

## Session 2: The Present Heaven

“Will we be with the Lord forever? Yes. Will we always be with him in exactly the same place that heaven is now? No. In the present Heaven, we’ll be in Christ’s presence, and we’ll be joyful, but we’ll be looking forward to our bodily resurrection and permanent relocation to the New Earth.”

- Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, 42

Usually when we refer to ‘heaven,’ we mean the place that Christians go when they die. When we tell our children “Grandma’s in heaven now,” this is what we mean. But this heaven is not Grandma’s \_\_\_\_\_ destination.

Theologians refer to the period between the believer’s life on earth and our resurrection to life on the New Earth, as the “\_\_\_\_\_,” or “\_\_\_\_\_ heaven.” This is the period and place in which we live, between physical death and resurrection.

### A Real Place

Scripture indicates that the present heaven is a real place, with physical as well as spiritual properties (Luke 23:43; Acts 7:55–56; 2 Kings 6:15–17, etc.).

The present heaven is said to contain smoke (Rev 15:8); palms, scrolls, and clothes (Rev 8:9); and musical instruments (Rev 8:6).

Hebrews describes earth as a copy and a shadow of the present heaven (Heb 8:1–5)! The author speaks about heaven as a real, physical place (Heb 9:1–14).

We are told that in the end, the “New Jerusalem” will “come down from God out of heaven (Rev 3:12, 21:2),” which implies that it is already there in the present heaven.

The saints in the present heaven may even have “intermediate bodies” before their resurrection bodies; they are at least not ghostly spirits. (Luke 9:28–36; Luke 16:22–31; Acts 1:11; Acts 7:56, etc.)

### Asleep or Awake?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Because of the reference to “falling \_\_\_\_\_,” some believe that our time in the present heaven will be a period of unconsciousness. What do other Biblical passages suggest about this idea?

Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22–31; Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8

These passages help us understand that “falling asleep” pictures what happens to our bodies at death—laid to rest until resurrection day (see Daniel 12:2–3). Early Christians referred to graveyards as “\_\_\_\_\_,” or “sleeping places.” The Bible teaches no “soul sleep” at death, but a relocation of our souls either to the present heaven or hell.

### What about Judgment?

At death, all people experience an initial “judgment of \_\_\_\_\_” which determines whether they go to heaven or to hell (Luke 16:22–31, Heb 9:27, etc.).

At the resurrection of the dead, believers will undergo a “judgment of \_\_\_\_\_,” which determines rewards and responsibilities in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rom 14:10–12, 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26–28; 3:21)

Unbelievers will also be raised to face a “Great White \_\_\_\_\_ Judgment (Rev 20:11–13; John 5:25–29).”

### Wonderful but Temporary

By definition, an intermediate state of location is \_\_\_\_\_.

Life in the heaven we go to when we die, where we’ll dwell prior to our bodily resurrection, is ‘\_\_\_\_\_ by far’ than living on earth under the curse, away from God’s direct presence (Phil 1:23). Still, the intermediate or present heaven is \_\_\_\_\_ our final destination. Our ultimate hope is the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 21:3).

What is the Present Heaven like (consult the Scripture references on page 1)? Consider what we learn from one scene of the present heaven in **Revelation 6:9–11**:

When these people died on earth, they \_\_\_\_\_ to heaven  
These are the \_\_\_\_\_ people: their personal history still known/recognized  
They can \_\_\_\_\_ themselves, with \_\_\_\_\_, as we do on earth  
They are fully \_\_\_\_\_: aware of God, themselves, each other, and earth  
They have an \_\_\_\_\_ with God and are free to ask him questions  
They care about God’s \_\_\_\_\_ being done on earth  
They care about God’s \_\_\_\_\_ still on earth  
They appear to be in physical \_\_\_\_\_; at least they are wearing white robes  
They don’t \_\_\_\_\_ everything in heaven and can learn things  
They still anticipate God’s \_\_\_\_\_ action  
There is awareness of \_\_\_\_\_ in the present heaven  
God knows when this temporary heaven will give way to the \_\_\_\_\_ heaven

People in heaven seem to remember our lives on earth (with transformed perspective)

People in heaven appear to be \_\_\_\_\_ of what’s still going on on earth (Rev 6:9–11; Rev 19:1–5; 1 Sam 28:16–19; Luke 9:31; Heb 12:1; Luke 15:7). Yet the saints in heaven are also still \_\_\_\_\_ despite this knowledge (Rev 14:10; Luke 16:23–26)

We should anticipate the present heaven, but never lose sight of our ultimate home: the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:13)!