

Hymns: 33 When the Roll is called Up Yonder 34 When We All Get to Heaven
Psalm 148 Psalm 16

As most of you have heard, about a month ago, the White House canceled White House tours “due to staffing reductions resulting from sequestration” --- that new law that seeks to reduce the rate of growth of government spending. Just last Tuesday, Fox News reported that the Navy's Blue Angels will stop performing their air shows for the rest of the year due to these government funding cuts. The Air Force also canceled the Thunderbirds aerial acrobat shows, as did the Army their skydiving Golden Knights.

Have any of you seen them? I remember as a young man our family going somewhere south of Raleigh to watch as these fighter planes soar through the air in formation just inches from each other performing precision stunts and leaving tracers in their wake. Apparently, the heavens will be a bit quieter this year---which brings us to the topic for today.

Last time, we looked at what we need to do to prepare for our ultimate appointment. Those of us who know the Lord have the promise of eternal life in a place designed just for us. Today, we want explore what the Bible says about the place it refers to as *heaven*. So fasten your seat belts. We're about to take off in a whirlwind trip to glory as described by some of the greatest men who ever set foot on this earth.

We're going to hear eyewitness and/or inspired accounts from: Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles Paul, Peter, and John. Heaven is a big subject. We have a lot to cover, so let's get started.

Now before we jump into this one-word study, we need to look at a particular difficulty that can occur with language. Sometimes the same word can have either dramatic or even subtle differences in meaning based on differing usage. These words are sometimes referred to as *homonyms*. Here are some examples:

- *pen*: We sign our names with a *pen* while a farmer keeps his pigs in a *pen*.
- *roll*: When the *roll* is called up yonder.... I'll have a dinner *roll*.
- *right*: Freedom of speech is a *right*, but we also say, “Go to the end of the hall and turn *right*.”

The Bible contains many instances of words that are spelled and even pronounced the same but have different meanings. This is exasperated for us as we read an English translation of a word taken from different source words and even from different languages. In the process, we may lose shades of meaning that exist in the original text. In fact, there are whole Bible translations (like *The Amplified Bible*) that try to address this one issue.

So let's look together at the source words for our topic of the day starting with the Hebrew/Aramaic found in the Old Testament.

Hebrew/Aramaic Results (Old Testament)

Strong's #	Occurs	Translit.	Pronunciation	English Equivalent	Reference	Quote
H8064	420	<i>shamayim</i>	shä·mah'·yim	HEAVEN , air, astrologers God's throne	Genesis 1:1 Psalm 11:4	<i>In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.</i> <i>The Lord's throne is in heaven</i>
H8065	38	<i>shamayin (Aramaic)</i>	shä·mah'·yin	HEAVEN		
H7834	21	<i>shachaq</i>	shakh'·ak	cloud, sky, HEAVEN , small dust	Daniel 2:28	<i>But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets</i>

Greek Results (New Testament)

Strong's #	Occurs	Translit.	Pronunciation	English Equivalent	Reference	Quote
G3772	284	<i>ouranos</i>	ü-rä-no's	HEAVEN , air, sky, HEAVEN ly	Matthew 3:2; Acts 4:24	<i>Repent for the kingdom of ...</i> <i>Thou art God which hath made heaven and earth</i> <i>Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men him will I confess also before my father which is in heaven</i> <i>Apostle Paul: caught up to the third heaven</i>
G2032	20	<i>epouranios</i> epi – from	ep-ü-rä'-nē-os	HEAVEN ly, celestial, in HEAVEN , high	Matthew 10:32; II Corinthians 12:2 I Corinthians 15:48	<i>As is the earthly such are they also that are earthly. As is the heavenly such are they also...</i>
G3770	6	<i>ouranios</i>	ü-rä'-nē-os	HEAVEN ly		
G3771	2	<i>ouranothen</i>	ü-rä-no'-then	from HEAVEN		
G3321	3	<i>mesouranēma</i>	me-sü-rä'-nā-mä	midst of HEAVEN	Revelation 19:17	<i>fowls that fly in the sky</i>

So basically, we have one Hebrew root word and one Greek root word that could refer to either the atmosphere, outer space, or the place that the Lord has prepared for His children. Each of these words is translated to a form of the English word *heaven*. This means that we need to pay **particular attention** to the **usage** of the word to determine the correct meaning to apply to it.

Let's now go through key heaven references to see what we can learn and how we use context to choose the correct meaning. The seventh word in the Bible is *heaven*. What does it mean?

Above the earth

Genesis 1:1-20

*[1] In the beginning God **created the heaven** and the earth.*

This is the heaven God created when he created the earth. Does Genesis chapter 1 tell us any more details about this heaven? Let's take a look.

*[8] And God **called the firmament** [or expanse above] **Heaven**. And the evening and the morning were the second day.*

Did you catch that? God just gave us a definition of heaven.

*[9] And God said, Let the **waters under the heaven** be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*

This heaven is above the seas.

*[14] And God said, Let there be **lights in the firmament of the heaven** to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*

*[15] And let them be for lights in the **firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth:** and it was so.*

This heaven includes the stars, planets, and outer space---what we can see as we peer into the sky.

