

03 - THE INTERMEDIATE (PRESENT) HEAVEN

- ✓ When a believer dies, he's ushered into the presence of the Lord in Heaven (2 Cor. 5:8). It's important that we make a distinction here, because **the Bible refers to more than one "Heaven"**.
- A. **The "Intermediate" Heaven** – This the Heaven that exists now. The reason it's called "intermediate" (or "temporary") is because it's not our final destination. It serves the purpose *for now*. But eventually, another "Heaven" will replace it.
- B. **The "Eternal" Heaven** – The Bible is clear that the redeemed will live forever on a New Earth, in a City called "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1-2). (This Heaven will be discussed next week.)

Where Is the Intermediate Heaven?

- ✓ When we discuss Heaven, the first question people usually ask is, "Where is it?" The Bible doesn't give us its exact coordinates (obviously), but we DO know that Heaven exists somewhere North of the Earth.

Isa. 14:13 – "You (Lucifer) have said in your heart, 'I will ascend **into heaven** ... I will sit on the mount of the congregation, in the **far North** ..."

Psalms 75:6 – "For promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south." (What did he leave out? **North**! That's because promotion *does* come from the North! That's where God is.)

Job 37:22 – "**Out of the North** He comes, shrouded in a golden glow; awesome majesty surrounds Him" (CSB). (So, where is Heaven? Somewhere North of the Earth.)

The Nature of Heaven

- ✓ It *must* be a place that's suitable for both spiritual and physical beings. Think about it! God is a **spirit** (John 4:24), the angels are

spirits (Heb. 1:7), and our spirits go there when we die (2 Cor. 5:8). So, it must be a place where *spirits* can live.

- ✓ At the same time, we know that Jesus lives in Heaven **in His resurrection body** (Eph. 1:20, 1 Pet. 3:22). And, once we receive *our* resurrection bodies (at the Rapture), *we'll* be living there in physical bodies for 7 yrs. So, Heaven must be able to accommodate physical beings, as well as spiritual ones.

How Does the Bible Describe the Present Heaven?

- ✓ When it comes to the New Jerusalem, there are two whole chapters dedicated to its description. Yet the Bible only gives us a glimpse (here and there) of the Intermediate Heaven. Any Heavenly scene before Revelation 21 would be a look into the Intermediate Heaven – so let's look at a couple of those instances.

Isa. 6:1-5 – "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a Throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Above it stood the Seraphim, each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two, he covered his feet, and with two, he flew. And one cried to another and said, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the posts of the door were shaken ..." (Rev. 4:1-6).

What's It Like for the Believers Who Go There? (What do they do?)

- ✓ We don't have as much information as we might like about the Intermediate Heaven. That being true, some might be tempted to look to sources outside the Bible for information. (Like testimonies about people's "visits to Heaven".) While it's okay to read some of those books occasionally, we need to remember that these testimonies are not on par with the Bible. For our purposes, we're going to stick to Scripture.

a.) They're in the Presence of God

2 Cor. 5:8 – "... **absent from the body** ... **present with the Lord**."

- ✓ The Tribulation Martyrs show us that, as individuals, we'll have access to God in the Intermediate Heaven, and we can even ask Him questions. (I have a *list*, don't you?)

b.) They're Reunited with Their Loved Ones Who Had Died

Gen. 25:8 – “Then Abraham breathed his last and he died at a good old age, satisfied with life; and **joined his family members** who had already died.”

- ✓ The relationships we had on earth will change somewhat in Heaven. (Marriage doesn't continue into the next life. Jesus made that clear.) Yet, there is still the *memory* of our families, and a love and closeness that passes into the next life. In Heaven we'll have the wonderful opportunity to renew those relationships.

c.) They Experience Joy, Pleasure Comfort & Rest –

Psalms 16:11 – “In Your presence is **fullness of joy**; At Your right hand there are **pleasures forevermore**.”

Lk 16:25 – “... now he is **comforted** ...”

Rev. 14:13 – “... that they may **rest** from their labors ...”

- ✓ The rest that this verse talks about is only temporary. In the Millennium *and* in the Eternal Heaven, adventure, work, discovery and rulership await us.

d.) They Worship God Alongside the Saints and Angels –

- ✓ Revelation 5 gives us a glimpse into a “worship service” in Heaven. Redeemed men and women worship alongside the 24 Elders and the angels! (The 24 Elders are probably the 12 apostles and the leaders of the 12 Tribes of Israel – people we've read about in the Bible.) That's going to be a wonderful experience!
- ✓ Worship *there* is not like worship *here*. No one is sitting passively,

with their arms folded. No one's checking their Facebook. No one's bored and disinterested. There is only “full-on” singing and heartfelt worship in the presence of God, (with no flesh, or devils, or anything else to distract us). We'll experience unencumbered worship, for the first time.

- ✓ Unlike the New Heaven and Earth – there doesn't seem to be a “service schedule” in the Intermediate Heaven. But we can be confident that worship isn't all we'll be doing in there.

e.) They “Keep Tabs On” What Happens on Earth

Heb. 12:1 – “Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith **watching us from the grandstands**, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back ...” (TLB)

- ✓ There are several examples of those in Heaven watching what's happening on the earth. The Tribulation Martyrs knew that their murders hadn't been avenged (Rev. 6:10). Later, when judgment falls on the earth, all of Heaven knows it (Rev. 19:5).

f.) They Await the Rapture & the Resurrection of Their Bodies

- ✓ I can't help but think that *they're* anticipating the Rapture as much as *we* are! (Your loved ones are as excited to see *you*, as you are to see *them*!) They can see the signs unfolding, just like we can. They don't know the day nor the hour either, but I *have* to believe that there's *some* preparations going on in Heaven for Jesus' soon return. (I often wonder what it looks like from that side.)
- ✓ Next week, we'll look at the Eternal Heaven – the one that replaces the Intermediate Heaven.