

What is Heaven Like?

Most Christians believe in heaven and expect to go there when they die. Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? If you asked someone to describe heaven what would they say?

It's common thought that there is no more sickness there... that you will be united with lost loved ones and reside in a city with streets of gold... but is that what the scripture says?

KJV Bible Concordance

- 582 matches for "Heaven"
- 133 matches for "Heavens"
- 23 matches for "Heavenly"
- 17 matches for "firmament"
- 3 matches for "Paradise"
- 22 matches for "Heaven + Heavens"
- 8 matches for "Heavenly + Places"
- 71 matches for "Throne + God"
- 21 matches for "City + Heaven"
- 7 matches for "far + above + all" (Ephesians 1:21 and 4:10)

Creation is divided into two parts, "heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1) which in Colossians 1:16 is expanded to mean "all things visible and invisible", and the term "heaven" may include thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, as well as physical sun, moon and stars.

It is possible that after Genesis 1:1, there are but nine or ten references to "heaven itself", i.e. the heaven of Genesis 1:1 in the whole of the OT.

Genesis 1:1-10 KJV

1 In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.



Isaiah 45:18 KJV For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.

What happened? Fall of Lucifer, became Satan (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28). Judgment was passed on the Earth and it was covered with water. The re-creation begins in verse 2.

2 And the earth was (became) without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was

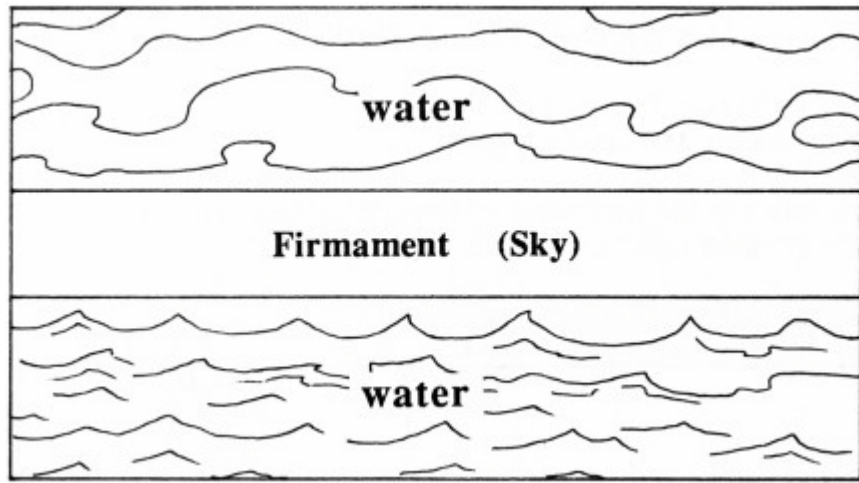
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light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. 6 And God said, Let

there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 8

And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning

were the second day. 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. 10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: and God saw that it was good.



Here are references to heaven that look beyond the present firmament:

Isaiah 40:22 KJV. *"It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:"*

Here Moses draws attention to the firmament which is "called" heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the heavens in the highest degree that were created long before the six days of Genesis 1:3-2:1.

