

# Heaven

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth."  
Genesis 1:1*

OT (Old Testament) word: '**samayim**' is plural, although it also occurs in the singular; translated to 'heaven/heavens'.

Means '**heights** or **high** places' – so God is the 'God Most-High.' **Genesis 14:18-20, Psalm 18:13**

NT (New Testament) word '**ouranos**' is plural, although it also occurs in the singular. It means 'that which is **raised** up'.

*Heaven is a **general** term that is given a **specific** meaning by its **context**.*

*It has three distinct meanings:*

1) atmosphere, birds of heaven: **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 21:24** and rain from heaven: **Deuteronomy 11:11**

2) universe/cosmos: **Jeremiah 33:25 Nahum 3:16 Hebrews 11:2**

3) the dwelling place of God: **Ecclesiastes 5:2 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:2**

*But, God made heaven (**Genesis 1:1**) and He is greater than it...*

*The point of vertical imagery (heaven being 'up') is this:*

A) heaven is **different**, more remote from Earthly reality

B) heaven is a higher, more **superior** mode of existence

Due to the fall, heaven is separated into an '**intermediate**' and a '**future**' heaven. The 'intermediate' heaven, and Earth, are separate from the 'future' heaven due to the curse. **Genesis 3:17-24**

Once the curse is **removed**, they will be compatible again. **Ephesians 1:9,10**

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## ***Intermediate Heaven:***

This is a real place. Stephen 'saw', not dreamed. **Acts 7:55,56** These weren't mere symbols of a state of existence. His eyes were opened to a spiritual dimension/reality. He saw real things.

*Talk about the ten dimensions of string theory, with six being unobservable.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:15-17** Gehazi's eyes were 'opened' to this dimension also.

Remember, **Acts 7** and **2<sup>nd</sup> Kings** are narrative (that is, historical accounts); not poetic or apocalyptic literature, or just figures of speech.

*Show PowerPoint graph of Intermediate and Final state on screen.*

## ***What happens now when we die?***

Our spirits go to be with Christ, while our bodies are in the grave, awaiting the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection.

**Philippians 1:23,24** and **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:8**

**Hebrews 12:1** We get to encourage those who are alive. Paul relates it to a race with stadium fans. Just like your eyes are fixed on the finish line, ours should be fixed on Jesus.

What are the fans doing in the stands? **CHEERING ON THE PARTICIPANTS!**

There is no 'soul sleep'. Our spirits/souls don't sleep until the first resurrection.

"Fallen asleep" is a metaphor for physical death. **1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13**

Our bodies 'sleep' until the first resurrection, but our spirits are alive...

## ***What will the future heaven be like?***

Many people think that the future heaven will be an endless praise and worship church service. This is a narrow definition of worship...

God created us to rule: **Genesis 1:26,28** **Isaiah 49:8** **Psalms 8:5,6**

A crown speaks of ruling authority:

**Revelation 2:10,26** and **5:9,10** and **21:7** **Luke 19:17** **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:2,3**

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## **Who will we rule over?**

Cities: **Luke 19:17**

Angels and the 'world': **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:2,3**

We'll rule with Christ: **2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:12**

Maybe God will create new people for us to rule over, but we're not given specifics...

*"The emphasis in the present heaven is on the absence of Earth's negatives, while in the future heaven, it is the presence of Earth's positives, magnified many times thru the power and glory of resurrected bodies on a resurrected Earth, free at last from sin and shame and all that would hinder both joy and achievement."* Rene Pache

**Isaiah 9:7** "everlasting" Let's stretch our minds... maybe not just here on Earth, but on other worlds. The question isn't why God would create other worlds...

- 1) they're already there for us to explore
- 2) God, by nature, is a creator

God rewards His faithful servants not by taking away responsibilities, but by giving them more. **Ephesians 6:8**

Service is a reward, not a punishment. See **Luke 19:17**

# LESSON 3