

Eschatology ABF Series
Eternity (Heaven) & Wrap Up
December 22nd

Review

Questions to Be Answered

1. What words does the Bible use for “heaven” or “heavens”?
2. What do we know about Heaven (our eternal home)?
3. What aren’t we sure of about Heaven?

1. What words does the Bible use for “heaven” or “heavens”?

Clarify Terms / Concepts (not developed much in the Old Testament)(**progressive revelation**)

OBE – Have any gone there and come back to tell us about it? What about those OBE’s?
(Out of Body Experiences)

Be careful. Many of these talk about lights and peace regardless of their religious background or commitment.

I don’t necessarily doubt that something happens when the brain is deprived of oxygen for a period of time, but I would not look to those experiences as the definitive proof of what Heaven is like, for that, let’s turn to the Bible, God Word on the subject.

Heavens / Heaven – 3rd Heaven

II Corinthians 12:2 *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.”*

1st Heaven – where the birds fly, the sky, the atmosphere

2nd Heaven – where the planets and stars are, the universe

3rd Heaven – where God is

So, when we read that God is going to destroy the heavens and the earth, He is probably just going to do a make-over of the 1st & 2nd Heaven.

Sheol (Old Testament word translated “grave” - the place of the dead - righteous & unrighteous)

Hades (the place of the unrighteous dead)

Matthew 16:18 *“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

Revelation 1:17-18 *“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first*

and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

Revelation 6:8a *“And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him.”*

Revelation 20:13-14 *“And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”*

Abraham’s Bosom/Side (the place of the righteous dead - with God – OT economy)(Paradise – NT)

Luke 16:22-23 *“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.”*

Luke 23:43 *“And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’”*

II Corinthians 12:3 *“And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows”*

Revelation 2:7b *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*

2. What do we know about Heaven (our eternal home)?

Heaven is a Place (it is our eternal home)

It is not just a state of mind. Jesus has come and gone from there. God is there. Angels live there.

It is referred to as “up” in location. It may exist outside of our known universe or it may just be outside our space-time continuum.

Mark 6:41 *“And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked **up** to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all.”*

Luke 9:51 *“When the days drew near for him to be taken **up**, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”*

It is eternal

Psalm 23:6 “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

It is comprised of at least one city (see previous notes on New Jerusalem)

Angels and other creatures are there

Revelation 4:4-11 “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’”

God will be there

Because God’s home is our home – Heaven contains His permanent inheritance for us, an unperishing estate He has reserved for us

I Peter 1:4 “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,”

Heaven is our country of citizenship

Philippians 3:20 “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”

“This World Is Not My Home”

[V1] This world is not my home I’m just a passing through, my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue, the angels beckon me from Heaven’s open door and I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

[Ch] O Lord you know I have no friend like you. If Heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do? The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

[V2] They're all expecting me and that's one thing I know. My savior pardoned me and now I onward go. I know He'll take me through though I am weak and poor, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

[V3] Just up in Glory Land we'll live eternally the Saints on every hand are shouting victory. Their song of sweetest praise drifts back from Heaven's shore, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

3. What aren't we sure of about Heaven?

What kind of bodies will we have in Heaven?

Gnostics of all kinds (Platonists, Buddhists, Hindus, Spiritualists, Manichaeans) say we will become pure spirits, angels. Pagans and Muslims say we will have earthly bodies and harems or happy hunting grounds.

I Corinthians 15:35-49 *"But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."*

II Corinthians 5:1 *“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

The Bible says we will have transformed bodies, but real, physical bodies, as Christ had after his resurrection. His body could be touched and could eat. Yet it could come and go as he pleased, with neither walls nor distance as an obstacle. It was the same body he had before he died, and it was recognized as such by his friends. Yet it was so different that at first they did not recognize him. I think our new resurrection body will be related to the body we have now in the same way that our current body is related to the body we had in our mothers' wombs. If a fetus saw a picture of itself at the age of twenty, it would at first not recognize itself, so unforeseen and surprisingly new would it be. Yet it is the same self, even the same body, now grown radically more mature.

I John 3:2 *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”*

What of injuries and deformities? Will they all be removed in the resurrection body?

Christ still had his wounds. But they were badges of glory, not suffering and sadness.

Luke 24:38-39 *“And he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’”*

Much here is conjecture, but it’s possible that the amputee’s limb will be restored, and so will the brain-damaged person’s intelligence.

Isaiah 35:5-6a *“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”*

Will we gain any “super powers”?

