

Open Heaven

Genesis 1:1-8 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, **that it was good**; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So, the evening and the morning were the first day. ⁶ Then God said, "**Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.**" ⁷ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament; **and it was so.** ⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. So, the evening and the morning were the second day.

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing **in the heavenly places** in Christ.

I want to go to heaven! This is what every person says... For the Christian, it is our ultimate goal, to dwell in heaven with our God and the saints of the ages. I don't think this is a unique thought or desire. I believe that, if asked, every person in the world alive today would want the same thing. **The problem in our world is not the desire of mankind to go to heaven, the problem is that there are several "heavens" being marketed.** Here are the various "heavens" that are being promoted so that you will know the difference between these and the one we are truly called to...

1. MATERIAL HEAVEN

This is the heaven that atheists are striving for. Atheists are those who believe that this physical universe is the only thing that exists. They come in all shapes and sizes. For example:

- Secular humanists (man is at the center)
- Communists (the state is at the center)
- Evolutionists (nature is at the center)

Regardless of the type, atheists seek their heavenly reward here on this earth. It may be fame, wealth, power, pleasure, advanced intellectual achievement, even the pleasure of making the world a better place somehow. But material heaven is the one where all you will ever receive is here in this life because there is nothing after this life is over.

2. MYSTIC HEAVEN

Mystic heaven is the paradise promoted by most Eastern and Far-Eastern religions. It is the heaven of the Hindus, the Buddhists, and all of the ancient nature religions of the Native

Americans, Africans, South Americans, etc. It is the heaven of the ancient fables, gods, and goddesses of the Greeks. In the mystic heaven of all types:

- You are immersed or swallowed up by the great force of the universe - (the Hindu religion calls it Brahma; Buddhists refer to it as Nirvana) or you join the pantheon of the gods (Greeks/Native peoples)

There are no historical foundations for the mystic heaven, simply stories and legends intertwined and handed down from generation to generation. The problem with mystic heaven is that the nature of the place and requirements for entry change from generation to generation as new religions and variations occur.

3. EARTHLY HEAVEN

I refer to the Paradise of Islam (Muslim religion) as one of the Earthly heavens. Their view of heaven is the reverse of the atheists:

- Atheists look for heaven on earth
- Muslims look for earth in heaven

In other words, the promise is an afterlife that is very much like life on earth but without the natural restrictions. For example: good food, lovely companions, the total victory of Muslim ideology (Sharia law – which features a severe form of male domination). A particular feature of Islam's heaven is that it appeals mainly to men and their human appetites. **In their view there are levels in heaven and only a few reaches the top tier to be with God.**

4. SILENT HEAVEN

Silent heaven is the heaven of those who view this world as a bad and scary place. It is the heaven of those who have made death their primary reference point.

Death is the mystery; death is the peak experience, murder and violence are the way to power and enlightenment. The Columbine shooters in Colorado believed in the silent heaven because once they tasted the glory of taking life by killing thirteen innocent people, they sent each other to silent heaven where there is no feeling or awareness - just the quiet sleep of death. **Silent heaven is the place depressed and suicidal people desire to escape the painful experience of this life.**

5. SECTARIAN HEAVEN

All those who think they are the only ones going to heaven because they've understood a special teaching or follow a certain "human" leader - these people are going to sectarian heaven. Just you and your special group are going to make it - this is at once the core teaching and appeal of this destination. For example:

- Mormons will spend eternity populating the planets of the universe - according to the writings of their leader and founder, Joseph Smith (1830)
- Jehovah's Witnesses will have 144,000 and only that number in their sectarian heaven - a teaching promoted by their founder, Charles Russell (1872)
- The modern Jewish religions also promote the idea that only their culture and nation will be revived to eternal glory

The biggest clue to knowing if you are headed for sectarian heaven is usually the fact that it's a heaven according to the ideas of one person and a pretty ordinary person at that.

6. SECULAR HEAVEN

Some believe that the universe itself is eternal (that it has always been). They can't prove this and it defies logic and science, however, they believe and make secular heaven the basis of their faith system.

They also reason that all of history is circular where we simply go round and round repeating the same events over again forever. The "big bang" is both the beginning and the end as everything is continually renewed for endless repetition. This is the basis of thinking for time travel and time tunnels in science-fiction movies where the hero who travels to the past is forbidden to change any event because doing so will cause the system to unravel. Fate is the by-word of those who believe in this circular theory of man's existence.

Heaven, in this worldview, is the ability to fit into the groove of history or find your spiritual balance (e.g. yin/yang). **Many religions and self-awareness/improvement systems are built on this idea of becoming "one" with the world around you to find your "place" in the universe.** You have found secular heaven when you have learned where you fit in this never-ending world.

7. THE THIRD HEAVEN

The third heaven is the heaven described in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 Paul refers to this place:

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 - Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 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.

