

DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN

1. The Bible provides many descriptions of our future home, such as streets of gold a place where there are fruit trees, cities, thrones, angels, crowns, etc. Yet it is obvious these are in most cases anthropopathic or anthropomorphic uses, not literal.

1.1 God has not provided a literal description, given our mortal nature vis-à-vis His divine nature. Whatever gives you ecstatic happiness in time might provide a starting point in our quest to answer, “what will heaven be like?”

1.2 Perhaps it suffices then to summarize the description of heaven as a place where believing mankind goes after death or the rapture whichever occurs first. It is there each believer will enjoy unimaginable joy.

2. The Greek noun **Ouranos** is the most often used New Testament word translated “heaven” or “heavens.” It appears more than 300 times in the New Testament.

2.1 **Ouranos** is very often used in the New Testament to describe three different heavens. The **aerial** which would cover up to approximately 25,000 feet, usually referred to as that space occupied with air. The area above the **aerial**, where the constellations pervade, is referred to as the **sidereal** and then there is the **third heaven** which is the abode of God.

2.1.1 The **aerial heaven** is the home of the sun, moon and stars.

Mat 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the **air** have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Mat 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Mat 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Acts 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the **air**.

Acts 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

2.1.2 The **sidereal heaven** is where the space station and multiple satellites circle planet earth. It is also from where a Russian astronaut said “I am in heaven but I don’t see God.” In His ascension Christ passed through the aerial and sidereal heavens on His way to the third heaven.

Heb 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the **heavens**, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

2.1.3 The **third heaven** is often referred to as “the abode of God.”

Mat 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in **heaven**.

3. In His ascension Christ ascended far above all the heavens where He sat down on the right side of God in the place of honor in the heavens.

Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

3.1 The third heaven is the scene of Christ's present life and activity.

3.2 It is from the third heaven that the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost.

1Pe 1:12 It was revealed to the Old Testament prophets that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

3.3 It is one of the abodes of the angels.

Mat 18:10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

3.4 Paul was caught up in the third heaven whether in the body or out of the body, he knew not.

2Co 12:1 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.

2Co 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows.

2Co 12:3 And I know that this man whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows --

2Co 12:4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

2Co 12:5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.

3.5 Heaven will be the eternal dwelling place of the saints in resurrection glory.

2Co 5:1 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

3.6 From the third heaven Christ will descend to the aerial to receive His saints at the Rapture.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

3.7 Christ will subsequently come from third heaven with His saints and with His holy angels at His second advent.

Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

3.8 In the present life Paul says "heaven" should be the place our positional citizenship.

Phi 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Phi 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

4. The present three heavens, with the earth will one day pass away.

2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

5. Isaiah prophesied of a new heaven and a new earth in Isa 65:17.

Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

6. Now let's see what other words or combination of words are used in a "heavenly context."

7. Let's look further at a new but similar word, "**Ouranios**."

7.1 It is used as a description of God the Father in Mat 6:14, 26, 32 and 15:13.

Mat 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your **heavenly** Father will also forgive you:

Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your **heavenly** Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your **heavenly** Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Mat 15:13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my **heavenly** Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Mat 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

7.2 **Ouranios** is used as a description of the holy angels.

Luk 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the **heavenly** host praising God, and saying,

Luk 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

7.3 It is used of the vision seen by Paul in Acts 26:19.

Acts 26:19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the **heavenly** vision:

7.4 **Epouraios** means that which pertains to, or is in heaven.

7.4.1 It is used of God the Father in Mat 18:35

Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my **heavenly** Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.

7.4.2 It is used of the place where Christ “sitteth at the right hand of God,” i.e., in a position of divine authority, Eph 1:20; and of the present position of believers in relationship to Christ, Eph 2:6; and where they possess every spiritual blessing, Eph 1:3.

Eph 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Eph 1:19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

Eph 1:20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the **heavenly** realms,

Eph 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the **heavenly** realms in Christ Jesus,

Eph 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

7.4.3 It is used of Christ as “the Second Man,” and all those who are related to Him spiritually. 1Co 15:48

1Co 15:47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.

1Co 15:48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from **heaven**, so also are those who are of heaven.

1Co 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

7.4.4 It is used of whose sphere of activity or existence is above or in contrast to that of earth, principalities and powers, Eph 3:10; of spiritual hosts of wickedness, Eph 6:12 (RV), in heavenly places (KJV) in high places.

Eph 3:8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Eph 3:9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Eph 3:10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the **heavenly** realms,

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the **heavenly** realms.

Eph 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

7.4.5 It is used of the Holy Spirit (**Epoupanios**).

Heb 6:4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the **heavenly** gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,

7.4.6 It is used of the calling of believers.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the **heavenly** calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

7.4.7 It is used of heaven as the abode of the saints, a better country than that of the spiritual Jerusalem.

Heb 12:21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly** Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

Heb 12:23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven ...

