

Observation #8 - Heaven is a place of indescribable glory. **II Cor.12:2-4**

When Paul was caught up to heaven, he saw things and heard things that were indescribable. Things there are not even permitted to be spoken by a human. Paul said no mind can even conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him (I Cor. 2:9).

Observation #9 - Heaven is a place of body transformation. Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:51-53;
Job 14:20

Obviously any who are in heaven are not in their old bodies. We also believe the final glorified body will not exist until the Rapture (I Thess. 4:17). In the meantime, those who have left their bodies are in a new recognizable state. It is a glorious state and an imperishable state.

QUESTION #14 – How many places has God created that can be classified as heaven-type places?

There are at least three different specific places that are heaven-type existences for believers.

Place #1 - In the O.T., there was Sheol, a place where O.T. believers went when they died. Specifically this is called Abraham's bosom.

Believers who go here will be raised up after the Tribulation and will enter the Promised Land when Jesus Christ returns (Dan. 12:1-2).

Place #2 - In the present, there is a place called heaven or the third heaven where N.T. believers presently go.

This was the place Paul visited and that which we just described under question 10.

Place #3 - In the Future there will be a New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem.
Revelation 21-22

Now this third place will not be created until after the Tribulation and after the Millennium. Ultimately the believer is headed to the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem. But each one of these places is a heavenly existence place for a believer.

Most books that are written about heaven confuse places 2 and 3. What I mean by this is that many take data pertaining to the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem and say this is the way it is in the third heaven.

We would agree that there are similarities. For example, any believer who goes into eternity via death cannot ever die again. This is true for any believer in any dispensation. It is appointed "once" to die (Heb. 9:27). You do not die two times, three times or four times. This would lead us to conclude there is nothing in heaven that can cause death—no sin and no sickness. So this is a similarity for every believer who dies. We would also agree that there is no curse in heaven.

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Often Revelation 22:3 is cited as a proof text of no curse. The context of Revelation 22:3 is that there is no curse anywhere—not in heaven and not on earth. Truth is until this moment the curse will be on the earth, but we would agree that it is not in heaven.

However, the truth is there are also differences. For example, many state that in heaven there is no sorrow and no tears. This conclusion is based on Revelation 21:4. The problem with Revelation 21:4 is that it does not occur until after the Rapture and after the Tribulation and after the Millennium.

There are clearly things that will be fulfilled when Christ reigns on earth that are not fulfilled in heaven (i.e. Luke 19:17-24; Matt. 19:27-28). We must differentiate between these events.

We know that there is some form of sorrow in heaven during the Tribulation because believers there are crying out to God for Him to avenge them (Revelation 6:10-11). We would suspect based on a text like I John 2:28 that the emotion of shame is still operative when one appears before the Presence of Jesus Christ.

QUESTION #15 – Does a person in heaven have knowledge of family successes or failures on earth? Job 14:14, 20-21

Job specifically answers this question and his answer was “no.” One who has gone to heaven does seem to have memory of the family (Luke 16:27-28) but does not seem to have specific knowledge of whether or not the family is succeeding or failing. One would specifically have no knowledge if one were getting rich or were poor.

Now there certainly could be knowledge of a family member who was laying up treasures in heaven. For example, let us say that a faithful believer dies and has an abundant entrance into heaven (II Pet. 1:11). Let us say that a person played a part in the individual believing on Christ who has a family member already in heaven. We know from Luke 15:10 that when a sinner gets right with God, there is rejoicing in heaven. It certainly would be reasonable to assume that this family member could gain knowledge of the faithfulness of another member on earth.

QUESTION #16 – What is the sleep state of a believer between their death and resurrection?

The Bible often refers to death as sleep (I Cor. 11:30; John 11:11-14). Now some believe that in death the soul sleeps. What that means is that some believe that when a person dies, the soul is in a state of unconsciousness. The reason for this is because death is often referred to as sleep. **But here is where the mistake is made. The sleep refers to the sleep of the body, not the soul.** This point is emphatically brought out in Matthew 27:52. It is the body that sleeps and not the soul.

Now there is specific O.T. and N.T. data that establishes the fact that when a soul leaves the body, it does not go to sleep until the future resurrection:

- 1) Psalm 146:4 - The spirit departs the body and the body returns to the earth.
- 2) Ecclesiastes 12:5 - The man who dies goes to his eternal home.
- 3) Ecclesiastes 12:7 - The body returns back to dust and the soul returns to the Lord.
- 4) John 11:26 - The one who believes in Jesus Christ “shall never die.”
- 5) Luke 23:46 - Jesus said when He died His Spirit was committed into the hands of God The Father.
- 6) Acts 7:59 - When Stephen died he asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit.
- 7) Philippians 1:23 - Paul believed that if he died he would depart and be with Christ.
- 8) II Corinthians 5:1-8 - Paul clearly believed his body was an earthly house that he would leave to go be with the Lord.
- 9) II Corinthians 12:2-4 - Apparently one cannot tell whether one is in his body or out of it when he goes to heaven.

Now based on all of these passages, we must conclude that even though the body stays here when a believer dies, the believer goes to be with the Lord. The sleep that is referred to is not the sleep of the soul, but the sleep of the body.

QUESTION #17 – What can a believer do to make certain he gets an abundant honorable entrance into heaven?

The Apostle Peter specifically addresses this question in **II Peter 1:5-11**. Peter lists a series of qualities in our character development in a lustful world that will guarantee us the highest possible entrance into heaven when our soul leaves our body. He specifically points out eight qualities that do determine whether or not our entrance into heaven is glorious or by the skin of our teeth.

Now the qualities ascend in a specific order. The participle “apply” (v. 5) means to make provisions to add these qualities to our faith. The verb “supply” means to add these things on to our faith (v. 5). The promise is if one develops in character, one will end up with an abundant entrance into heaven. All of these qualities are developed by faith and none of them are an automatic guarantee: