; Ps. 18:11), plural "clouds" (Job 35:5; 36:28; Ps. 68:34, marg. "heavens"), means probably the firmament.

(e) Heb.

*rakia*

is closely connected with (d), and is rendered

*firmamentum*

" in the [Latin] Vulgate, whence our "firmament" (Gen. 1:6; Deut. 33:26, etc.), regarded as a solid expanse.

(3.)

*Metaphorical*

meaning of term. Isa. 14:13, 14; "doors of heaven" (Ps. 78:23); heaven "shut" (1 Kings 8:35); "opened" (Ezek. 1:1). (See 1 Chr. 21:16.)

(4.)

*Spiritual*

meaning. The place of the everlasting blessedness of the righteous; the abode of departed spirits.

(a) Christ calls it his "Father's house" (John 14:2).

(b) It is called "paradise" (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7).

(c) "The heavenly Jerusalem" (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 3:12).

(d) The "kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 25:1; James 2:5).

(e) The "eternal kingdom" (2 Pet. 1:11).

(f) The "eternal inheritance" (1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 9:15).

(g) The "better country" (Heb. 11:14, 16). (h) The blessed are said to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and to be "in Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22; Matt. 8:11); to "reign with Christ" (2 Tim. 2:12); and to enjoy "rest" (Heb. 4:10, 11). In heaven the blessedness of the

righteous consists in the possession of "life everlasting," "an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17), an exemption from all sufferings for ever, a deliverance from all evils (2 Cor. 5:1, 2) and from the society of the wicked (2 Tim. 4:18), bliss without termination, the "fulness of joy" for ever (Luke 20:36; 2 Cor. 4:16, 18; 1 Pet. 1:4; 5:10; 1 John 3:2). The believer's heaven is not only a state of everlasting blessedness, but also a "place"—a place "prepared" for them (John 14:2).

M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Ed. John Dean. Copyright © 2001 by BusterSoft™, S.v., "Heaven"

1.2 Christian thought lines up with Jewish thought. The word from the Greek New Testament translated "heaven" is *ouranos*. The

Seedmaster electronic Bible program gives this information about *ouranos*

:

1) the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it 1a) the universe, the world 1b) the aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced 1c) the sidereal or starry heavens 2) the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings [dwell] (SEEDMASTER).

*ouranos*, probably akin to *ornumi*, to lift, to heave, in used in the N.T. (a) of the aerial heavens.... (b) the sidereal.... (c) the eternal dwelling place of God, Matt. 5:16; 12:50; Rev. 3:12; 11:13; 16:11; 20:9. From thence the Son of God descended to become Incarnate.... In His ascension Christ "passed through the heavens," Heb. 4:14, R.V.; He "ascended far above all the heavens," Eph. 4:10, and was "made higher than the heavens," Heb. 7:26; He "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty [God] in the heavens," Heb. 8:1; He is "on the right hand of God," having gone into Heaven, 1 Pet. 3:22. Since His Ascension it is the scene of His present life and activity, e.g., Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24. From thence the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, 1 Pet. 1:12. It is the abode of the angels, e.g., Matt. 18:10; 22:30; cp. Rev. 3:5. Thither Paul was "caught up," whether in the body or out of the body, he knew not, 2 Cor. 12:2. It is to be the eternal dwelling-place of the saints in resurrection glory, 2 Cor. 5:1. From thence Christ will descend to the air to receive His saints at the Rapture, 1 Thess. 4:16; Phil. 3:20, 21, and will subsequently come with His saints and with His holy angels at His Second Advent, Matt. 24:30; 2 Thess. 1:7. In the present life heaven is the region of the spiritual citizenship of believers. Phil. 3:20. .... (W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, McLean VA: Mac Donald Publishing Company, n.d., pp. 548-549.)

### **38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."**

John 6:38, NASB

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up {to heaven,} after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

Acts 1:1-2, NASB

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 1:1-4, NASB

{I pray that} the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. {These are} in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly {places,} far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:18-23, NASB

The {former} priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:23-25, NASB

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the LORD, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the LORD, will not

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precede those who have fallen asleep. For the L

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Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the L

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in the air, and so we shall always be with the L

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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, NASB

d. Jesus, with his army, will return from heaven to the earth (Revelation 19:11-16).

And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.  
(Luke 10:18, NASB).

f. Paul was a Jew and built upon Jewish (Old Testament) thought. He gives his testimony of an experience the LORD gave him of going to Heaven:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.  
2 CO 12:2-4, NASB

## 2 Where Is Heaven?

2.1 Metaphysical Reality and *Ultimate Reality*. God is separate from his creation. To put it in philosophical language, the universe is reality and God is *Ultimate Reality*

In theological language, he is both transcendent and immanent. He is God Almighty, the Creator and separate—transcendent—from his creation. For the Christian, He is our Heavenly Father—immanent and close to us. God is omnipresent—everywhere in his creation in all time and in all his attributes and yet he has a localized presence in Heaven. Paul found some Greeks who had made an altar dedicated "*To an Unknown God*" and taught them about the one true God:

*"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is LORD of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands*

[italics mine]

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nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all {people} life and breath and all things; and He made from one {man} every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined {their} appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for

*in Him we live and move and exist*

[italics mine],

as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all {people} everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:24-31, NASB

2.2 Where is The Third Heaven where God dwells? It is probably outside our universe. It may be in a different dimension than ours. It is beyond human comprehension and description. Paul "...heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak" (2 Corinthians 12:4, NASB). Heaven is more real than our universe.

3 How can you know that you will go to Heaven?

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:16-18, NASB

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

John 6:37, NASB

3.2 Paul writes,

In Him [the LORD Jesus Christ], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of {God's own} possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14, NASB

All those who have accepted Christ as their Personal LORD and Savior have been born again. The Holy Spirit gives us the new birth and comes into our beings to dwell. He is "

**a pledge of our inheritance**

"—the one who seals us in Christ. Heaven is where God is and God dwells in the heart of the believer in a unique way. We have a part of Heaven now—proof that the angels will take our spirits to Heaven when we die!

Conclusion:

God loves you and wants you to live in Heaven with him forever. He has done his part and now it is up to you. It is your decision. Please make the right decision and receive Christ as your Savior now—don't put it off. Here is how:

1. *God loves you.* Realize that God loves you and desires for you to be at peace with himself:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16, KJV

Not only did God tell you that he loves you, but he proved his love by sending his Son to die for you! His love is also expressed by the full and high quality life he has planned for you *now*—as well as in the life to come. Jesus said,

The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10, NIV

Why is there so much evil in the world and why do so many people not have peace?

*2. Sin has separated you from God.* Because people are sinful, they are cut off from God and his peace. The Bible teaches and human experience confirms that we are sinful:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
Romans 3:23, KJV

We were created for fellowship with God, but that fellowship was broken when we sinned. Sin brought us spiritual death, sickness, physical death and turmoil:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.  
Romans 6:23, NIV

No human accomplishment will give us peace with God. How do we become reconciled with God and experience his peace?

*3. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.* Jesus Christ is God's only provision to forgive our sin, set us free and give us love, peace and joy. Jesus died for us—he took our penalty of death:

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*

[italics mine].

Romans 5:7-8, NIV

Christ is the only way to peace with God:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life, No one comes to the Father except



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Almighty God, I confess that I have sinned against you. I ask you to forgive me. I receive Jesus Christ as my LORD and Savior. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

John 14:27, NASB

Tell someone that you have accepted Christ as your Savior. Please email me and tell me the good news also.

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