

Introduction

What do you think of when I say the word, “heaven?”

- angels, clouds, harps, golden streets, pearly gates, Hawaii

On a scale of 1-10, how excited are you for heaven?

If I could give you the option to live another 20 years or go to heaven now, which would you choose? (not a threat)

ILLUST - as a young man, I remember wanting heaven but only after my birthday.

Philippians 1:21 ESV

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:23 ESV

²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Paul says it is “far better” to depart this life and be with Christ in heaven.

Was Paul’s life simply so bad that heaven was now the better option? Or did Paul have a different view of heaven — one that puts any of the good things this life has to offer to shame?

Part of the reason we can’t answer that question honestly is because you likely have many questions about heaven:

- What happens when we die?
- What will heaven be like?
- What will we do in heaven?

Define the term “heaven.”

(Break down misconceptions)

Understand the concept of heaven.

(What does the Bible teach about heaven and what happens to us after we die?)

Live in light of heaven.

(What difference does it make in my life today?)

Define the terms of “heaven.”

(Break down misconceptions)

Heaven as the literal sky

Genesis 1:1 *ESV*

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 8:3 *ESV*

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

- God is creator of all
- glory of these heavens
- final heaven is greater

Deuteronomy 10:22 *ESV*

²² Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Heaven as the place where God dwells

[Genesis 22:11](#) (ESV)

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him **from heaven** and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

[Genesis 22:15](#) (ESV)

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time **from heaven**

[Genesis 24:3](#) (ESV)

³ that I may make you swear by the LORD, the **God of heaven** and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell,

We know that God is not contained by the place of heaven:

1 Kings 8:27 *ESV*

²⁷ “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

(Heaven is also understood as the place of angels)

Heaven as the current home of believers who have died

(Intermediate state)

Luke 23:43 *ESV*

⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

2 Corinthians 5:8 ESV

⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Heaven as the final home of all believers

(New Heaven and New Earth)

[Revelation 21:1-4](#) (ESV)

¹ Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 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.”

Understand the concept of heaven.

(What does the Bible teach about heaven and what happens to us after we die?)

Common concepts of heaven:

- ethereal, wispy
- we become angels
- we sing worship songs all day
- float on clouds
- we get wings (every time a bell rings)
- Weird golden streets bridged from cloud to cloud and lined with mansions

Not a separate concept or afterthought — actually always part of the story — actually completely integral to the entire story of God and his redemptive plan for his creation.

Zoom out

Genesis 1:1 ESV

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

There was nothing. . . but God. No earth. No “heaven.”
God created earth and every concept of heaven.

- God creates the earth.
- God creates a garden on the earth.
- God creates man and woman as unique and for a relationship with them
- God places them in the garden.

Genesis 1:31 ESV

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

(Borrow the concept from the Bible Project)

- Presence of God was with man - with Adam and Eve
- It was literally heaven on earth.
- Heaven is a real place (space)
- Think about it like another dimension so they can overlap

[Genesis 3](#) - separation of the spaces as mankind tried to create their own world in which God was not the ruler.

The entire story of the Bible is about God’s plan to bring these two spaces back together — the space of God’s presence and the place where we exist.

To begin the process, God began to overlap his presence on this earth through the Tabernacle and later the Temple.

Both of these places were said the place where God’s presence dwelt.

1 Kings 8:10–11 ESV

¹⁰ And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

Temple is where the sacrifices took place — making a “clean” space for the two to overlap (although not truly cleaning the space)

Then Jesus came to:

[John 1:14](#) (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and **dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[Matthew 3:2](#) (ESV)

² “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”

Matthew 6:10 ESV

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Those who are believers and die now are in the presence of God but not in the final place because God is moving history to the final judgment and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth after Jesus' return where the presence of God will be in the space of earth once again

ILLUST - Old car / New car - similar yet different.

[Ephesians 1:8-10](#) (ESV)

⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, **to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**

Zoom in

So what happens when you die?

Scripture can be a bit vague about exactly what happens to us when we die, but we can glean this much from Scripture:

We can say this about the intermediate state:

Luke 16:22 ESV

²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,

- **You are in the presence of God.**

2 Corinthians 5:8 ESV

⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

*No reincarnation.

*No annihilationism

- **You are conscious and aware.**

Luke 16 - must be careful to make too much from the parable especially when describing the intermediate

state was not the main point of what Jesus was trying to communicate. However, we should also be aware that Jesus would not knowingly tell untruths in the parable either.

[Luke 16](#) - Rich man and Lazarus die. Both can remember each other and can remember those on the earth and their relationship to them.

John's vision in [Revelation 6:9-10](#)

[Revelation 6:9-10](#) (ESV)

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ **They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"**

— There is no "soul sleep"

— You are disembodied awaiting glorified body when Jesus returns.

- **You will participate in the worship of God.**

Revelation 4:1 ESV

¹ After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

— in the throne room

— This is God's kingdom and he is ruling - can you imagine seeing how God rules?

— You will experience God's holiness, glory, love in worship.

- **You are aware of events on earth.**

After Jesus returns there are judgments then he recreates the heaven and earth.

You are in the presence of God and all the goodness that entails. You are not, however, experiencing all that God has yet for you in the new heaven and new earth.

Live in light of heaven.

(What difference does it make in my life today?)

Recognize the reality and priority of heaven.

(Urgency)

Shift in perspective

ILLUST - Me without glasses. Things are undefined. It's all a blur. Glasses allow me to see definition, avoid dangers, have a perspective I didn't before.

Remembering heaven will help me to put things into perspective.

Tell me how many seconds you have guaranteed?

Understanding heaven is a priority — especially asking the question, “Am I sure I am going?”

- There is no purgatory
- There is a hell

We are guaranteed eternity (in heaven or hell) even while we are not guaranteed one more breath.

Remember forever now.

“Faulty view of heaven destines us to a wasted life.”

— Chip Ingraham

Walking through the day with an eye on eternity changes how you see everything.

It helps to realign your purpose.

Matthew 6:19–20 ESV

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

There are things that will last and things that won't.

If you could go back ten years, what would you do differently?

Even changing whatever you would still only makes a temporary difference.

ILLUST - not having a gift for the party.

A focus on heaven shifts (or should) your priorities.

Don't waste your dot!

Let heaven help you every day.

Remember, heaven is not just “out there” or a place that will happen someday. IT IS A REALITY that is happening even now. The kingdom of God is already starting here on earth as believers who, through the Holy Spirit, are the dwelling place of God, begin to live like Jesus, who was the presence of God on earth (or heaven on earth).

Promises of heaven affect you today!! How?

Perseverance (Grit)

[John 14](#) - Jesus comforts, encourages, and gives his disciples grit for the journey ahead without him.

God is always fair; however, the full extent of his fairness may not be realized while on this sin-drenched earth.

Knowing that heaven is real and that I am secure in my salvation allows me to have perseverance through whatever this world has to throw at me.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

We will exist in heaven with the fullest expression of who we were created to be, experiencing all of God's creation to its fullest extent, all while basking in loving presence of God to the fullest measure.

Conclusion

While looking to answer all of the previous questions is important, there is perhaps no more important question regarding heaven than this, "Will I be there?"