



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#136)

Consequences of salvation:
Will we spend eternity in heaven?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "SAVED"?

For many, the first thing that comes to mind is...

I GET TO GO TO HEAVEN!!!



(With or without wings!)

BUT THAT IS **NOT** THE FOCUS OF THE BIBLE!

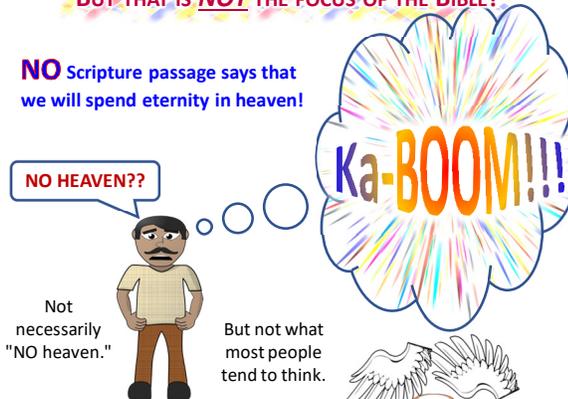
NO Scripture passage says that we will spend eternity in heaven!

NO HEAVEN??

Ka-BOOM!!!

Not necessarily "NO heaven."

But not what most people tend to think.



FURTHERMORE...

THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE BIBLE ...

⇒ Is **NOT** what we will do in *eternity*...
↳ But what we are to do **NOW!!**

If we aren't willing to live as a follower of Jesus **NOW**, we won't be willing to do so in *eternity*. **ETERNITY WON'T CHANGE OUR HEARTS.**

If we aren't willing to love God and neighbor **NOW**, we won't be willing to do so in *eternity*.

The world may think you're good. But if this represents **YOU**, the Bible describes you as wicked. You will not be given the opportunity to pollute the eternal home of the righteous.

Nothing impure will ever enter it, ...
Revelation 21:27a (NIV)



BUT THERE ARE VERSES THAT MENTION HEAVEN!

WHAT ABOUT THOSE MANSIONS JESUS TALKS ABOUT?

JESUS TELLS US TO STORE OUR TREASURES IN HEAVEN!

THE BOOK OF REVELATION MENTIONS PEOPLE IN HEAVEN!

WHAT ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

DIDN'T PAUL VISIT HEAVEN?

OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE IS STORED IN HEAVEN!

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN!

WON'T WE BE JUDGED IN HEAVEN?

IT'S GOOD TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN, IF WE ARE WILLING TO SEEK THE BIBLE'S ANSWERS!

If we carefully avoid adding to, or subtracting from, Scripture, we will discover:

- ❖ There are over 250 verses in the New Testament and over 400 in the Old Testament. None of them tell us that we will spend eternity in heaven!
- ❖ In many instances, people make assumptions, based on preconceived notions. **THIS VERSE SEEMS TO IMPLY...**
- ❖ There *are* verses that mention people visiting (or being in) heaven for a short time. These are *temporary* situations!

THE BIBLE SAYS, "TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD."

ISN'T JESUS IN HEAVEN?

IT'S ALSO GOOD TO REALIZE THAT WE AREN'T GIVEN ALL THE ANSWERS!

- ❖ It's NOT our job to know all things, but to trust the God who does! **EXAMPLE:** Even in the book of Revelation, God told John to NOT tell us some of the things that will occur!

... I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "... **do not write it down!**"

Revelation 10:4b (CSB)

- ❖ At Jesus' first coming, some things were not revealed until afterwards. So we shouldn't be surprised if the same happens with Jesus' second coming. **1st coming EXAMPLE:** Paul writes about some of these things that have now been revealed.

This message was **kept secret** for centuries and generations past, but **now it has been revealed** to God's people.

Colossians 1:26 (NLT)

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- ❖ The problem is that we often go beyond what is written – making assumptions and reaching false conclusions.