*[20] And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may **fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven**.*

So in verses 14 and 15 we have this heaven including the stars and planets and this last verse, verse 20, refers to the atmosphere where birds fly. The heaven of creation is the sky and what we can see when we look up into it and through it.

Next, the prophet Isaiah takes us beyond the heaven of creation to the heaven where God's throne is.

Throne of God – Beyond the skies

Isaiah's vision:

Isaiah 6

*[1] In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the **Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up**, and his train filled the **temple**.*

*[2] **Above it stood the seraphims**: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.*

*[3] And **one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory**.*

Here we see the Lord, an elevated throne, and a type of angel called a seraphim. Notice that while the word heaven is not mentioned here, as we shall see from other passages about heaven, that heaven of God is clearly in view. What's going on there? The angels are praising God.

Now we skip forward to the prophet Daniel's vision.

Daniel's Vision - Ancient of Days

Daniel 7

*[9] ..., and the **Ancient of days** [God] **did sit**, whose **garment was white as snow**, and the **hair of his head like the pure wool**: his **throne was like the fiery flame**, and his **wheels as burning fire**.*

*[10] A **fiery stream issued** and came forth from before him: **thousand thousands ministered** unto him, and **ten thousand times ten thousand stood** before him: the **judgment** was set, and the **books were opened**.*

Here Daniel calls God “the Ancient of Days.” He wears a pure white garment and has hair like pure wool. We learn more details about His throne, being described “lifted up” and like a “fiery flame.” We also learn of another object called “wheels” compared to “burning fire.” In this heaven, we see many thousands attending to God, and many millions standing before Him. The passage also mentions a judgment and books being opened associated with that judgment.

While we see visions of God from our own limited perspective, Solomon in his dedication prayer of the temple reminds us that God is much greater than what these images can portray:

I Kings 8

*[27] But will God indeed dwell on the earth? **behold**, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house [the earthly temple which he is dedicating] that I have builded?*

Now let's move on to the New Testament.

Jesus' Testimony

Jesus came down from heaven. As such, He ought to be able to give us some firsthand descriptions of what goes on there. And He does.

Matthew 5

*[12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for **great is your reward in heaven**:...*

According to Jesus, in heaven rewards will be given to men.

Matthew 6

*[9] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our **Father which art in heaven**, Hallowed be thy name.*

*[10] Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done** in earth, **as it is in heaven**.*

Jesus says, God is in heaven and **there** His will is done.

*[20] But lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where **neither moth nor rust doth corrupt**, and where **thieves do not break through nor steal**:*

We can lay up treasures there where things do not wear out neither are they destroyed or taken.

Matthew 24

*[35] **Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.***

Notice here that Jesus changed his usage of the word *heaven* to talk about the *heaven* of Genesis, the heaven we can see when we look up into the sky, because it is the one created with the earth, it will pass away with it.

The Apostle Peter speaks of this event in greater detail.

Apostle Peter's Story

II Peter 3

*[10] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the **heavens shall pass away with a great noise**, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

*[12] Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein **the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved**, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

*[13] Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.***

Here we see a more graphic picture of what will happen to the physical world including the **heaven** above that we can see. It will explode, be burned up, melt, and be dissolved. It will then be replaced with a new version without sin.

Returning now back to Jesus' account in Matthew 24 we read:

*[36] But of that day and hour **knoweth** no man, no, not **the angels of heaven**, but my Father only.*

Jesus says there are angels in heaven.

John 6

*[38] For **I came down from heaven**, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

Here Jesus explicitly stated that He came from heaven---that is the heaven where God's throne is.

And finally in John chapter 14 He tells us:

A place for us

John 14

[1] Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

*[2] **In my Father's house are many mansions**: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.***

*[3] And if **I go and prepare a place for you**, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that **where I am, there ye may be also.***

Jesus left this earth and went to be with God. He's preparing a place there for us to be with Him.

Let's move on now to the Apostle Paul's testimony:

Apostle Paul's Expedition

II Corinthians 12

*[2] I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the **third heaven**.*

[3] And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

*[4] How that he was **caught up** into **paradise** [a garden, park], and heard **unspeakable words**, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

The Apostle Paul refers to the “third heaven.” In this study, we've seen three distinct places each labeled as *heaven* in these verses. Paul here is explicit. The *first heaven* would be the atmosphere, the *second heaven* the realm of the planets and stars, and the *third heaven* the place to which he was caught up that he referred to as “paradise.” There, he heard words that could not be spoken by man and which were actually unlawful even to say.

Apostle John's Story

The Apostle John gives us the most extensive picture of heaven. Unfortunately, our time is up so we'll have to leave that one for the next time we get together.

While it may be that our government is broke and has to renege on its promises. Our tickets to tour the White House have been canceled and the air show that we planned to attend will be missing its featured performers, we can rest assured that our **Heavenly Father is not broke** (the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof [Psalm24:1; I Corinthians 10:26]), **His promises are sure** (all of the promises of the Lord are true. II Corinthians 1:20), and **His glorious heaven is real**. Will you be there? I hope so.

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

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