

## The World's Unbiblical View of Heaven

### The World's Unbiblical View of Heaven

How many jokes have you heard about heaven where people are playing golf or they are given different sized houses or have possessions or get to do all their favorite things they did in mortal life ? It is alarming what people associate with heaven or think it will be like. Most people secretly loathe the idea of it because they associate it with death. Others have silly images of a never ending sing-a-long in the sky. Will we really have angel wings and a halo and play a harp all day ? Will it be a disembodied existence in a nonphysical heaven ? Where do people get their views on heaven ? A Barna poll revealed that the American people cut and paste their views of heaven from television, movies, comic books, and friends. Ultimately, with these sources we give into assumptions that what we see is real and what we don't see is not. What is the antidote ? We must learn or remind ourselves what the Bible says about Heaven.

First, heaven is a tangible place with an actual location. Revelation 21-22 portrays it as an actual place with detailed physical descriptions. We also are both physical and spiritual beings. Remember Adam was not a living person until he was both body and spirit. Therefore we can expect heaven to be an actual place that a physical person can inhabit. We don't have a whole lot of info but we do have many witnesses who have been there like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, Stephen, and John. From their descriptions some things are impossible to describe while others God forbids them to describe. Nevertheless, we are to, "set our hearts on the things above"(Col.3:1), and we are "longing for a better country"(Heb 11:16). Jesus calmed His troubled disciples by telling them He would prepare a place in heaven for them(Jn.14:2). So, where is this place, what is it like, and what part should it play in our lives today ?

It will not be a disembodied state of being like the Greek philosophers envisioned. It will be a new earth, and have a new city of Jerusalem with bodily people engaged in activities, gatherings, conversations, and work. In Rev. 21-22 we see a city, buildings, streets, water, trees, houses, and people—all serving and glorifying Christ. There will be rest, peace, fulfillment, and beauty. Many things we have now will be absent like fear, anxiety, depression, disease, natural disasters, rejection, pain, and death. We will have very meaningful fulfilling work to do. Who will you work for ? Everyone will gladly joyfully work for the Lord.

What will it look like, and what will we look like ? Can you imagine beauty and glory w/o aging and death ? Things will no longer be tainted by sin—no scars, no fat, no deformities, and no defects. Something you may not know is that in eternity God is not going to abandon His creation—He's going to restore it. We won't go to heaven and leave earth behind. Instead God is going to bring heaven and earth together with no more separation. God has a plan "to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, Christ"(Eph.1:10). Compare passages like Isa. 65:17 "I will create new heavens and a new earth" and Isa.66:22"the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure" to New Test. passages like 2Peter 3:13 "In keeping with God's promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous" and Rev. 21:1, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away". We will be given another chance in Christ to be reinstated as God's managers on a new earth. The original creation w/o sin will be restored. It will be a freeing of creation from sin and evil and a reinstatement of life as originally intended by God. Isn't this what Peter meant in Acts 3:19-21, "Jesus will be in the current heaven until the time to restore everything". Jesus will restore a renewed humanity on a new earth(Paradise). Isn't this what Jesus told His disciples in Matt. 19:28,"in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones". It sounds like to me our destiny is to live, serve, and rule under Christ's authority on the new perfect paradise of earth. It sounds like disciples of Jesus will be restored to God's original calling and purpose to exercise the dominion given by God over the earth.

The prophets also spoke of the Son of David, the Messiah(Jesus), ruling the new earth from the New Jerusalem promised in Rev.21. Read Ps.102:15-16, Isa. 11:9-10;65:17-25;66:19-20, Dan.2:44, Ezek.37:24-28, Micah4:1-3 and many others. Try to imagine what Isaiah foresaw for Jerusalem "they will call you the city of the Lord"60:14, "no longer will you have the sun for light by day..but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light"60:19, "the glory of the Lord has risen upon you..nations will come to your light"60:1. Isaiah is remarkably like Revelation 21:23,"the city has no need of the sun for the glory of God has illumined it and its lamp is the Lamb of God"

What about us ? Will we be spirit creatures that are unrecognizable, without our present identity ? Amazingly, recent polls show the majority of Americans believe the resurrection will be non-physical disembodied spirits. All the Christian creeds I have seen state "I believe in the bodily resurrection". Paul is clear in 1 Cor.15:35-42 that we will be raised with a perfect

imperishable glorious body. Job said that in his body he would see God (Job 19:26-27). Our new body and our spirit will be joined in the resurrection and we will serve and rule with Christ on the new earth. We will retain our memories and our identities. Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration. They continue to have their history and their identity.

What about the EARTH? I must admit I never stopped to think what would happen to the earth in eternity. Rev. 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 are clear that the present heavens and present earth will pass away, meaning they will be transformed, recreated into the new heaven and new earth. The earth will be raised to newness of life just like our resurrection bodies. It will be new in quality and perfection.

We have a lot to look forward to. Instead of the misconception of floating around with wings and halos playing on a harp with nothing to do, we will have a God to worship, serve, and a universe to rule. Exciting activities now like skydiving or extreme sports will seem tame compared to the excitement of being with Jesus. God will give us purposeful work. We will have friends and family to enjoy. If someone asks you, "will we know each other in heaven?" You can say, "we won't really know each other until heaven". There will be an eternity of learning and discovery. For the first time we will be doing what we were created to do. Augustine said it well, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in you". For the first time we will know true rest. Will we ever be bored? Again Augustine, "There is nothing greater or better than God Himself. God shall be the end of all our desires, who will be seen w/o end, loved w/o end, and praised w/o weariness". There will be no more frustration, restlessness, boredom, anxiety, or searching.

Our excitement about that future event, that glorious day, should help us be excited about God today. Imagining the sheer joy, peace, and fulfillment of that day in the presence of God should give us patience, endurance, and purpose today.