- Note that he also refers to it as "Paradise." The person he is referring to may be himself and the occasion, a time when the Lord revealed Himself to Paul. Others in the Bible were permitted a glimpse of this spiritual dimension while still in their human bodies. For example:

ISAIAH - Isaiah 6:1-3 - In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

JOHN - Revelation 4:1 - After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

If you examine the New Testament carefully you will note that Jesus Himself makes the most references to heaven. He usually says one of two things about it:

- **It is a kingdom** - Meaning that it has structure, rulership, a population of beings.
- **It is where He and the Father dwell** - Suggesting that this is the source of the power He displayed on earth.

Here is what we know about this place called the third heaven...

- **It is not of this world** - Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" in John 18:36. The Bible likens it to physical things like gold and precious gems (Revelation) but this is imagery used to describe its beauty, not its actual substance. It is experientially far greater than anything this world has to offer.
- **It is not a mystical place conjured up by the dreams of men** - Jesus says that He has come from this realm, returned to this dimension, and will come once again at the end of the world to bring the church into this place - where only He can lead the way (II Thessalonians 4:13-18). We know Jesus' description of heaven is accurate because His resurrection establishes His credibility (Romans 1:4).
- **The third heaven will be an experience completely unlike our earthly one** - Jesus says that there is no marriage there (no need for reproduction because there is no death) and we will take the form of angels (Matthew 22:30). **Never mind better, Biblical heaven will not be anything like our earthly experience. We are transported there by faith because there is no physical power or delivery system here that can bring us there.**
- **Biblical heaven is full of rejoicing angels and saints** - There is an awareness of self and others, as well as an appreciation of God's presence (Revelation 4:8-11). There is peace in heaven but not a silent, unconscious peace. There is peace because there is no cause for war or hatred, all are at peace with one another.
- **The third heaven is not populated by just a few of one sect or culture - but by people of every tribe on earth** - **Rich and poor, male, and female, black or white and every shade in between. The common experience that all share is that they have all been cleansed from their sins in the blood of Christ and have remained faithful unto death.** This is not the

commands or teachings of men, but the command and teaching of the Lord of heaven - Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

- **The heaven of Christ is eternal** - In the third heaven everything will be made new without imperfection, and the guarantee is that it will always be this way (Revelation 21:21). If Jesus could inhabit a weak human body and live among sinful men in a fallen world where He was constantly tormented by Satan himself, and never sin (1 Peter 2:21-22), imagine the quality of existence He can give us in a place where none of these impediments exist.

Paul starts out his letter to the church of Ephesus by saying, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3, NKJV).”** The words “every spiritual blessing” jumped off the page at me as I read it.

The Greek word for “blessing” is the word *eulogia* which means “benefit” - These *spiritual blessings* that Paul referred to weren’t just nice ideas - They were realities to him that were attached to real benefits when he lived in and through them. **Paul goes on to list these benefits for us in verses 4-19 and shares 15 different spiritual blessings we have when we live in Christ.**

15 Spiritual Blessings Paul declares over you... THAT ARE STORED IN HEAVENLY PLACES...

1. Chosen Before the Foundation of the World (v.4)

To know you’ve been chosen before the foundation of the world is to know that your life matters. Your existence isn’t an accident or by-product of natural selection. God has been thinking about your destiny **before** He ever said, “Let there be light.”

2. Holy and Blameless (v.4)

In Christ you are holy and blameless. This means you are fit to serve Him and worship Him despite your shortcomings. God enjoys you when you approach Him and He gladly moves through your life to touch others, not because of your own righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed or attributed to you.

3. In His Love (v.4)

In Christ you stand in *agape* or unconditional love. You cannot earn it. Today, you are unconditionally loved in Christ. Have you received it? Make the following confession today, “Jesus, I receive your unconditional love.”

4. Predestined to Adoption (v.5)

God has predetermined to call you His own in Christ. He has selected you to be His son or daughter. You are a part of His family. He is your Father. Many times when parents adopt a child, they go through a selection process for making a decision on who they will adopt and who they won’t adopt. God already went through His decision-making process about you a long time ago and decided to adopt you as one of His children.

5. Accepted in the Beloved (v.6)

You are not rejected. You are not an outcast. You are not unworthy of approval. The Creator of the universe accepts you in Christ. You have been relationally reconciled in Christ and are pleasing to God. You might not have health in all of your relationships right now, but, in Christ there is nothing between you and God today.

6. Redemption through His Blood (v.7)

Outside of Christ you were a slave to sin and eternal death. You couldn't buy or earn your way out of it. The price for your freedom was the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus wasn't a slave. Jesus was already free. Jesus paid for your freedom anyways.

7. Forgiveness of Sins (v.7)

In your life you have turned your back on God morally. You have consciously rebelled against His law in your heart. You have ignored His wisdom and thought yourself to be the wiser many-a-time. In Christ, you are forgiven today.

