

The Basics of Heaven

I. Introduction

- A. Many churches today do not teach about an actual heaven. They teach that heaven is just a nice spiritual idea.
- B. Belief in heaven has steadily decreased in the past 200 years.

II. Heaven—Misconceptions

- A. There are at least seven popular wrong beliefs about heaven. Many Christians today firmly believe these wrong ideas.
- B. The Bible teaches very much about heaven. It must mean far more than just some spiritual idea!

III. Heaven—A Literal Place

- A. The word *Heaven* appears in our Bibles hundreds of times. Most of the time the word *Heaven* is a translation of the Hebrew word *shamayim* or the Greek word *ouranos*.
- B. The Bible uses these words to define three separate areas.
- C. This is what Paul means when he told about being caught up into "the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2).
- D. To help us understand more about the idea of God having a specific place that He considers "home," the Bible uses at least seven different words that refer to heaven. All of them have the idea of a living place or residence:
 - 1. the tabernacle of God,
 - 2. the house of God,
 - 3. the temple of God,
 - 4. the sanctuary of God,
 - 5. the throne of God,
 - 6. the glory of God, and
 - 7. God's heaven.
- E. The Bible tells us that heaven exists now, not just sometime far in the future.
- F. God has built some basic instincts into our lives. One of the basic instincts is a belief in heaven and a longing to go to heaven.

IV. Heaven—A Paradise

- A. "What are the United States like?" There could be many, many different ways to answer that question!
- B. In the same way, we need more than one explanation of heaven to get a balanced idea of heaven.
- C. Heaven is called Paradise, the Father's House, the New Jerusalem, and Zion.
- D. Both the Old and the New Testaments speak of Paradise.
- E. Paradise's first description is in the book of Genesis.

- F. Because Paradise has been returned to the presence of God, the Christian dead are not merely called, "the righteous dead," but, "those who have died believing in Christ".

1 Thessalonians 4:16 The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first.

- G. Everyone in Paradise has access to something that no one has had since the Adam's sin—the tree of life.

Revelation 2:7 Every person who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To those who win the victory I will give the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life, which is in the garden of God.

V. Heaven—Father's House

- A. Ever since Jesus introduced this term, it has been a favorite concept of Heaven for most Christians. It is so very comfortable. Home!

Luke 2:49 Jesus said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

- B. But this is more than just home—it is the Father's house, the place where God lives.

- C. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them in "my Father's house". He added that there were "many rooms".

John 14:2 There are many rooms in my Father's house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

- D. Jesus suggested that something new was going to happen—people were going to be brought into Heaven!

VI. Heaven—The New Jerusalem

- A. All through the Bible, people of faith have been eager to go to heaven. Heaven has been seen as a city built by God.

- B. Believers from all ages have looked forward to heaven as a city.

- C. Jesus didn't describe heaven as some spiritual idea; He always spoke of it as a literal, real, and glorious place.

- D. Heaven is the home of the believers and God has prepared places for us; houses that are part of the city.

- E. During the Millennium, (the 1,000 years when Jesus returns to earth and rules), Jerusalem will again be the headquarters city for Christ's reign.

- F. Heaven has become the hope, the joy, and the excitement of the believers through all the years.

- G. The book of Revelation tells us what God has planned for the New Jerusalem. We can see that heaven is a real city designed by God, built by God, and God and His people will live there.

- H. The New Jerusalem has a heavenly design and origin. The materials used to build the New Jerusalem are heavenly materials. The city is located in heaven.

- I. From this heavenly city, the believers will have access to both the city above and the earth below.

- J. We would expect that any city God built would be huge. And it is!
- K. It is a city filled with happy people busily engaged in the activities of God and enjoying social fellowship with other members of the family.