

Heaven

Rev. Kenneth G. Parrish

Heaven. It's always been imagined as a place of wondrous beauty. But what exactly is Heaven? Where is Heaven? What is Heaven going to be like? Are we going to know each other in Heaven? These are a few questions I will try to answer.

First of all, I want to emphasize that no words could ever describe Heaven. Words could never do justice to what Heaven is really like.. In describing Heaven, Paul says that there are "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." There are just some things about Heaven that we are not to know about until we get there. We are very limited in our knowledge of Heaven. In fact, the Bible tells us more about what will not be in Heaven than it tells us about what will be in Heaven. Yet at the same time, the Bible tells us everything that we do need to know about Heaven.

Heaven is going to be a breathless wonder!

To begin with, Heaven is a real place. It is not some state of mind. It is physically a real place. The Bible talks about three heavens. The first heaven is the atmosphere that surrounds the earth. The second heaven is outer space. This is where the stars, planets, comets, galaxies, *etc.* reside. The third heaven is the abode of God. It is often described as a city or a kingdom throughout the Bible. The first heaven you see by day. The second heaven you see by night. The third heaven you see by faith.

Jesus tells his disciples that in His Father's house are many mansions. This is the third Heaven that He was speaking of. In II Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul tells us about his experience of seeing this third Heaven.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The man Paul mentions in this passage is Paul himself. He states that he was taken into Paradise or the third Heaven. He could not tell if he went there in his body or whether it was just his spirit, but he did go to a place and not a state of mind. It was a physical place that Paul went to.

So if Heaven is a physical place, just where is it? Heaven is always referred to as being "up." In biblical times, people thought the earth was flat, so "up" was always in the same direction. We now know that the earth is round, so "up" for one person would be "down" for another

person on the opposite side of the earth. How can Heaven, being a real, physical place, be in all directions?

I believe that Heaven is northward. How did I come to this conclusion? Think about this: no matter where on the globe you are, north is always considered “up.” You can go up north or down south. On a map, north is always “up.” North is a fixed position. Point a camera toward the north star and leave the lens open for a while. The resulting picture will show all the other stars circling around the north star. It is a fixed position.

But conclusions should always be based upon the Bible, so let us take a look at the following passages.

“And he shall kill it on the side of the alter northward before the Lord ...” Leviticus 1:11

This passage was telling the Jews the proper way to make a sacrifice. Notice that this unblemished animal is to be killed **northward toward the Lord.**

“For the promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” Psalms 75:6,7

If the promotion does not come from the south, east or west, then it is implied in this passage that the promotion comes from the north; from God.

“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” Isaiah 14:13,14

This passage is telling us about Satan and how he wanted to take over God’s kingdom. The “throne above the stars” is referring to the third heaven and the congregation is “in the sides of the **north.**” It is only here that Satan believed he could be like God; the “most High.”

Heaven will also be a place of perfection. It is a place that we strive to be. In Philippians 1:21, we are told “*to die is gain.*” It is going to be absolutely perfect and peaceful, “*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*” (Revelation 21:4). It is going to be a place of rest. But not a lazy rest. There will be things to do in Heaven. Remember that Adam, before the fall, had work to do taking care of the Garden. But it wasn’t laborious work. Labor didn’t appear until after sin entered the world.

Heaven is all the love, mind and power of God ...

All that the loving heart of God would desire (Love)

All that the incredible mind of God could conceive (Mind)

All that the mighty hand of God could create. (Power)

Not only is Heaven going to be beautiful, but we all will know each other there. We will sit down not only with our families but with all the other saints as well. Matthew 8:11 tells us that we *“shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”*

When Jesus took Peter, James and John up on a mountain, a transfiguration occurred. This was a little piece of Heaven on earth. Moses and Elias appeared with Christ during this transfiguration and they were talking amongst themselves. Keep in mind that the disciples had never met Moses nor Elias, but they knew them as soon as they saw them.

The Bible also compares going to Heaven as being gathered with your people. In other words, being reunited with family. Please consider the following verses ...

- *“Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, and old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.”* Genesis 25:8
- *“And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”* Genesis 35:29
- *“And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.”* Genesis 49:33
- *“Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:”* Deuteronomy 32: 49,50

But best of all is that we will be in Heaven with Jesus. We will be able to see him face to face. To talk with Him. To fellowship with Him. And this is His prayer as well ... that we will be with Him; *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24).

And that is what will make Heaven home; having Jesus there. After all, when I return home, it's not the furniture I hug. It's not the dinning room table that I miss. It's my wife Kathie that I hug and miss. I rejoice in seeing her. It is her that makes my house a home. The same goes with Heaven. It will be Jesus that I will rejoice to see. It is Jesus that will make Heaven feel like home.

But we all must remember that only the redeemed will enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Christ came into this world for us. He was crucified so that His blood would wash away our sins. During John's revelation, Jesus told him, *“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 7:14).

Religion will not get you into Heaven. Denominations will not get you into Heaven. Being a good person will not get you into Heaven. Doing charity work will not get you into Heaven.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21:27).

Accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior is the only way to get into Heaven. *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me“* (John 14:6). Give your life to Jesus and enjoy the benefits of being in Heaven with him. Hopefully we will all meet there and rejoice together.