

Heaven, Pt 4

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Date: 14 September 2025

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[0 : 00] If you find Isaiah 14, I'm going to pick up where we left off last Sunday. We've been discussing the doctrine of heaven. And we've already come through a lot of the material that has to do with information about what it may look like or what it may look like.

And just the experience that the apostle John had and things he saw. And did my best to try to relate that to something we can understand or at least receive and consider.

But it's such a hard topic really to know with certainty this place where our God dwells and can be worshipped and seen.

And so we've covered some of that material. And last week we kind of turned the corner a little bit into more of maybe not as much of the visual things.

But more of the doctrine of just some simple thoughts. But as well as trying to get into a location of heaven. And so what we covered, the apostle Paul tells us that he was caught up to the third heaven.

[1 : 12] And just taking that at face value, that indicates there's a first and a second if there's a third. And I showed you one teaching on that about a third heaven that I don't agree with.

And so we just will let that rest for now. But we did run a few other references where this term, the heaven of heavens, shows up several times. The heaven of heavens.

That seems to be a reference to the third heaven. Also called God's dwelling place or God's holy habitation. And we looked at some words of Solomon.

We looked at some words of the Lord Jesus Christ saying that the Father is in heaven. He's called the heavenly Father. And also noted that the Lord Jesus Christ himself said that he was in the Father.

And saying that even the Son of Man which is in heaven. Even as he was here on earth. So we tried to discuss the heaven of heavens. That would be the third heaven.

[2 : 07] And I want to eventually get to the first and second. But before that we tried to locate the third heaven. One thing we saw was in Revelation that John was caught up. He was caught up.

Another place we saw the word ascend. And so that word doesn't really tell us anything if we're looking at the from where are you at on the earth to where is up.

And if you're on the southern hemisphere, what feels up would be what we would consider going down and vice versa. But is there a cardinal direction? So we came to Isaiah 14.

That's where we're just going to pick up. And the words of Lucifer in his lifting his heart up against God and his rebellion. I'll start in verse 12 again.

Isaiah 14, 12. How art thou fallen from heaven? So implying going downward. O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations?

[3 : 02] For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation. And here's the phrase, in the sides of the north.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds and be like the most high. And instead of getting to do that, thou shalt be brought down to hell to the sides of the pit. He's going down instead of up.

But he wants to ascend above the stars of God. Another upward reference. And in this case, he says the sides of the north. It's a very interesting statement there.

We'll put some other scripture on it to see if we can make any sense of that. And so go to Psalm 75. I'm just going to give you two other places to consider.

Psalm 75. There's some real vague statements in the scripture.

[4 : 04] Or at least there's some things in there that I have no idea. In Isaiah 14 where he said that I will sit also upon the mount. The mount, like a mountain.

Of the congregation. In the sides of the north. And there's another reference to something similar elsewhere. But then there's these times where Satan took Jesus Christ and tempting him to a high mountain.

An exceeding high mountain. And he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time. Like that is outside of the earth. Outside of the universe. It's outside of time. And it's something. That's a mount or a mountain. It's described as a mountain somewhere else. And that's... Can't get that one. So let's go to Psalm 75. And verses 6 and 7.

The Bible says, For promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. Period. But God is the judge.

[5 : 08] He putteth down one and setteth up another. And there's destruction and fury referenced in verse number 8. Instead of being promoted from the east, west or the south.

God is the one that promotes. Now it doesn't say God promotes from the north. It doesn't say that. But it sure looks like God is substituted for the cardinal direction north.

Or at least the Lord does not promote from the east or from the south or from the west. So what are you left with then? It seems like the north is hanging out there to describe where God promotes from.

Where he judges from. Putting down one and setting up another. And so in the passage is promotion and destruction. And they seem to be coming from the direction of north to match where Lucifer wanted to ascend.

Let's go to one more place. Find Ezekiel chapter 1. A little bit to your right. Ezekiel. Major prophet. Chapter number 1. And this is a wild vision that he has just to open his book.

[6 : 27] He starts off with a bang. Daniel has some pretty wild visions. He warms you up a little bit with some stories. But not Ezekiel.

Verse number 1. It came to pass in the 30th year. In the fourth month and the fifth day of the month. I was among the captives by the river Kabar. But the heavens were open and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month. Which was the fifth day of King Jehoiachin's captivity. The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest. The son of Buzi. In the land of the Chaldeans by the river Kabar.

And the hand of the Lord was there upon him. And I looked. And behold a whirlwind came out of the north. Specifically out of the north. And as we study this out.

This is God traveling. There's a great cloud. Mentioned that last week a little bit. Not going to get into that. And a fire enfolding itself.

[7 : 23] And the brightness was about it. And out of the midst thereof the color of amber. Out of the midst of the fire. There's four living creatures mentioned in verse 5. And it starts to describe these.

And later on. Look over at verse number 24. And when they went. I heard the noise of their wings. Like the noise of great waters.

As the voice of the almighty. The voice of speech. As the noise of an host. When they stood. They let down their wings. There was a voice from the firmament. Which was over their heads. When they stood.

Had let down their wings. And above the firmament. That was over their heads. Was the likeness of a throne. The appearance of sapphire stone. Upon the likeness of the throne. The likeness of the appearance of a man. And above upon it.

And he says in verse 28. Very last sentence of the verse. Down to the bottom. Says this was the appearance of the likeness. Of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it. I fell on my face.

[8 : 18] And then he hears a voice. And it's God speaking to him. And the spirit entered into him. In verse 2. Now the point here is. Ezekiel in his vision. Sees this whirlwind come from the north.

It is God traveling. Or sending beings to him. That opens up. And he starts speaking to him. It begins with a whirlwind. Out of the north.

It ends with the scene. Of the likeness of the throne. With the glory of God. And the point is. It's coming out of that northern direction. Now that's all I can say about it. There might be another few verses.

To put on this. I don't believe they're quite as strong. But if we're going to locate. Where the third heaven is. Where God's dwelling place is. From the perspective of the physical universe as a whole.

It appears that the cardinal direction is north. It's up. It's to the top. It seems that way. It says in a place above the heavens.

[9 : 16] Or set his throne above the heavens. Things like that. So we'll table that. And just say that's probably where the third heaven is. It's up to the top.

And now let's discuss a little bit about the first and the second heavens. And then if we have time we'll come back to that third one. So find Genesis chapter 1.

Let's go there. And the reason we're going to discuss the first and second. It's kind of getting off topic of the real study of this third heaven.

And God's abode. But the Bible uses the same word. The same word every time. It doesn't distinguish. It doesn't always say the third heaven. The third heaven. Or the heaven of heavens. It rarely says things like that. Most of the time it just says heaven. Our father which art in heaven. And then here in Genesis 1 he calls a firmament heaven. Is it the same thing? Is it a different thing?

[10 : 12] And so it really can get confusing if you don't be cautious and study out your Bible closely. Let's check out Genesis 1. And notice verse number 6. And God said let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.

And let it divide the waters from the waters. 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. So pause. There is still waters above the firmament that God made. And in that firmament, look at verse number 14.

God said let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.

And it was so. And God made two great lights. The greater light to rule the day. The lesser light to rule the night. And he made the stars also. And so there's the firmament with all the stars and the sun and the moon as the scripture declares.

[11 : 19] Now above that firmament in 6 and 7 is waters. And below that firmament is waters. And the Bible uses the wording above. And it uses the wording under.

Let me see that. Yeah. Under and above. Verse 7. So now verse 8. God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. The heaven.

So there's a heaven there. Is that where God dwells? In the stars? In the sun? In the moon? Is God up there? What is that? Well let's continue reading here.

There's more. So God creates this firmament. Populates it with the sun, moon, and stars. Then look at verse number 20. On the fifth day. This is the fifth day of creation. God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life.

And fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. So the fowl, the birds, are flying in what we know as an atmosphere above our heads.

[12 : 27] And they come down to earth and they fly above our heads and come back down to earth. And the Bible calls that the open firmament of heaven. If we're taking the Bible just as we read it, then it seems like that's all one thing, right?

It does seem like that because it mentions it. The firmament of heaven, the open firmament of heaven. But then come to chapter 2. And verse number 1.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished. And all the host of them. And now there's two heavens. Verse 4 says these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now that's significant because Genesis 1 and verse 1 says, In the beginning God created the heaven, singular, and the earth. And it doesn't show any distinguishing of an atmosphere that birds fly in. And I think there's good reason for that. We're putting that one back on something that Lucifer had.