8. Riches of His Grace Abound To You (v.7-8)

Grace means "unmerited favor." *Abound* means "to have in abundance." In Christ, there is an abundant measure of unmerited favor flowing to your life like a river that will last from here into the never-ending depths of eternity.

9. Made Known to You the Mystery of His Will (v.9)

In a fallen world of war, suffering and disease; a sinful world where bad things happen to good people; God has revealed His solution to us. He wrapped-up every answer to every aspect of the human condition in Christ and He gave it to us.

10. Obtained An Eternal Inheritance (v.11)

Revelation 21:4 describes Heaven in the following manner: *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

11. Heard the Word of Truth (v.13)

God's truth is a light in darkness. We are not without counsel. We are not left in the dark. We have heard His good news and discovered the path of life.

12. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (v.13)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit that was prophesied about by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, John the Baptist and Jesus has been made available to you in Christ today!

V13. You Know the Hope of His Calling (v.18)

His calling over your life is the basket you can put all of your eggs in. It's an anchor. It's a rock. It will never end in vain.

14. You are the Riches of His Inheritance (v.18)

You are of great value to Jesus. As Christ brought you back to God, God gives you back to Jesus as His inheritance. You are valuable in Christ, you are the righteousness of God in Christ. You are His eternal reward that He cherishes.

15. The Exceeding Greatness of His Power (v.19-20)

Paul says *the exceeding greatness of His power is toward you who believe*. What kind of power of this? It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead! It is the same power that conquered sin, death and hell. In Christ, this same power is present in your life today!

Paul the apostle saw and experienced many supernatural occurrences as he walked as a Spirit-led believer in Christ. One such experience he tells us about:

If there is a 3rd ...then there has to be a 2nd and a 1st...

Genesis 1:1 says that, in the beginning, God created **the heavens** and the earth. The word *heavens* are in the plural, and raises a big question: If the abode of God is in the third heaven, **where are the first and second heavens? What goes on there?**

In another place, Paul the apostle wrote to the Church at Ephesus, warning of a spirit which he calls the prince of the power of the air:

Ephesians 2:1-2

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

- **In another place, Jesus Himself calls him, "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31), and the apostle John tells us that the physical world in which we live is under satanic control: "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1John 5:19).**
- **Rev. 12-13 – Satan is not in hell...it is a place reserved for him.**
- **He dwells with his rebellious angelic horde in the second heaven.**
- **He works his agenda through these being - spiritual wickedness in high places - down into the first heaven via demonic forces influencing the lives of people – the children of disobedience.**

Here is the problem... All our benefists are in the 3rd heaven. In order for them to get to use in the 1st heaven they have to pass through the 2nd. However, when they enter the second heaven they often get hindered...

Have you ever felt like something was blocking your prayers? It feels as if there is something or someone that is between us and God and our prayers don't get to him or our answers don't get to us. There is some truth to that feeling. It is not that your prayers don't get to God, it is that your enemy attempts to block the answer getting to you!

Daniel 10:12-14 *"Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."*

- Here is what was happening while Daniel was waiting: **The angelic being who brought to Daniel this message from God had been in a powerful battle or fight with another spiritual being.** The scripture identifies that demonic principality as the prince of the king of Persia. This was not a human being or natural prince or king, this was a spiritual being. The description of the being before him was supernatural.
- **The end result was that the prince of Persia was powerful enough to withstand this angelic messenger sent by God to Daniel with the answer to his prayers.** But by Daniel not giving up in seeking God, he was able to see God bring him the answer. In fact, this Word says that Michael (an archangel) had come to help the angelic being bringing him the answer and that they had prevailed. But it took 21 days to get his prayer answered.

Genesis 1:6-8 - ⁶ Then God said, "**Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.**" ⁷ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the **waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.** ⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. So, the evening and the morning were the second day.

- The firmament is speaking of the second heaven. Most theologians agree that the water below is speaking of earth's water and the water above is speaking of the crystal sea in the 3rd heaven.
- Notice: God blessed everything that he created by saying it was good, **EXCEPT FOR THE FIRMAMENT.**
- He could not bless it because in his foreknowledge he knew that it would one day be inhabited by evil.

So what are we to do if there are these beings in the second heaven interfering with the reception of our heavenly blessings...

Matthew 16:19 - And I will give you the **keys** of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:18 - Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

- We have been given authority to open and close the heavens...
- But how do we use the keys...

Here is a mighty key to controlling the firmament...

Psalm 150: 1-6 Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; **Praise Him in His mighty firmament!** ²Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! ³Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! ⁴Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! ⁵Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! ⁶Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

This passage follow

Psalm 149 - Praise^[a] the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, *And* His praise in the assembly of saints. ²Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. ³Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. ⁴For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the ^[b]humble with salvation. ⁵Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. ⁶*Let* the high praises of God *be* in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, ⁷**To execute vengeance on the nations,** And punishments on the peoples; ⁸**To bind their kings with chains,** And their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹**To execute on them the written judgment**—This honor have all His saints. **Praise the Lord!**