
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is HEAVEN like?**

The Bible speaks of at least three distinct "heavens."

2 Corinthians 12:2

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

Notice in this verse the expression: "third heaven." If there is a "third heaven" then it is necessarily implied that there is a first and second heaven.

(1) The first heaven would be the atmosphere which surrounds the earth.

Acts 14:17

17 ... [God] gave us rain from heaven ...

The "heaven" here is the atmosphere around the earth.

(2) The second heaven consists of the universe in which the stars and galaxies are located.

Genesis 22:17

17 ... [God told Abraham] I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven ...

(3) The third heaven is the eternal abode of God Himself.

Matthew 5:48

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

The Bible states that the first heaven and second heaven shall both perish along with this earth when Jesus comes again.

Matthew 24:35

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, ...

2 Peter 3:10

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Notice that the word "heavens" is plural. Not just the atmosphere of the earth shall pass away, but the second heaven as well which contains all the stars of our universe.

Revelation 21:1

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

The third heaven -- the place of God's abode -- is the only heaven that will endure throughout eternity and this is the place in which God's people shall dwell thru the ages of eternity.

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

What is this "heaven" like and what will it be like for those who go there?

(1) Heaven will be very spacious.

In heaven there will be enough room for all the redeemed of all the ages. In the Book of Revelation John was describing a great heavenly scene. Here is what John saw in heaven:

Revelation 7:9

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Heaven is big enough for all the men and women of all nations who have chosen to serve God.

(2) Heaven will be a place of rest.

Revelation 14:13

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

All the trials and temptations of this life will have vanished. There will be no more struggles against sin and sinful men. Heaven will be a place and a time for the redeemed to rest from their burdens of this life.

(3) Heaven will be a place of service.

Many people find this rather contradictory. Didn't the Bible just say that God's people would rest in heaven? YES, but there is also work to do and service to perform in heaven.

Revelation 7:13-15

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

Now, God did not design heaven to be a place of inactivity. The redeemed will not sit around doing absolutely nothing throughout eternity, but rather, they shall serve God day and night.

QUESTION: How can the Bible truthfully say God's people shall rest from their labors and at the same time do work?

REPLY: Well, when the Bible says God's people "rest from their labors," it means they shall be refreshed from their labors. In this life we must stop working for a while in order to be refreshed, but in heaven God's people shall be refreshed while their work for Him. The more service that is performed, the more refreshment there will be.

(4) Heaven will be a place of plenty.

In this life all our resources are limited. In third world countries this is more evident, for the citizens of those countries often starve to death for lack of food. But heaven is a place of plenty. There will be no limit on the resources there.

Revelation 7:16

16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; NKJV

Not only will there enough of the necessary resources, but heaven will be a place of unlimited, luxurious resources. The provisions will far exceed any need we will ever incur.

The Old Testament land of Canaan was a prefigure for Israel of heaven itself. Continuously God called the promised land a "land of milk and honey." Milk and honey symbolize abundance and excess and this truly is a description of heaven.

(5) Heaven will be a place of security.

There will be no locks on doors, no alarm systems, no insurance policies. Nothing will be unpredictable. There will be no surprises, no unforeseen disasters. Nothing will ever wax old, or become decayed for heaven will be a place of life.

Matthew 6:20

20 ... lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Heaven is a place of security in the sense that there will be no temptation, no sin, no falling away from God.

1 Corinthians 9:27

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Only in heaven can we truly speak of "eternal security." Only when men get to heaven can they truly relax and no longer "buffet their bodies" lest they become castaways. Only in heaven can men "rest from their labors" and no longer struggle against sin.

(6) Heaven will be a place of ownership.

There is in every person a joy an rejoicing in ownership. Every man longs to own certain things for himself, but in this life that is not always possible. Heaven is different. In heaven there will be a sense of ownership for every occupant in heaven.

John 14:2

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Jesus is right now preparing a place for anyone who desires to go to heaven. He is preparing a mansion for each citizen and with that mansion comes a sense of ownership – a sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION

Heaven, as the old song goes, "will surely be worth it all." Heaven will be worth all the heartaches, toils and strife we may endure in this life. If we miss out on heaven, we have truly missed it all!