[13 : 28] And there was no need for that. And the beings that he was and is or the placement of it. It's hard to understand that. But nevertheless, it seems now there's two heavens in Genesis chapter 1 that God created.

One is an atmosphere we call an atmosphere down here where the fowl can fly. The Bible says elsewhere the fowls of the air. And here it calls it the fowls of heaven. And so the open firmament of heaven rather.

It appears that we can identify two separate heavens here. And so the common teaching is heaven number one is the atmosphere that holds the weather.

You'll see references to the clouds and heaven and say there's tons of them. That when he's withholding rain from the earth or when he's giving rain, it describes heaven as a place where the clouds are.

And so that's the atmosphere that holds the weather where the birds fly about. They don't fly to the moon. And God has definitely limited the realm of birds flying.

[14:32] And he says they fly in heaven. I'm going to look up a verse I wrote down here. I don't know if it's really a big deal here. Oh, it's the fowls of the heaven.

It's a vision in Daniel. And so the birds don't fly out there in space. They don't fly out there outside of this atmosphere. But outside of this atmosphere where the birds fly, the blackness of space exists where God hung the earth upon nothing, according to Job 26.

And he later placed lights in the sky for signs and for seasons. And we call that heaven number two, based on Genesis 2 verse 1, heavens being created.

Now that might sound simple enough. Heaven one, where the weather and the blanket that surrounds the earth, where the fowls fly. Heaven two, the outer space or the firmament above our heads where the stars are.

And then heaven three, where God's dwelling place is. That sounds simple enough. That's the common teaching. And that's kind of the scriptural avenue to teach that. Paul does say there's three heavens.

[15:43] Or he does say the third heaven. So I firmly believe there's a one and a two, at least, as well as a three. If the Bible uses the same word as it seems to describe all three, and it doesn't worry about it, then that's just, that's what it is.

Sometimes it says heavens, plural, seeming to be referring to heaven one and heaven two. And that's that. But I'd have to admit, what bothers me in studying this out is that the text is not as definitive as I would like it to be.

And it's as if this teaching doesn't always fit into the box that is easily understood. And so I'm not going to leave you with something definitive, because I don't understand some of these references. There were some that confused me. Let me show you a few. I'm not trying to confuse you, but I'll at least tell you there's stuff here I don't have worked out. Look at 2 Chronicles chapter 6. It seems like the Bible uses the same word to refer to everything that is not earth, or that is not water, or that is not what we call the deep, or the Bible calls the deep, or the waters above the firmament, the great deep.

2 Chronicles chapter 6. I'm just going to show you some verses, a couple passages here that I don't profess to understand. And maybe these are not complicated.

[17:04] I don't want them to be. But I'll just show you what I run across here. So we looked at this passage last week with Solomon's sermon. That is, Solomon praying and just describing to God, if we do this, and he's dedicating his temple, and he's saying, God, you hear our prayers.

If we sin, if we get carried away out to a distant land, but when we turn and we pray toward you, then hear and answer our prayer. And he does this for the whole chapter. And we looked at a few verses. We looked at verse 21, where he said, Hearken therefore unto the supplication of thy servant, of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place.

Hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven. He says it again in 23. Then hear thou from heaven. We saw it in verse 30. Hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place.

But what I skipped over last week on purpose was verse 25. Then hear thou from the heavens. Why did he make it plural there?

And then in verse 27, then hear thou from heaven. And he just gives one case after another. In verse 28, if there be a dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, there be blasting, blah, blah, blah, then the prayer we make toward you, then hear thou from heaven, verse 30.

[18:24] But then in the next case, verse 33, Then hear thou from the heavens. You can see it again in verse 35. The heavens. It's again in verse 39.

Then hear thou from the heavens. And that's strange to me. Now that may not be strange to you. You may just chalk it up like, oh, yeah, just God's up there.

But in the one case, when he says, The heaven thy dwelling place. The next time he says, hear thou from the heavens. I just don't understand why it goes back and forth. If that was isolated case,

I would just say, meh.

But it's not. It's actually all over the Bible, that kind of thing. Let me show you one more or two. Look at Psalm 102. And we're going to compare this with something right next to it in Psalm 103.

Psalm 102. It seems like a very definitive statement. And then if you keep reading, then there's just something that doesn't seem to match it perfectly.

[19:28] Psalm 102 and verse 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven did the Lord behold the earth.