7.4.8 It is used of the Kingdom of Christ in its future Manifestation.

2Ti 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his **heavenly** kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

7.4.9 It is used of all beings and things, animate and inanimate that are above the earth.

Phi 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

Phi 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in **heaven** and on earth and under the earth,

7.4.10 It is used of the resurrection and glorified bodies of believers. (1Co 15:40 and 49);

1Co 15:40 There are also **heavenly** bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.

1Co 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from **heaven**.

8. Ouranochen means from heaven and in most cases, it is used of the aerial heaven; for example:

Acts 14:17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain **from heaven** and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

9. The etymology of Greek words translated heaven provide a great deal of information from many Scriptures. Now let's spend a little time with definition and concept beginning with the Old Testament.

9.1 The word heaven or the heavens is used in the Scripture in a number of different senses.

9.2 In the most general of these it includes all that is distinguished from the earth.

9.3 When employed this way, the words heaven and earth exclude one another, but when taken together the two embrace all the universe of God.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Gen 1:2 Now the earth was (*became*) formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

9.3.1 The term **Ouranochen** is often used metaphorically.

Deu 4:32 Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?

Deu 4:33 Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived?

9.4 In a more limited sense the word heaven is employed to describe the atmosphere which surrounds the earth.

9.4.1 Thus we read of the "dew of heaven," Dan 4:15, the "clouds of heaven," Dan 7:13 and of heaven giving rain.

Dan 4:15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. "Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth."

Dan 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

Dan 7:14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

9.4.2 Again, the word often includes more than just that which is comprehended within the earth's atmosphere.

9.4.3 It is used to embrace all that is visible in the expanse of the universe above man.

9.4.4 It would be impossible to set specific limits to the visible expanse of space which stretches away to unknown heights; but as such, the term heaven includes the vast realm in which are the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars.

Gen 1:16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

Gen 1:17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

Gen 1:18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

9.4.5 From the theological standpoint, unquestionably the most important use of the term heaven is with reference to the invisible realm of which the visible may be simply the fringe nearest to man. This is the heaven which is best described as God's dwelling place.

9.4.6 Before the Christian era, the Jews divided the heavens into seven different strata, a notion which has no basis in the Scripture.

9.4.7 Unquestionably the apostles often spoke of heaven as the abiding place of God and the blessed dead. The fact that they used the expression "third heaven" means they were referring either to heaven in its most exalted character or to the heaven which is reached by the souls of the blessed when they have passed through the two lower regions of the atmosphere.

9.4.8 The term "heaven of heavens in Deu 10:14, 1 Ki 8:27, Psa 68:33 and 148:4, literally render the Hebrew idiom by the superlative, "the highest heaven." It would seem to express our concept of the uttermost reaches beyond the universe.

Deu 10:14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

1Ki 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

Psa 68:33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.

Psa 148:4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.
Psa 148:5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

10. When we speak of heaven as God's dwelling place, or the place where His presence is made manifest, we do not transgress the doctrine of His divine omnipresence.

10.1 Though the Lord speaks of coming from heaven and going to heaven, He is infinite, transcendent and therefore manifests Himself where He already was.

10.2 Joh 1:18 implies that when the Lord was on earth He was also in the bosom of the Father: not inexplicable given the Omniscience and Omnipresence of the Trinity.

Joh 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

10.3 We must simply recognize that the essence of an infinite and a co-infinite, co-equal and co-eternal Deity demand such a conclusion. This concept is conveyed in the Word of God to finite human minds, hopefully, in terms we can understand.

10.4 Much of the description of heaven in its strictest sense is given in figurative terms, because it is impossible to express heavenly things except in language which is often symbolic. This language does not at all mean that there is nothing literal about heaven. Jesus in Joh 14:2 said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

10.4.1 Christ lives forever in His glorified resurrection body. There must also be a place where He dwells with His saints.

11. Certain things are clearly revealed in the Scriptures concerning heaven.

11.1 Considerable attention is given to the things which are not to be found there. For example, there will be no marrying or giving in marriage. (Luk 20:34-36)

Luk 20:34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

Luk 20:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

Luk 20:36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

11.2 There will be no tears, death, sorrow, crying or pain, nothing that defiles and no more curse. There will be neither sin nor human good there.

Rev 21:4 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.

11.3 God is present in heaven in a special sense, dispensing judgment, grace and glory.

Isa 33:5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

12. Jesus Christ descended from heaven.

Joh 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

13. Christ was taken up into heaven.

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

13.1 He is presently at the right hand of God, making intercession for His saints.

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

14. From Heaven Christ will come again to judge Israel, the nations and all unbelievers.

Psa 96:13 The heavens will rejoice in song before the LORD, when he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

15. Redeemed souls are presently with Christ in heaven in a soul format. At least two Old Testament saints, Enoch and Elijah, were translated into heaven without death.

2Ki 2:1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

2Ki 2:11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

16. The redeemed of the Church Age shall receive resurrection bodies at the Rapture.

1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

1Co 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Phi 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

16.1 Furthermore, their treasures and rewards await the saints in heaven.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pe 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,