Like Jesus, will we be able to move through walls? Maybe, maybe not. Remember, He was still God when He did that. Was that a feature of His new body, or His divinity?

Teleportation – Will we be able to visit the planets and stars by “beaming to them”?

Any answer would be pure conjecture. The only “super power” I know we’ll have is to never die.

Revelation 21:4 *“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and **death shall be no more**, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

Will we eat in Heaven?

We will have bodies, so we will be able to eat, as Christ did after the resurrection. But I don't think we will have to eat.

Revelation 22:2 “... *through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*”

Will our bodies be clothed in Heaven?

Revelation 19:7-8 “*Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure*”—*for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*”

Revelation 19:14 “*And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.*”

What age will we be in Heaven?

Medieval philosophers, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, usually thought we would all be 33, the ideal age, the age of maturity; the human age of Jesus when He died and was resurrected.

Some say that we will be the same age as when we died.

I Samuel 28:13-15 (King Saul & the witch at Endor) “*The king said to her, ‘Do not be afraid. What do you see?’ And the woman said to Saul, ‘I see a god coming up out of the earth.’ He said to her, ‘What is his appearance?’ And she said, ‘An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.’ And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’*”

What about people who die when they are old? Will they still be old looking?

What about aborted or miscarried children? Will they be tiny, tiny forever? We assume not.

The fact is, there is no way to know at this point. There is no clear Biblical text on this subject.

What language will we speak in Heaven?

Again, we are in the realm of pure conjecture, but let me make a few comments.

I think it will be a reversal of what happened at the tower of Babel.

This may have been foreshadowed at Pentecost, where distinctive languages were preserved, yet each person understood everyone else. Perhaps there will be as many languages as there are individuals, and yet at the same time only one. What is sure is that there will be no misunderstanding.

Is there time in Heaven?

The concept of no time is not in the Bible, it is from a hymn, “time shall be no more”

If at its most basic concept ... time is merely the fact that things happen in sequential moments ... then, yes, there is time in Heaven.

Learning implies time. At one point in time you don't know something, then at another moment you do. We'll see the truth about us learning in Heaven in the next question.

Actions such as falling down and casting crowns imply a sequence of events.

The tree of life (Revelation 22:2) yields its fruit every month

Revelation 8:1 speaks of silence in Heaven for about half an hour.

Songs imply time ... meter, tempo, rests ... songs begin and end.

The concept of age is what is probably missing. I don't think we'll continue to age or have any sense of time dragging on, and certainly no worry about the future!

The greatest, most worthy subject of our learning will be God.

What will I do in Heaven? (partly revealed, but only in glimpses)

We will Learn

Ephesians 2:6-7 “... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

“Show” means to reveal, in a progressive, ongoing way.

Psalm 27:4 “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”

“inquire” suggests studying, questioning, probing

I believe we will continue to learn about God & His creation throughout all eternity. We will never know everything. Only God can do that. Explore the universe? Why not! We will have the full capacity of our brains available to us, though, so learning will be fun, exciting, easy.

We will get to know God even more

“We’ll explore and discover God’s very being, an experience delightful beyond comprehension. We’ll delight in the richness and diversity of the triune God, understanding more and more clearly the meaning behind His names and attributes. There will be an ever-deepening appreciation of God’s greatness.”
Alcorn - 76-77

We will Meet Others

Matthew 8:11 “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,”

We will Rest

Revelation 14:13 “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!””

Hebrews 4:1-11 “Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest,”” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.” Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.”

We will Serve Him

Revelation 22:3 *“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.”*

“Serve” is an active term. It involves work, the expending of effort, responsibilities, duties, planning & creativity.

We will Rule with Him

II Timothy 2:12a *“... if we endure, we will also reign with him ...”*

Revelation 3:21 *“The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*

Luke 19:17-19 *“And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’”*

I Corinthians 6:2-3a *“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels?”*

Reigning implies specific delegated responsibilities for those under our leadership.

We will Worship Him Perfectly

Revelation 19:1 *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God ...’”*

Since the sin problem is forever solved I believe our worship will be: creative, have variety, be completely selfless, and prolonged. No more “worship wars”!

We will be eternally happy & content

Psalms 16:11 *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

Conclusion

From the Introduction to Knowing God by J.I. Packer:

“There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, ‘Behold I am wise.’ But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass’s colt; and with solemn exclamation, ‘I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.’ No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God ...”

In C.S. Lewis’s *“The Last Battle”* when Aslan’s creatures leave Narnia and enter Heaven, one of them proclaims ...

“I have come home at last! This is the land I have been looking forward to all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this.”