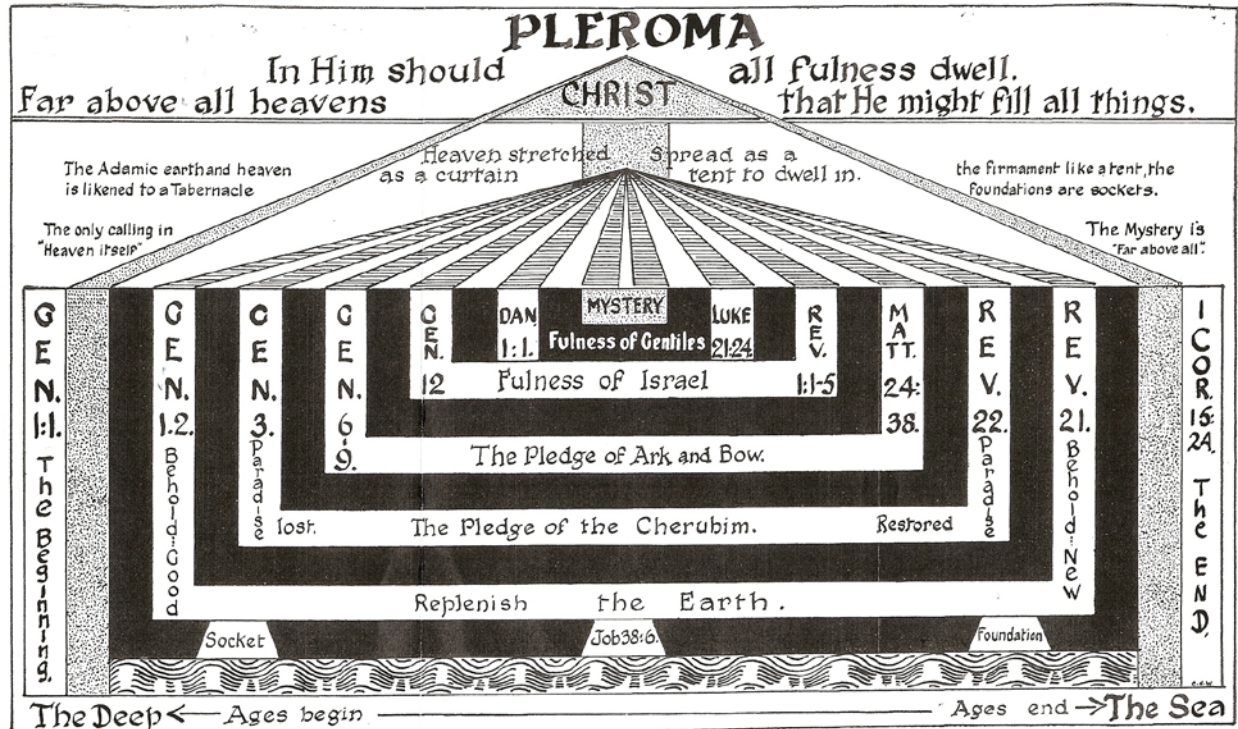
No further reference is made to the heavens themselves until the days of David and Solomon..

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| Psalms 8:1 KJV | O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. |
| Psalms 57:5 KJV | Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. |
| Psalms 57:11 KJV | Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth. |
| Psalms 108:5 KJV | Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth; |
| Psalms 113:4 KJV | The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. |
| Psalms 115:16 KJV | The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. |
| Psalms 148:4 KJV | Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. |

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Five hundred years after Moses, Solomon recognized that neither the present heavens, nor the heaven of heavens could contain God... 1 Kings 8:27 KJV. *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"*

And the last OT reference to heaven of heavens, in contrast with the firmament, is found in the Levites' prayer in Nehemiah 9:6 KJV. *"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."*



The illustration shown here of the Pleroma reflects the firmament definition of heaven described in Isaiah 40:22.

The study of "heaven" forces itself upon our attention, however, is the fact that, apart from Paul's ministry, and especially in his prison ministry, there is scarcely any reference in the scriptures, either Old or New, to the heaven of Genesis 1:1.

The hope of the Mystery alone pierces the intervening firmament and places the believer "far above all" even where Christ sits at the right hand of God. We should now look at the term "heavenly places". This subdivision of the great term "heaven" is justified by reason of its dispensational importance, and the words play a great part in setting forth the distinctive character of the Mystery.

Epouranios. The word is composed of *epi* "upon" and *ouranios* "heavenly", which is the adjective form of ouranos "heaven". Upon examining the Ephesians, we discover that the word *epouranios* is there used in a form which occurs nowhere else, and that this form occurs in five passages in the epistle:

