

HEAVENS

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *šamayim* is the primary word translated as heavens and it is a plural form of a feminine noun. It clearly indicates “more than one” heaven. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:2 that he was caught up to the third heaven. Therefore, logic dictates that if Paul was in the Third Heaven then, there must be the First and a Second Heaven.

Each heaven is a physical place. We will look into the three heavens and their relevance.

The NIV Word Study Dictionary defines this word as “region above the earth: the heavens: place of the stars, sky, air; heaven: the invisible realm of God.” As you can see, it has a variety of usages.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *ouranos* is the primary word translated as heaven. This word is defined as “sky, air, firmament, any area above the earth; heaven(s), the place of sun, moon, and stars; heaven, in which God dwells.” Like *šamayim*, this word is used in a variety of ways.

First Heaven:

The First Heaven contains the sun, moon, and stars, yet it is a minuscule glimpse of God’s creative majesty. This is mainly the heaven we see with our physical eyes.

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.” (Hebrews 1:10)

Hebrews 1:10 is our second scripture that confirms that God made the heavens and the record of creation in Genesis confirms He made the sun, moon, stars...and all things that we see up there and admire the creation of God.

“Then God said, “Let there be light-bearers (sun, moon, stars) in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be useful for signs (tokens)... and for marking seasons, days, and years; and let them be useful as lights in the expanse of the heavens to provide light on the earth”; and it was so... God made the two great lights—the greater light (the sun) to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) to rule the night; He made the [galaxies of] stars also [that is, all the amazing wonders in the heavens]. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to provide light upon the earth, to rule over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good and He affirmed and sustained it.” (Genesis 1:14-18 AMP)

God did not make the moon, the sun, and stars for people to worship but to confirm His creative majesty, to sustain the earth, and to divide seasons. His creation points to Him.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

The First Heaven is “as far as the eyes can see” with or without the assistance of telescope, lunar orbiter, a scape shuttle, or a sky dish. Whatever man discovers in the galaxies by whatever apparatus he invents, it is part of the First Heaven. Paul said:

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20)

What is this scripture saying? Anyone who has the ability to look up and see the sun glittering in the day and the stars and moon shining at night should recognize that these celestial bodies were put there by a Power greater than man. No military might on this earth is able to sweep the stars from the sky. No

human influence can blot the sun from the heavens. No strength of man can command the moon to stop shining, the wind to stop gusting or to stop the waves from crashing on the shore.

“Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name)” (Jeremiah 31:35)

Second Heaven:

“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

Paul’s statement in the verses above describes a specific place called Paradise. Paul also said he was caught up into the Third Heaven. As stated previously, logic would dictate that if there is a Third Heaven, then there must be a First and Second Heavens. Paul’s personal experience also verifies that people who are alive can be “caught up” or transported through the First and Second Heavens into the Third Heaven, which is the believer’s (temporary) eternal home.

Midst of Heaven or Mid-Heaven

“And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”” (Revelations 8:13)

John the beloved spoke of a region described as “midst of heaven” or “mid-heaven” with the Greek word “mesouranema”.

“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.” (Daniel 10:12-13)

The battle in Daniel 10:12-13 is an ongoing conflict between the forces of good (God elected angels) and the forces of evil (satan’s fallen angels). This occurrence and John’s statement validate the existence of a Second Heaven.

Other Scriptural Reference to heaven and the realm of the devil and the demonic:

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)

“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” (Ephesians 2:1-2)

Third Heaven:

Here are 7 biblical facts about the Third Heaven. It is ...

- God's dwelling place (Psalms 33:13).
- Where Christ is today (Acts 1:11).
- Where Christians go when they die (Philippians 1:21-23).
- The Father's house (John 14:2).

- A city designed and built by God (Hebrews 11:10).
- A better country (Hebrews 11:16).
- Paradise (Luke 23:43).

Solomon referenced the Third Heaven in his prayer for the dedication of the Jerusalem ancient temple:

*“But who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I then, that I should build Him a temple, except to burn sacrifice before Him?” (2 **Chronicle 2:6**)*

Job further confirmed there is a highest heaven:

“Is not God in the height of heaven? And see the highest stars, how lofty they are!” (Job 22:12)

Characteristics of Heaven

- A Place of Unimaginable Beauty

“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.” (Revelation 4:2-4)

- A Place of Brilliant Light

There is no need of physical sun or moon in the Third Heaven, for the redeemed will walk in the light and glory of the Lamb.

“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.” (Revelations 21:23)

- A Place of Service

The God who created man and woman and placed them in His perfect garden to tend it will also be served by the redeemed in the Third Heaven

“Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” (Revelation 7:15)

- A Place of Joy

As we abide in the presence of the Lord, we will find no strife, disappointment, worry or mourning.

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Revelation 16:11)

The Third Heaven is the place of rejoicing...

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 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.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”” (Revelations 21:3-5)

Who Is In The Third Heaven?

- God the Father is in the Third Heaven sitting on His throne and surrounded by angels singing His praise.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.” (Isaiah 6:1-4)

This is Isaiah recording his privileged position of seeing into the Third Heaven seeing the Lord sitting on His throne and the angels praising Him. John recorded something similar:

“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” (Revelations 4:2)

- The 24 elders will be there (Revelations 4:4)
- Enoch & Elijah (2 people who have not physically died yet)
- The Old Testament godly people (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc.)
- Believers in Jesus Christ who have gone before us (1 Corinthians 15:42-54)
- Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God (John 14:3)

The Third Heaven is an actual place, as real as the country in which you were born. It is called a “better... heavenly country” (Hebrews 11:16) and it is above the earth (1 Kings 8:25).

Guaranteeing Your Place in the Third Heaven

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (1 Corinthians 5:17)

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb... the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelations 22:1,3-5)