ILLUSTRATION:

1. The Bible mentions that we have an inheritance "kept in heaven" for us (1 Peter 1:4); and that Jesus is "preparing a place" for us in his Father's house (John 14:2-3).
2. Do these statements prove, or even suggest, that we will be going to heaven to get them? NO! *God can just as easily bring them to us, as take us to them!*
3. Even in "everyday life," it is common to own things that are stored at some other location. If you have an inheritance kept in the bank, that doesn't mean you plan to move in and make the bank your home!

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So WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HEAVEN?

This summary covers most of the issues. Any minor points not included here will not contradict these things.

① ABOUT THE WORD ITSELF.

- It refers to anything "up there," beyond human reach (without the use of machines that extend our "reach" a short distance).
- The same *one* word can refer to *any or all* of these categories:
 - ✓ "Sky" or "air" – the home of birds, clouds, etc.
 - ✓ "The universe" – the home of the sun, moon, stars, etc.
 - ✓ "Heaven" – the home of angels, where God resides, etc. 
- Most of the verses belong in this last category, though Scripture does not always define the word or make these distinctions.

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② GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND ITS INHABITANTS, JUST LIKE HE CREATED THE EARTH AND ITS INHABITANTS.

- Many Scripture passages refer to "heaven and earth" as opposites. The one is where God resides (along with the angelic beings) and the other is where people (and animals) reside.
- Many Scripture passages describe heaven and earth as temporary. Both will wear out and be destroyed. This is because:
 - Heaven and earth have both been tainted by sin.
 - ✓ It's not just *people on earth* who have sinned. There are also *spirit beings in heaven* who have sinned – Satan and his angels.
- In the future, the present heaven and earth will be replaced with a new heaven and earth, where all the effects of sin will be forever eliminated.

Representative verses: Job 1:6; Ecclesiastes 5:2; Matthew 24:35; Colossians 1:16; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 12:7-9; 21:1

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③ THE INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN.

- God (Father/Son/Spirit) resides there – the fullest manifestation of God's presence in the created realm. (Since God is *greater than creation*, it cannot be the *total* manifestation of his being.)

Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain you, ...

1 Kings 8:27b (CSB)

- The created inhabitants of heaven include various angelic beings, as well as Satan and the angels who rebelled with him.
- The dead in Christ are with Christ – which seems to imply that they are in heaven. [We shall see that this is not permanent.]
- In a few instances, living people are said to have been there temporarily. (Examples: Paul and the apostle John.)
- There are also references to "things," "inhabitants," "armies," "multitudes," etc. (all undefined).

Representative verses: Ecclesiastes 5:2; Matthew 6:9; 28:2; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 12:2-6; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 4:1; 12:7-9

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④ GOD RULES HEAVEN.

- God's throne is in heaven.
 - ✓ On earth, the Jewish tabernacle/temple and the system of sacrifices, symbolically represented it. But now that Jesus has come, our focus is on the reality that is in heaven.
- At the present time, there are spiritual forces of evil also present; but they cannot overpower God.
- God's people desire God's rule to be manifest on earth, just as it is in heaven.
 - ✓ It is described as the "kingdom of heaven" in Matthew (the "kingdom of God" in most of the New Testament).
 - ✓ We pray for God's will to be done, and are willing to do it.
 - ✓ Jesus is our Lord (Master) – the one who rules over us.

Representative verses: Psalm 123:1; Matthew 6:9-10; 7:21; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 4:14; 9:23-24; Revelation 12:7-9

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⑤ INTERACTION BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH.

- Jesus came to earth, ascended back to heaven, and will someday return to earth.
- Angels have often come to earth and then returned to heaven.
 - ✓ "Angel" means "messenger. Their presence on earth was always for a purpose (which was determined by God).
- In this present age, Satan has access to both heaven and earth.
- Voices have been heard from heaven – coming from God or from angels. Noise (like thunder) is also mentioned.
- There have been signs from heaven, fire from heaven, and light from heaven.
- (People have had visions of heaven; but that is not the same as going there.)