Third heaven, right? That's got to be. His sanctuary. In Revelation, there's a temple in heaven that gets opened up in the throne there. And angels come out of it.

And there's smoke and thunders and all of that. That's his sanctuary in the heaven. The one that was made here on earth was a replica of that. Or a, what's the word he uses?

One made with hands. A picture? No, I can't think of the word. Pattern. The pattern of the heavens. There's two words there. Okay. Chapter 103 and look at verse 19.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens. Why does it say in the heavens? There's other places where he says heaven, the heaven is my throne.

[20:33] Singular. The earth is my footstool. It seems to be a reference to the universe, the firmament of heaven. And then other cases, his throne is in the temple in heaven, where John is caught up to.

That's just as confusing to me. I don't know what to make of it, if anything. I'll show you another one. Hebrews chapter 9 and Hebrews chapter 8, side by side. All right.

So you're in Hebrews chapter 9 first. And this one's pretty easy. In verse number, I'll back up to the verse I was looking for, where the word pattern shows up there.

In 23, it was necessary, therefore necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

[21:53] That is a definitive, singular location, a place where the presence of God is. Heaven itself. And so just go back to the previous chapter, and Hebrews chapter 8, and look at verse number 1.

Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The same thing, same context. And yet, this one he says, the throne is in the heavens. So maybe it's nothing. Maybe it's just interchanged, and God's allowed to do what he wants to do, and it's not always identifying a singular exactness, like I want it to be, so I can understand it.

So I'm willing to just let it slide, and say, for instance, I ran this word, and studied this a little bit. The word sky is singular, in the Bible. Several times, it refers to like the clouds, and he saw clouds in the sky.

Something like that. But then the word is also plural, in the skies. And are there more than one skies? Is there a sky? Like, but we don't, we just take that for granted.

[23:17] That's not a big deal, right? To say sky or skies. It doesn't seem like we have to identify different skies. So, in that case, it makes me back off and say, okay, maybe we don't have to be so worried about heaven and heavens, and articulate it to where it's perfectly categorized and clean.

Maybe that's where I have some kind of compulsion, but I want it to be that way so I can understand it. Let me give you another verse here.

Come back to Psalm 148. I didn't really intend on going into all this, but I figure we'll just ride this train a little further, and show you what I've been trying to uncover.

Some things we can say for certain, and then some seem to be vaguer, and that's okay. Psalm 148, and this context shows us some, some more of the same.

Verse 1, Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him all His angels. Praise ye Him all His hosts.

[24:36] It seems as if those first two verses are referring to if we could categorize the third heaven, where His hosts are the heights, the angels. It seems that way.

It uses the word heavens though, so maybe not, but verse 3 then says, Praise ye Him sun and moon. Praise Him all ye stars of light. Praise Him ye heavens of heavens, heavens and ye waters that be above the heavens.

It seems now He's into that physical creation below the third heaven, but there He says heavens, plural, of heavens.

And I think that's the only time that phrase is in your Bible. I'm not positive about that, but I think that's the only time I saw it. Ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Now I don't have a problem with the waters because that goes back to Genesis 1 and dividing the waters and putting a firmament there, so above that firmament where He placed the sun, moon, and stars are waters.

[25 : 35] No problem with that. It's called the deep. And Job says the face of the deep is frozen. And there's plenty of references to that. But calling something the heavens of heavens just throws me off a little bit if I want to understand 1, 2, and 3 and keep it in a box like that.

Alright, I'll go to another one. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians 4, find number, find verse, number, we'll start in verse 8 where Christ ascends.

verse number 8 says, Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. So, that could be just a vague statement to everything above our head.

But when He says all heavens, far above all heavens, I just wonder, what is, is that something else there that I don't understand or is there more to this than the Scripture really is clear on for us?

[27 : 02] One more verse and I'm not worried about that one as a big deal. It's just one I saw that I noted. One more verse is in Revelation 12. And when the dragon wars with Michael in heaven, verse 7, there is a war in heaven.

And in verse 8, He prevailed not, neither was there found any more place or any more found, there place found any more in heaven that the great dragon was cast out.

That old serpent, verse number 9 here, called the devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world. He was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth. So the reference here is to the heavens, plural, and ye, plural, that dwell in the heavens that are to rejoice but not if you're on the earth because that devil is coming down to you and he has a short time and you don't want to be anywhere near it.

