

Someone dies, they reach the pearly gates, and guess who's there to meet them? Indeed, I am the obvious choice to tell you about Heaven, but not for the reason you may think. There is no good reason to think that I will be standing at the pearly gates to let you in or keep you out. No, I am the obvious choice because I was the first to clearly write about two Heavens.

If you stop to think about it, you could find it strange that while a primary goal of most Christians is to go to Heaven, those same Christians know very little about where they think they want to go for all eternity. I hope to clear up some misconceptions, and to entice you to study the subject in more detail.

One of the reasons to be certain Heaven currently exists is that so many people have seen it. Jesus,¹ Jacob,² Micaiah,³ Ezekiel,⁴ Daniel,⁵ Stephen,⁶ John,⁷ and Paul.⁸ And that's just a partial list of those who have seen at least portions of Heaven.

Heaven is currently the place where God resides⁹ and has his throne¹⁰ and where Jesus resides and has his throne¹¹. God owns Heaven.¹²

¹ John 3:13

² Genesis 28:10-13

³ 1 Kings 22:19

⁴ Ezekiel Chaps. 1-3, 8:3

⁵ Daniel 7

⁶ Acts 7:55-56

⁷ Revelation Chaps. 4-22

⁸ Acts 26:19, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

⁹ i.e. Deuteronomy 4:39, Joshua 2:11, 1 Samuel 2:11

¹⁰ i.e. Genesis 28:17, Deuteronomy 26:15, 1 Kings 8:30

¹¹ i.e. Matthew 26:64, Mark 16:19, Hebrews 8:1

¹² i.e. Deuteronomy 10:14, 1 Chronicles 29:11, Psalm 115:16

Heaven itself plays several roles, including declaring God's glory,¹³ proclaiming God's righteousness,¹⁴ and praising God.¹⁵ Heaven is a very active and loud place. God seems to be in continual action, as are the angels and creatures of God, as well as the saints who are there.

The descriptions of Heaven by the people who have seen it are complicated by a myriad of factors. The scenes are so overwhelming that the viewers can scarcely describe them; the viewers are seeing only tiny, and sometimes different, portions of Heaven; time has no meaning in Heaven; and God is able to both be in a localized position while simultaneously being everywhere.

Here is a very brief summary of three accounts of what Heaven looked like to Ezekiel, Daniel, and John:

The focus of Heaven is the throne where God sits. God has the appearance of whiteness, light, fire, and has a radiance of His glory around Him, but seems to take on the form of a man. There is a sea of glass and a golden, horned altar in front of the wheeled throne, and a green rainbow that encircles it. Lightning, thunder, and fire are in abundance, including a river of fire flowing out from the throne. Four celestial creatures are near the throne, as well as seven blazing lamps which are the spirits of God. Surrounding the throne are twenty-four thrones on which sit twenty-four elders dressed in white with gold crowns. These elders have harps and gold bowls full of incense of prayers of the saints. The main purpose of the creatures and elders is to lead worship and to give glory, honor and thanks to God. There are billions of attendants around the throne area which include: celestial creatures, angels, elders, martyrs, and saints. These attendants worship through songs, sayings, and prayers. It is incredibly noisy and active with beings coming and going, casting of crowns, judgments, and all manner of worship activities.

Heaven makes a three-ring circus look like a still painting.

To be honest, I find all of that interesting, but not as important as what I am about to tell you. What? Heaven is less important than something else? No, and that is why I was chosen to tell this story.

In my book of *Second Peter*, I wrote: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare...That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."¹⁶

¹³ Psalm 19:11

¹⁴ Psalm 50:6

¹⁵ Psalm 69:34, Psalm 148:4

¹⁶ 2 Peter 3:10-13

Did you get that? Heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire and replaced with a new Heaven and a new earth! The Heaven that exists now is not the one that will exist for future eternity!

Incidentally, although I was the first New Testament writer to make this clear, in retrospect the prophet Isaiah declared that Heaven and earth would be destroyed and replaced.¹⁷ My advantage was that I knew much more about the new Heaven and new Earth. What I knew came from Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

John also learned about the new Heaven and new Earth from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. John wrote down much of what he learned in the last two chapters of *Revelation*. Why?

Biblical prophecy reveals both God's power and love. It can motivate its hearers toward holiness in their lives and deeper belief in God. One reason the Bible tells us about distressing things is to warn us so we can avoid suffering the consequences of certain actions, to inspire us to be mindful. On the other hand, we are also told about certain gratifying things so we will strive for the rewards of our actions. The Bible and its prophecies are encouragements and warnings for people to change their ways.

Jesus said, "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that, when it comes to pass, you may believe."¹⁸ I wrote, "What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."¹⁹ Let your knowledge of heaven drive you to a life of holiness.

There is no better description of the new Heaven than how John starts:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no sea. I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, for the old way of things has passed away."²⁰

No tears, no death, no sorrow, no pain. No negatives. Only this overwhelming positive...God dwells with his people!

¹⁷ Isaiah 51:6, 65:17. In addition, Jesus indicated several times that heaven and earth would pass away.

¹⁸ John 14:29

¹⁹ 2 Peter 3:11-12 NIV

²⁰ Revelation 21:1-4

This will happen after the final judgment by God. Many of these verses were prophesied by five of the most credible witnesses in the Bible: Isaiah²¹, Jeremiah²², Jesus^{23,24}, John²⁵ and me.

The idyllic Heaven most people think of is referred to by John as a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. This is where God dwells with his servants and all is well forever and ever. It is a resurrected universe inhabited by resurrected people²⁶ living with the resurrected Jesus.²⁷ The new Heaven will be the final and eternal abode of God and his servants.²⁸ God will fellowship with and provide for its inhabitants.

A few more selected verses about this perfect place, listen:

“the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city; and his servants will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night; and they will need no candles or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”²⁹

Now you know what Heaven will be like for all eternity, to get even more excited about eternity for God’s children, read the last two chapters of *Revelation*.

I am often asked who will be in Heaven. Hey, I’m the one standing by the pearly gates. Many people want to know what religious formula they need to follow. So, it is particularly noteworthy that Revelation 22 gives an indisputable description of the people who will be in Heaven. It says three times that God’s servants are in Heaven. It's no wonder that Jesus made such a big deal about servanthood and how his people should be servants!

What can we say about the Heaven where God’s people will exist for eternity? Heaven will be perfect in every way...Heaven will provide perfect protection, perfect provision, perfect fellowship, and perfect joy. I’ll see you there.

²¹ Isaiah 34:4, 51:6, and 66:22

²² Jeremiah 4:28

²³ Matthew 5:18, 24:35-36

²⁴ 2 Peter 3:7-10

²⁵ Revelation 21:1-22:6

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:1-2

²⁷ H, pg. xviii

²⁸ Revelation 22:3, 6

²⁹ Revelation 22:3-5