Representative verses: Job 1:6-7; Matthew 3:17; Luke 17:29; 22:43; John 3:13; 12:28-29; Acts 1:11; 9:3; Revelation 12:1; 12:3; 20:1

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⑥ SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATED TO PEOPLE AND HEAVEN.

- People sin against heaven (i.e., against God who resides there).
- People swear by heaven (i.e., promise to tell the truth) – though we should always be so truthful that we don't have to do so!
- "Being lifted up to heaven" – This concept is used as an expression of fame and greatness. (The cities described this way would eventually experience great humiliation and disgrace.)
- People have lifted their hands to heaven (in prayer).
- People have looked toward heaven (in prayer)... or not (in the humility of repentance).

Representative verses: 1 Kings 8:22; Luke 10:15; 15:21; 18:13; John 17:1; James 5:12

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⑦ HEAVEN AND CHRISTIANS.

- We have many connections with heaven. In addition to Jesus being there...
 - ✓ Our names are written there.
 - ✓ We have a dwelling prepared for us there.
 - ✓ Our reward/treasure/inheritance is there.
 - ✓ Our hope is there.
- When Jesus returns, all Christians, whether on earth or in heaven, will be gathered together to be with Jesus.

But then... after the old heaven/earth are replaced with the new:

- The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven. God/Jesus will be in that city. This New Jerusalem and new earth is where we will spend our eternity. The unsaved won't be there.

Representative verses: Matthew 5:11-12; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 18:22; John 14:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1-2; Colossians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Hebrews 12:23; 1 Peter 1:4; Revelation 21:2-4

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WHAT WILL WE DO FOR ETERNITY?

- We aren't given much information, but the few things we are told aren't connected to the word "heaven."
- Some people have the notion that we will spend eternity sitting in clouds, playing harps.
 - ✓ Though music will probably be present in eternity, and harps are mentioned in the book of Revelation, nowhere does it say we will spend eternity doing this!
- We will serve God/Jesus, but specific details about this service aren't given.
- Most likely, we will be fulfilling the original task given to Adam... only in a greater and more glorious way, and on the new earth.

I'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A MILLION YEARS...

I'M GETTING BORED!!



NOT THIS!

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THERE IS ONE THING WE KNOW FOR SURE!

- One thing will be the SAME as now: What we do will be an expression of love for God and neighbor. (Those who don't do that now won't be there.)
- As for the rest of the details: We can trust God to take care of them – the same way the saved of the past did!

GOD'S FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF THE PAST LONGED TO BE WHERE GOD LIVED – IN "GOD'S COUNTRY"!

Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 11:16; 12:22a (NIV)

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SOMEDAY THAT LONGING WILL BE FULFILLED – FOR BOTH THEM AND US!

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.' He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)

WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE REWARDS STORED UP IN HEAVEN?

When Jesus comes, he will bring them with him!

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done."

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

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WILL THE NEW JERUSALEM BE LARGE ENOUGH FOR ALL THOSE MANSIONS, TREASURES, AND OTHER THINGS THE BIBLE MENTIONS?

Consider its size!

He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia* in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

Revelation 21:16b (NIV)

What are "STADIA" (singular = "stadion")?

This was a unit of length, about 607 feet (185 meters). So the city's dimensions are about 1380 miles (2220 kilometers) *in each direction*.

The volume of this cube is 2,628,072,000 cubic miles (10,954,281,958 cubic kilometers) – which is about *half the volume of the moon!*

HOW CAN IT BE SO HUGE?

We don't have to worry about that; it's in *God's* control. Since it will be on the *new* earth, we shouldn't be surprised if some things are different than how they are on today's earth!

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THIS WEEK'S MISSION: REJOICE!

God has a wonderful future planned for us!

Just make sure you're ready!

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to *a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, *make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

2 Peter 3:13-14 (NIV)

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Credits (1)

The highest heavens belong to the Lord,
but the earth he has given to mankind.

Psalms 115:16 (NIV)

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