[28 : 39] But the curiosity to me is the rejoicing of the heavens. Obviously, the dwellers in them but who's dwelling in the heavens?

Plural. You could say it's the third heaven. You could say that there's principalities and powers in the second and some that are... I don't know. I don't know what to make of that either.

There's much about this Bible that once we get off of this planet I don't understand. So there are all kinds of verses like this and maybe some are small, insignificant, maybe some are a little more confusing or some seem to lean one way and others don't.

when you attempt to verify a precise teaching it feels like this topic has a little bit of flexibility in the first, second, and third.

And that's all I'll leave it as because I don't know where to go with that. Or it's just that there's something missing or something unrevealed or something that's undiscerned from the scripture and I wouldn't doubt that there's truth in there.

[29 : 43] I just haven't been able to see it or haven't read anybody's take on things that makes a cleaner and clearer sense than the one, two, and three. So I take that one, two, and three the way I showed it to you and all these other confusing verses I just allow to be confusing to me and I don't mean to confuse you with them.

You can just say somebody else will figure it. Leave that to the scholars or you can say whatever you want with that because I don't know about that stuff. Now there's a whole section. I don't think we're going to get to this at all because there's one more section I want to give you of what I'm just calling these verses of interest about heaven and I think I'm going to have to save it for another

Sunday just because if I start it it's not really going to give any resolution, just confusion. But there's verses that describe windows of heaven, a door opened in heaven, the heavens were opened many, many times and there's other descriptions of the heavens that seem to imply that if heaven is located to the far north cardinally like we got this peak of a roof here and heaven is the very tip of it and we're down here somewhere, that seems to be okay. Yet there's other places where the Bible likens the universe and that firmament to a robe, to a curtain and to a vesture, like a piece of clothing that can be taken off and to a curtain that can be rolled aside or rolled away or to like curtains in a window can be opened up. And so this is confusing stuff but I want to at least cover it with you and just show you the stuff I put together and maybe try to spend a little more time on it this week if I could clean it up a little. [31 : 36] Because right now I'm just going to take you through the passages and the verses and try to put together what they say and it's really not going to, I'll just leave you with what it seems to indicate as a possibility but I don't know how to match it with the cardinal direction of north. What I'm saying is when the heaven gets opened up, a man is sitting on earth, he gives us, we just read it today in Ezekiel, he's sitting on earth by a river in a land, Chaldean, he tells you exactly where he's at on this planet and the heavens were opened. So he didn't like ascend, he just, it opened up in front of his eyes and he saw visions, he saw behind something and the same thing happens with John in the first couple chapters he's told to write this, this and this when he gets this vision of the Lord and the candle sticks around him but then after this I looked and I think he's back on earth and a door opened in heaven and the voice says come up hither. So I think he's back down on that island again and then over his head something opens up and he's caught up to it and immediately there he is around the throne of God and some would say that it's a portal. Some teach there's a portal above our heads and the devils know about this and they try to take you back to Genesis, is it 10 or 11 with the tower of Babel and saying that they were trying to build a tower that reached onto heaven, really they were trying to build to a portal. [33 : 12] They also take the teaching of Jacob's ladder and his prayer as he sees this ladder going up to heaven, angels ascending and descending and saying that there's just above our heads is a portal that you can get to the third heaven without traveling through space for as the scientists tell you, light years and light years and light years and billions and all that, which is so hard to understand what that even is. So this is getting out there now, I know that, so we're going to rain it back and put a pause on it today and next week we'll come back and just I'll take you through the scriptures to show you what the Bible says and what Jesus Christ said and John the Baptist said and Saul and Ezekiel and Stephen and Jacob and something David says in the Psalms and tie it in with something that John writes a couple things in Revelation connected to something the author of Hebrews wrote to the Jews and just try to put it together and say there is definitely something to this that I can't make out but it really fascinates me and intrigues me as to the dwelling place of God and how far away it may be or the spiritual realm itself that could be closer than you think. So sorry to be so vague at the end here, I'll try to do better next week. So for now we're moving off of the look of heaven and trying to get one more thought of just what the Bible, it seems to be dropping some crumbs to something that is hard for us to understand so we'll stop with that, give you a few extra minutes today and take some time fellowship with one another and we'll come back at the top of the hour.