

Heaven is God's Home

In the concepts of the ancients, there were actually three places called "heaven".

The **first heaven** is the air above the earth (this is also "up" for those who live on earth) Mat 24:31; Mark 6:41; 13:27; Luke 4:25; 9:16; 17:24; 29; 18:13; John 6:**31-33**; 17:1; Acts 1:10-11; (this heaven gives rain Acts 14:17; James 5:18).

The **second heaven** is where the sun and stars reside Mat 24:29-30; 26:64; Mark 13:25; Luke 21:11, 26.

The **third heaven** is where God lives, the angels live Mat 18:10; 24:36; Mark 12:25; 13:32, Luke 2:15; John 1:51; Gal 1:8; and at this moment in time where the saved abide which have died. The third heaven is where Paul went when God raptured him give him revelation.

2Co 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.*

The "third heaven" or simply "heaven" is **where the presence of God the Father exists and lives**. When we see reference to God the Father, he is always in this heaven, Mat. 3:17; 5:16, 48; 6:1, 9-10; 7:11, 21; 10:32-33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:14; 23:9; Mark 1:11; 11:25-26; John 12:28. There is a sense in which "heaven" also represents something that surrounds **the outer most area of the earth** (Acts 2:5; 4:12). Scriptures represent **the Holy Spirit descending from this heaven** before his coming in a more permanent way on the day of Pentecost (Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32; 1 Peter 1:12). Equally before Jesus' incarnation, he came from heaven where God the Father lives John 3:13; 31; 6:38, 41-42.

In this sense, **the third heaven represents the kingdom or throne of God** Mark 11:30-31; 14:62; John 3:27; **Acts 7:49**; 17:24; Romans 1:18. All sin is against heaven (the throne or kingdom of God) Luke 15:18, 21. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared various times to the

disciples, and after this, Jesus ascended into heaven (the third heaven) and sat down at the right hand of God the Father Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 7:55; Hebrews 9:24; **1 Peter 3:22**; and thus remains until his return to the earth in judgment and power **Acts 1:11; 3:21; 1 Thes. 1:10; 4:16**.

Now, heaven is **a place apart from the earth** Mat 5:18, and **God is sovereign** over both Mat 11:25. **Jesus created all that there is in heaven and in earth** Col 1:16.

For those that achieve eternal life, heaven is where they will go to live for ever with God.

Some human beings will enter heaven if they obey God Mat 19:23; Mark 10:21. **When somebody is saved, his name is written in heaven as one of heaven's citizen** Luke 10:20; Heb 12:23¹; and **God makes them a part of the family of God** Eph 1:10 and 3:15. There is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents Luke 15:7. Believers treasure up riches in heaven Mat 6:20; 19:21; Luke 6:23; 18:22; Col 1:5. The saved know that they "*have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*" Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 1:4. A crown of justice awaits us in heaven 2Tim 4:8; 1Pet 5:4.

But this situation will change one day after the future events of Revelation. In Revelation 21 when God has finished judging unconverted men from all times of the earth's history, they will be thrown in the lake of fire with the Devil and his demons, and then God will totally destroy heaven (1st and 2nd) and earth (which Satan as god over this has corrupted), make a new heavens and earth, and the 3rd heaven will descend to earth forever. This will be the saints' and God's dwelling place forever.

Rev 21:1-3 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming*

¹ **Hebrews 12:23** describes who is in heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect."

down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Conclusions and Summary

Then heaven DOES exist at this moment. God the Father always has lived there since creation. The Holy Spirit and Jesus live there also, until they came to earth. When Jesus came to the earth, he came from heaven. When he left earth, he returned to heaven. The Holy Spirit came from heaven to the earth (to dwell with his special presence in the believer). Heaven is where God lives with His holy angels and the saved. Jesus threatened the Jews that they would not go where Jesus goes (to heaven John 8:21, 24) if they did not believe in him as their personal Saviour.

Hell², the place of Punishment

The fact that the Bible teaches a place of punishment is very difficult to deny, but some do try to do just that. It is interesting that we know more about hell because of Jesus' teaching than from any other source. Jesus presented the reality of hell as a great motivator to change our lives because this threat of divine punishment is more horrible than any can imagine.

We see passages where God presents a divine judgment against each person after death, in which those that trust in the Saviour will avoid this judgment to go where God resides (heaven) and those who do not have the Saviour will go to a different place of living torment. They didn't want God, so they go where there is no blessing of His

² The Word "hell" occurs 12 times [Gehenna] Mat. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; Jas. 3:6; 2Pe. 2:4, and [hades] 11 times Mat 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1Cor 15:55; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14. [tartarow] is used in 2 Pet 2:4.

presence. **Num 16:29-33** relates a situation where human beings went alive into hell, a real live place in the center of the earth.

The Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

The point that Jesus stresses here is that there is a judgment of each person, and that there is life after death where some suffer tremendously, and others are in “paradise” (a place of pleasure) with God. Parables present reality in a simple form, and even taking this as a parable, the truth being taught is punishment and pleasure in the afterlife. Some would lightly esteem the doctrine of heaven and hell in Luke 16, but that is exactly the teaching point of Jesus. He did not concentrate very much on what they did in life, but what was their fate and continued existence in the afterlife.

Heb 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

This passage teaches that immediately after death, each person goes to their particular destiny, some to torment and others to a pleasurable place. Annihilation³ is not what happens when somebody dies.

Place of Torment – The importance the Luke 16 narrative is that the after death torment is real. The rich man had a conscious, and he neither was asleep, nor ceased to exist, but continued his existence and consciousness in a very disagreeable place. There is fire, pain, tortures, and the tortures seem to grow with more and more people that follow the example of the sinner’s life causing more judgment. The rich man didn’t want his family to follow him there, increasing his own torture more and more. The place of torment is an actual place, where there is fire (Mat 5:22; 13:41-42; Luke 16:23-24) that is never put out (Mark 9:47-48). It is a place of burning forever with sulfur (liquid fire, or

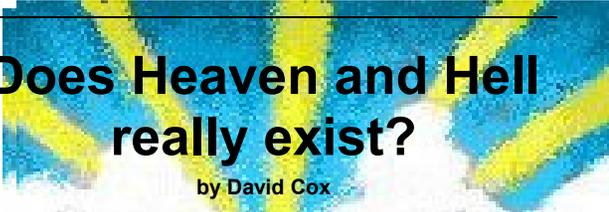
³ **Annihilation** – That in death, the person ceases to exist. The body decays, and their spirit, soul, and conscience all cease to exist for ever.

brimstone) that is highly flammable (Isa 34:8-10; Rev 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). It is a prison not a party (Psa 116:3; 118:5). Besides the physical torment, there is also mental torment (Luke 16:24-28) which has no rest nor relieve in any form ever (Rev 14:9-11). It is a place of extreme darkness (Mat 25:30; 8:12; Eph 5:8; Acts 26:18; Col 1:13). Because of the intense pain and suffering (Job 26:5; Psa 18:5; 2 Sam 22:6) it is described as a place of the grinding of the teeth (Mat 13:42; Luke 16:24) and of crying (Mat 13:42). It is described as a place of worms that eternally eat through the bodies of the people there (Mark 9:47-48). It is a bottomless pit (abysm) where apparently there is disorientation and a sensation of falling as in a pit (Rev 20:1). All this causes hell to be a place that is highly “not desirable” (Mat 5:29-30; 18:8-9).

Hades, Seol, and the Grave

I have written a book on the Punishment of God, where I explain this in more detail, but in summary, hell is now a place of temporal punishment until the divine judgment of the nations (Great White Throne – Rev 20). After this time, all in hell without exception will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, which is a place even worse than hell is.

For those that reject the concepts of heaven and hell – To reject that these two places do not exist does not mean that they don’t exist. Many reject that they have cancer, because they don’t want to contend with what it is. But it is not a wise path to take. It is better to confront it and deal with it correctly, taking the necessary decisions. Why don’t you accept the truth of these places as the reward of God, and as the punishment of God, and accept Jesus as your Saviour, to save you from hell, and save you for heaven?



Does Heaven and Hell really exist?

by David Cox

[doct03] v1 ©2005 www.cocontracts.com
you may freely reproduce this tract

Why is this Issue so Important?

There are religious groups and individuals that believe that neither heaven nor hell exists. For them, everybody goes to the grave, and at this moment their existence ends. **To deny the existence of heaven is to deny the possibility of salvation, eternal life,** or a place and experience of eternal happiness after death. Heaven represents the reward God gives to those that obey Him, and it even represents God and his promises to us. To deny the existence of hell is to deny that an Almighty God exists, that God is a just Judge, and that He is holy. Hell represents the punishment of God on those that refuse His will. God is a judge that judges men about moral matters. God does not permit sin in His presence; neither does he allow sinners to escape with a “ceasing to exist” (annihilation). God punishes them in a place of extreme punishment called “hell.”

