

HEAVEN

Lesson #5: *The Bible's Semantics When It Speaks of Heaven*

Introduction: This lesson series is designed to present the theology of heaven. The only authoritative resource available to us in this study is the Bible, because it is the sole resource that contains all the truth about heaven that God reveals. The truth about heaven is neither found in hallucinations nor near-death experiences. The truth about heaven is found in the Word of God alone. So let us begin with a significant fact:

★ The Bible is sufficient to teach you about heaven. ★

When the Bible speaks of heaven, what *terms* does the Spirit of God utilize?

① Heaven / Heavens:

Gen. 1:1 - In the beginning, God created the **heavens**....

“Heavens” means “heights” or “elevations.”

Rev. 21:10 - And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of **heaven** from God.

“Heaven” refers to that which is “raised up” or “lofty.”

The Bible actually speaks of three heavens.

- Heaven One = The Atmospheric Heaven:

It includes the air you breathe as well as the space that immediately surrounds the earth.

This is the place where the birds fly: And God said...“let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the **heavens**.” (Gen. 1:20)

This is the place where God has set the clouds, and from where He sends the rain: He covers the **heavens** with

clouds; he prepares rain for the earth. (Ps. 147:8)

- Heaven Two = The Celestial Heaven:

This is the space in which God positioned the sun, moon, and stars. Genesis 1:14-18 records God creating the sun, moon, and stars and positioning them in the **heavens**:

(14) And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the **heavens** to separate the day from the night... (15) and let them be lights in the expanse of the **heavens** to give light upon the earth.”... (16) And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. (17) And God set them in the expanse of the **heavens** to give light on the earth, (18) to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.

- Heaven Three = The Divine Heaven:

This is the dwelling place of God.

God cannot be limited to any one geographical place: “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!” (1 Kings 8:27)

There is a geographical place where God resides – and that place is heaven: “...we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in **heaven**.” (Heb. 8:1)

God even goes on record by stating that He has a dwelling place: “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in **the high and holy place**’....” (Isaiah 57:15)

Isaiah identified God’s “high and holy place” of dwelling as heaven: “Look down from **heaven** and see, from your holy and beautiful **habitation**.” (Isa. 63:15)

At his stoning, Stephen saw God in heaven and Jesus with Him: “But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into **heaven** and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right

hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the **heavens** opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” (Acts 7:55-56)

Heaven is even synonymous with the presence of God: “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into **heaven** itself, now to appear in **the presence of God** on our behalf.” (Heb. 9:24)

② Third Heaven:

2 Cor. 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.”

It is the region above the second heaven, the seat of order of things eternal and completely perfect where God and other heavenly beings dwell.

③ Heaven of Heavens:

Deut. 10:14 - “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the **heaven of heavens**, the earth with all that is in it.”

Neh. 9:6 - “You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the **heaven of heavens**, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.”

This refers to those heavenly spheres that are beyond those visible from earth. It most likely speaks of the dwelling place of God – the third heaven – since the atmospheric heaven and the celestial heaven are visible from earth.

④ Paradise:

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

2 Cor. 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—

Rev. 2:7 - 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.’

In each of these three verses, “Paradise” speaks of heaven, the abode of God – the place where God resides.

⑤ First Heaven:

Rev. 21:1 - ...for the **first heaven** and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

‘First heaven’ refers to the heaven first created – the heaven “first in time”. It includes the atmospheric heaven and the celestial heaven, which are not eternal and will eventually pass away: “...and then **the heavens** will pass away with a roar...” (2 Pet. 3:10)

⑥ New Heaven:

Rev. 21:1 - Then I saw a **new heaven** and a new earth....

The “new heaven” signifies a heaven that is new in “form” and “substance” – new in quality (2 Cor. 5:17).

Conclusion: Your beliefs about heaven must be deduced from that which the Spirit of God has revealed about heaven in Scripture. The Bible is sufficient to teach you about heaven! Choose to start thinking about heaven in the manner that the Bible speaks of heaven.

For your personal growth and change:

① What truth(s) about heaven must you now accept?

② What prior thoughts about heaven must you discard?
