



HEAVEN

BLOCK FOUR

1 THESSALONIANS

4:16

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.



IMPORTANT POINTS

1. Our citizenship is in heaven. - **PHILIPPIANS 3:20**
2. We have a family in heaven. - **EPHESIANS 3:14-15**
3. Heaven is a temporary place of man's residence. Not because it will pass away but because we will one day live again upon the earth.
4. Heaven is not a reward but a welcomed entrance into our Father's house.
5. Your eternity depends on heaven.

This life block is designed to be an initial and very simple introduction to heaven. We could spend the rest of our lives learning all that has been revealed about this wonderful place and still not exhaust its comprehensive expanse and glory. Thankfully we will have a whole lot more time than merely our earthly life to explore heaven's grandeur. However, in the time we have together now; allow me to begin our study on the adventure called heaven.

The word "heaven" is used 551 times in the KJV of the Bible. On top of that, the place and purposes of heaven are mentioned hundreds of more times and referenced from Genesis to Revelation with great expectations for the future.

What we most often intend when we talk about heaven is the place where God lives and where we want to go when we die. This is totally the right definition of heaven.

Heaven is where God lives and carries on the operation of the universe.

Heaven is where God has established His throne and where He speaks from, receives prayers into, dispatches angels from, and welcomes His children into when they die and leave planet earth. That is the heaven we all know and look forward to enjoying.

However, when we read the word “heaven” in the Bible, it is not always referring to that place where Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of God’s throne. In fact, there are 3 distinct heavens spoken of in the Bible.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished ...

GENESIS
2:1

We can clearly see the scriptures referring to heavens as being plural in the creation. But, how do we arrive at the understanding of 3 heavens?

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.

2 CORINTHIANS
12:2

The first heaven is the air we breathe - the atmosphere of earth held under the canopy of our sky. This heaven is separated from the expanse of the universe that we know as space or the heavens.

And God called the firmament Heaven.

GENESIS
1:8

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

LUKE
21:33

This first heaven is the heaven that will pass away when the earth melts with a fervent heat.

The second heaven is what we see when we look up at the heavenly bodies of planets, stars, and galaxies in outer space.

In Psalms 8 David considered the sun and moon and all the heavenly handiworks of God. In Genesis 15 God told Abraham to number the stars of heaven – the heaven he could view from earth which stretches beyond our understanding and contains the stars we see at night.

God is the creator of those heavens and they praise Him. I have no idea what was or is intended for them. (We hear that the universe is continually expanding at the speed of light. Perhaps one of the reasons is because, as far as we were told, God said let there be light and He did not tell it where to stop. I suppose Light has continued to spread in all directions from that time creating that heaven.)

The third heaven is God's abode. It is where God's Angels and saints who have passed on reside and prepare for the end of this world and the beginning of the next.

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool.

ISAIAH
66:1

This is where Jesus lived with God before He became flesh and blood as the incarnate Son of Almighty God. And it is where He ascended to so that He could spend time preparing a house for us so that we could live with Him eternally as His bride. (Acts 1:11; John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:2;9ff)

For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

JOHN
6:33

Jesus came down from heaven to be born of a virgin and save souls.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 THESSALONIANS
4:16

Jesus ascended back into heaven and is coming again from heaven soon.

Heaven is more real than our temporary existence on earth.

Heaven is eternal but we are not meant to live there forever.

Heaven is a temporary residence for the souls of God's children until He cleanses the earth of sin and begins a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

God gave us a picture of His will for man on earth from the first 2 Chapters of Genesis. One day we the redeemed will begin that world once again. In the mean time, between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21, we are in a parenthetical moment of God dealing with rebellion in heaven and sin on earth. During this time God welcomes and rewards His children in His eternal abode until all things have been made ready, the marriage supper of the Lamb enjoyed, all rebellion abolished and every rebel banished.

Our earthly hope is heaven - our heavenly hope is a new earth.

Heaven will one day be the place where the judgment will occur before God's throne. The devil and his angels along with the souls of every man and woman who refused the blood of the Lamb of God will be cast out from God's presence forever. Only those who are covered by the blood of Christ will be given entrance into the eternal Messianic Kingdom and live with Jesus

in the city of New Jerusalem on a new earth without sin, sickness, poverty, pain, worry or fear forever and forever.

Heaven is also the place where our thoughts, intents, and actions will be revealed and rewarded. Great rewards will be given some and others will have nothing to offer God and the Lamb who saved them and redeemed them from eternal destruction. There will be so many sorrows and tears that God will give special time for them to dry before continuing with His plan.

Some may say: I don't want or need rewards ... Just getting into heaven will be reward enough. To quote a dear friend and scholar:

"To place little value on what heaven says has great value insults the very Lord who offers these rewards." (David Shibley – Living as if Heaven Matters)

A casual attitude towards the prized rewards of heaven could be considered an insult and an offense to God. You see,

Heaven is not a reward - heaven is our Father's home and we are welcomed there not by reward but by grace.

No works can grant one entrance into God's presence or His palace - it is by grace and grace alone. We are given sanctuary in His presence because we are family. Rewards, however, are earned. It seems they are very important to God and they should therefore be to us.

How can we consciously be on our way to God's home and take Him no gift.

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SUPPORT SCRIPTURES

COLOSSIANS 1:16
COLOSSIANS 3:1-3
GENESIS 22:11
DEUTERONOMY 10:14
2 CHRONICLES 18:18
JEREMIAH 23:24
PSALMS 119:89
REVELATION 21:1