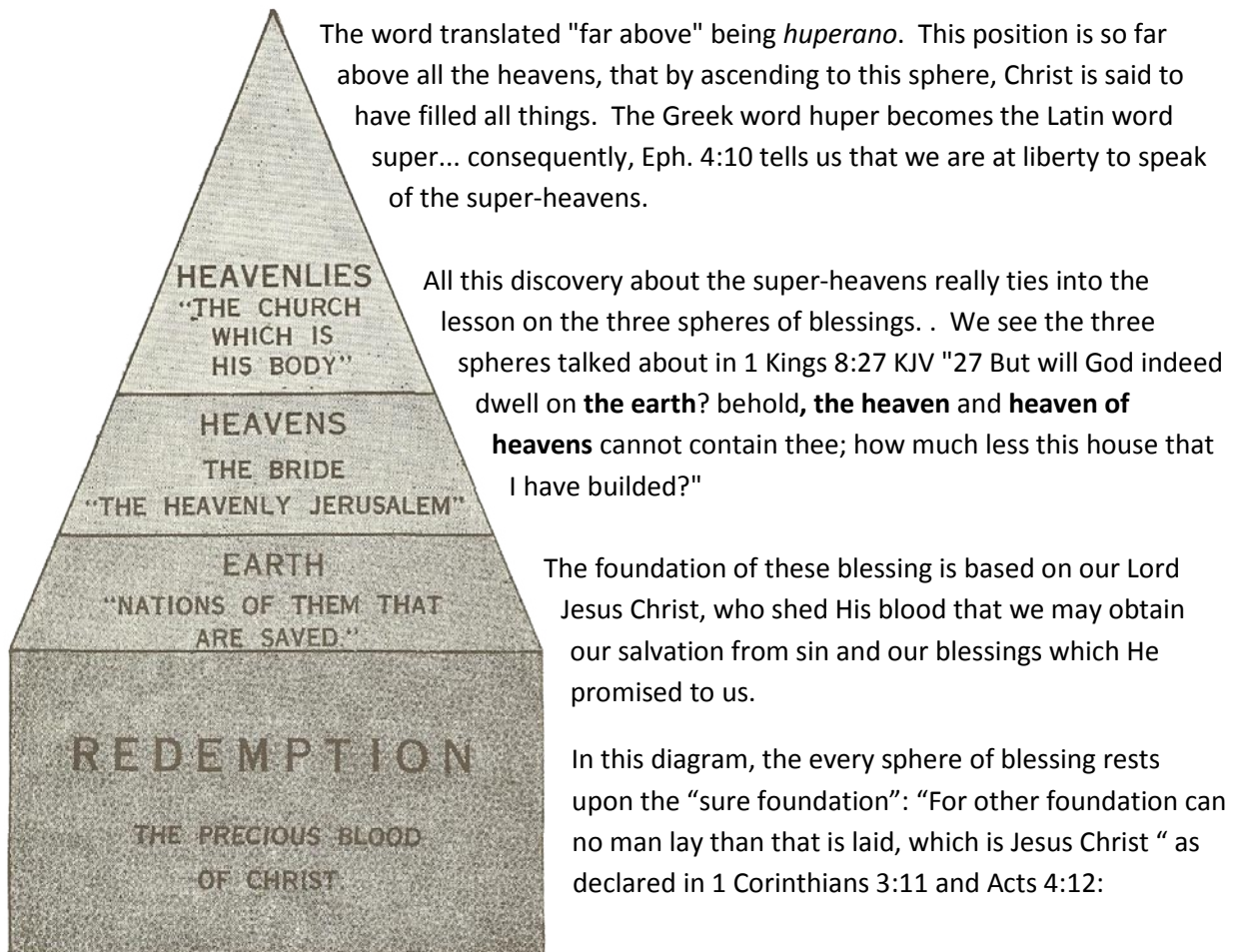
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- A Eph. 1:3 Spiritual Blessings
 - B Eph. 1:20 Far above all principalities and powers
 - C Eph. 2:6 Raised and seated together
 - B Eph. 3:10 A witness to principalities and powers
- A Eph. 6:12 Spiritual Wickedness

The form in which these five references to heavenly places occurs is unique. It is found in no other part of the NT. Where the remaining fifteen occurrences use the word *epouranios* simply, Ephesians uses it in a phrase *en tois epouraniois* "in the heavenly (places, things, sphere)" and never merely to define something as heavenly in character.

The Apostle Paul has not only given these five verses which indicate the exalted and peculiar position of Christ and his church, he has also assisted us further by giving an explicit statement on Ephesians 4:10 concerning the Ascension.

