

What The Bible Teaches About Heaven

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

This scripture sets forth two attributes of God — attributes which He possesses to the infinite degree, namely His “*goodness and severity*.” Herein the saints at Rome were reminded of both these attributes, and for good reason — they needed the **motivation** to press forward in the service of God. There are two kinds of motivation — incentive motivation and fear motivation. To illustrate, we suggest that a child might obey his parents because he enjoys their praise, their approval, and they have promised him an allowance if he acts in keeping with their instructions. This is incentive motivation. Or a child might obey his parents because he knows that if he disobeys them, he could receive a stern reprimand, or a good spanking. This is fear motivation. In either case — whether it be because of fear or incentive — the motivation has its desired effect, that being obedience on the part of the child. Incidentally, a child is very fortunate if he is first able to conceive of the “*goodness and severity of God*” because of having experienced the goodness and severity of his own **parents!** The “*goodness*” of God finds its ultimate manifestation in **heaven**. The “*severity*” of God finds its ultimate manifestation in **hell**. Properly understood, the existence of the one implies the existence of the other. The same Bible which affirms the existence of the one also affirms the existence of the other. In the balance of this article, we shall focus our attention on that celestial city called “heaven.”

Heaven Exists!

Heaven is the abode of God. David said “*the Lord’s throne is in heaven*” (Psa. 11:4). Ezra described Jehovah as “*the Lord God of heaven*” (Ezra 1:2). Nehemiah “*prayed to the Lord God of heaven*” (Neh. 2:4). Jesus taught His disciples to pray to “*our Father in heaven*” (Matt. 6:9). In fact, Jesus Himself came “*down from heaven*” (John 6:38). He ascended back “*into heaven*” (Acts 1:11); He is now “*in heaven...in the presence of God*” (Heb. 9:24), and He will ultimately “*descend from heaven*” (I Thess. 4:16), at which time all the dead will be raised (John 5:28-30), and made to “*appear before the judgment seat of Christ...*” (2 Cor. 5:10). The Bible obviously teaches that there is a place called “heaven!” Inasmuch as the Bible is “*the word of God*” (Heb. 4:12), and inasmuch as “*the entirety*” of God’s “*word is truth*” (Ps. 119:16), then we know that heaven really exists! It is not simply a figment of someone’s misguided imagination! But other than affirming the actual existence of heaven, what does the Bible say about heaven itself? In other words, what is heaven like?

Heaven Is:

1. The most beautiful city that the mind can conceive or that inspiration can describe! At this point, it would be profitable for you to momentarily put this bulletin aside, then take your Bible and simply read Rev. 21:10-17. Yes, we are aware that Revelation contains much figurative language (cf. Rev. 1:1), but keep in mind the fact that the Holy Spirit employed figurative language to describe something that is **real**. And in the reference herein cited, upon the canvas of eternity, the brush of inspiration has painted a picture depicting a place of incomprehensible glory and indescribable beauty. Read it for yourself! And keep in mind the fact that the writer is describing heaven!

2. Heaven is a place which provides permanent, perfect, complete “health care!” Describing this glorious place, John said “*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; there*

shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Nothing on earth — however wonderful it may be — even begins to approximate the glory and grandeur of heaven!

3. Heaven is a place void of all crime! Regarding this celestial city, the apostle said *“there shall by no means enter into it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life”* (Rev. 21:27). In heaven, no child will be molested, no elderly folks will have to hide behind locked doors for fear of being assaulted, no taxes will be levied to fight crime, and its atmosphere will never be foul because of the stench of sin!

4. Heaven is a place of abundant, enduring wealth! The *“inheritance”* there is *“incorruptible and undefiled,”* and it *“does not fade away”* (I Peter 1:4). This is why Jesus urged His disciples to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,”* for He knew that those treasures are safely protected — that *“neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal”* (Matt. 6:20).

5. Heaven is a place where earth’s finest people will be your neighbors! Its inhabitants will be those *“who follow the Lamb wherever He goes,”* those *“redeemed from among men”* (Rev. 14:6), those who were *“faithful unto death”* (Rev. 2:10). Heaven will be populated by faithful Old Testament worthies (Hebrews 11), and heaven will be populated by New Testament Christians who *“do His commandments”* (Rev. 22:14), those who *“walk in the Spirit,”* having *“crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5:24-25).

6. Heaven is the location of our citizenship — if we are Christians. Please ponder these words: *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 3:20). On many occasions we become distressed because of what is happening to our country, wherein we are natural born citizens. But our **real** citizenship — if we are faithful Christians — is in heaven! It is there that God will *“transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Phil. 3:21). Mindful of these facts, Old Testament saints *“confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth”* (Heb. 11:13); they were able to cope with their then present difficulties because they knew God was not *“ashamed to be called their God,”* and that He had *“prepared a city for them”* (Heb. 11:16).

7. Heaven is a place of eternal life and happiness! Jesus assured those who followed Him that they would receive a *“hundredfold now in this time,”* and then He stated that in the age to come they would receive *“eternal life”* (Mark 10:30). *“Eternal life”* means more than simply eternal existence! It is *“life”* because of being sustained by the very Author of life; it is *“life”* because of one’s relationship to the father; it is *“life”* because one wears *“the crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10), drinks of *“the water of life,”* and eats of *“the tree of life”* (Rev. 22:1-2).

8. Heaven is Paradise! To the saints at Ephesus, the Lord gave this wonderful assurance: *“To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7). It is *“paradise”* because it is void of everything unpleasant. It is *“Paradise”* because it is filled with everything lovely, pleasant, beautiful, and good. It is *“Paradise”* because it is the abode of God. It is *“Paradise”* because it is the ultimately reflection of God’s *“goodness.”*

But Who is Going to Heaven?

1. Not everyone who is religious! In that last day, many eternally disappointed souls will

say to Jesus, “*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in your name?*” And then He will “*declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*” (Matt. 7:22-23).

2. **Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven!** Cf Matt. 7:21. To go to heaven one must obey the gospel (I Pet. 4:17). According to the New Testament, obedience to the gospel involves **faith** in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), which results from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). One must **repent** of His sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30). He must **confess** his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10). He must be “**baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:38; 22:16). By so doing one enters “*into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27), is “*added*” to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47), wherein he must faithfully serve the Lord, avoiding “*the unfruitful works of darkness*” (Eph. 5:11), and keeping his “*affections on things above.*” (Col. 3:2). Friend, if you gain heaven, you will have gained everything of value. If you miss heaven, you will have missed everything of value, and experience eternal misery instead. In view of the frightful alternative, you cannot afford to miss heaven!

Conclusion:

Friend, if you are not a Christian you are not prepared for heaven! However, if you have read this article to this point, you obviously are interested in heaven. Going to heaven is the goal of every faithful member of the Seffner church of Christ. We believe it should be your goal. **We** want to go to heaven, and we want **you** to go to heaven! Hence, we would be thrilled to study the Bible with you, and assist you in your quest for heaven!

*** —B. Witherington