Ephesians 4:10 KJV "10 He that descended is the same also that **ascended up far above all heavens**, that he might fill all things.)"



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1 Corinthians 3:11 KJV "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." and Acts 4:12 KJV says "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Our next step should be to identify the actual "spheres of blessings" that are spoken of in scripture. We will not take the time to enumerate the kind of blessings but with the domain in which these blessings naturally find their setting... this way we may be able to answer the question we have before us "what is heaven like?"

In the diagram, all three spheres of blessing are built upon the blood of Christ, Him being the chief cornerstone that every blessing is built.

(1) The sphere of blessing found in Ephesians 1:3 is defined as 'in heavenly places'.

Again we are not yet concerned as to whether these 'heavenly places' are no higher than the firmament in which birds fly; whether they denote the starry heavens; or whether they refer to a position far above all. All that we are immediately concerned with is that a distinct 'sphere' is indicated by the words 'in heavenly places'.

We now turn to another part of the New Testament, where we read of another sphere of blessing: 'blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5). Once more, we are not concerned with the character of those here referred to, nor with their inheritance, but exclusively with the 'sphere' of their inheritance, and we therefore record:

(2) A sphere of blessing is found in Matthew 5:5 which is defined as 'the earth'.

We assume, that 'the earth' and 'heavenly places' are two distinct spheres. Common sense says that they are distinct...

Here then are two spheres of blessing concerning which there is no controversy. But in addition to these two, we discover what appears to be an intermediate sphere of blessing, a sphere above 'the earth', yet not 'in heavenly places'. For this we turn to Galatians 3:14: 'that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ'. The question which now arises is, does this passage refer to a distinct sphere of blessing, or is the blessing of Abraham to be enjoyed in one or other of the two spheres already considered? A complete answer can only be given after careful examination, but for the sake of conciseness, we note that in this calling, 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28).

This unity does not sound like the constitution of a kingdom, which is what is in view in Matthew 5. Rather it so resembles the later revelation of Ephesians that some have adopted the expression 'all one in Christ Jesus' with the idea that it declares the Unity of the spirit of Ephesians 4. Before seeing the proofs, most, if not all, will agree that Galatians 3:14 does not refer to an inheritance on the 'earth'. Yet when we read on to Galatians 3:29, we are prevented from asserting that it belongs to the sphere of the Mystery made known in Ephesians, for we find it stated: 'and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'.

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So entirely contrary is it to the Scriptural teaching concerning the Mystery to make it a fulfillment of any promise to Abraham that we must hesitate to place this company, which is Abraham's seed, 'in heavenly places'. We therefore search further in this epistle, and in the fourth chapter we find the following statement: 'But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all ... now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise' (Gal. 4:26,28). 'Jerusalem which is above', is neither 'on the earth' nor 'in heavenly places far above all principality', and as this city forms the theme of Hebrews 11:9-16 and 12:18-23, where the 'heavenly country' is contrasted with the 'earth', we are obliged to record a third sphere of blessing.

(3) A third sphere of blessing, differing from that of Ephesians 1:3 and that of Matthew 5:5 is recorded in the epistles to the Galatians and the Hebrews, and is associated with the heavenly Jerusalem, a sphere distinct on the one hand from the earth and its kingdom, and on the other hand from the heavenly places which are the sphere of the church of the Mystery.

The Three Spheres Of Blessings

<u>Where</u>		<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>
(1) 'The earth'	(Matt. 5:5)	The Kingdom	Israel
(2) 'Jerusalem which is above'	(Gal. 4:26)	The Bride	Israel
(3) 'In heavenly places'	(Eph. 1:3)	The Body	Christians

So, have we answered the question "what is heaven like?" There is no scripture that describes the furnishings but what we have found it that there is scripture describing who will be where.

As in all things, when you study a topic from scripture it must be rightly divided to keep things in their context... and be a workman to dig it out of scripture. We probably should not be concerned with what heaven will have, but what we will be doing when we arrive in our sphere of blessing!

Ephesians 2:4-7 KJV "4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:10-11 KJV "10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: