

CLARITY TRUMPET

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For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

-First Corinthians 14:8, 9-

Do Christians Go to Heaven When They Die?

It may surprise some of you to learn that there are Christians who either do not believe we go to Heaven when we die, or that it is not that important whether we go there or not. Some even feel that "going to Heaven when you die" is not a legitimate Biblical emphasis. They point out that anticipating Heaven is not even discussed in *most* of the Bible, meaning the Old Testament. We are told that believers back then did not concern themselves with Heaven, but were intent on establishing God's kingdom *on earth*. Therefore, we too should have God's kingdom on earth as our focus today.

Good Principles to Follow in Studying Any Bible Subject

- When we study Scripture we all bring our past experiences, knowledge and impressions to our research. So it is very important to make a conscious choice and develop the habit of not even thinking "*beyond what is written*" (I Corinthians 4:6). Deposit all preconceived and outside influences *outside* the door of your heart and mind so that God's Word may be your *sole* source of Truth.

- Second Timothy 2:15 reminds us that we should be "*workers who do not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*" There is a right way to "divide" Scripture so that things that differ are not viewed as being the same. Thus, Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel; law is not grace and grace is not law; Heaven is not earth and earth is not Heaven.

- We need to faithfully compare "*spiritual things with spiritual*" (I Corinthians 2:12, 13), and *avoid* the devastating habit of comparing writer with writer, theologian with theologian, movement with movement. The *ONLY* thing worth comparing is one Bible verse or passage with other Bible verses and passages. It doesn't matter one iota what was written by the Church Fathers or the Reformers, or what your current favorite contemporary authority on the Bible might say or write. God has given us just one authoritative, infallible guide, and that is His holy written Word, the Bible.

Progressive Revelation

God has seen fit to reveal Himself and His mind to man as man has been able to receive it. This gradual unveiling of the Truth of God is commonly called *Progressive Revelation*. Though denied by some, it is God's method. The Lord Jesus was speaking of this when He told the eleven disciples, "*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. . .*" (John 16:12, 13a).

Since the New Testament speaks freely of a place called Heaven, it doesn't really matter what God did or did not reveal to those living before the time of Christ. However, the fact is that not only is the subject of Heaven *not absent* in the Hebrew Scriptures, it was quite obviously something for which they longed; and the New Testament elaborates upon it in much more detail.

It's been said that "the New Testament is *in* the Old *concealed*, and the Old Testament is *by* the New *revealed*. And it's true.

A number of Old Testament statements, prophecies, events and stories are only understood properly as we read God's explanation and commentary on them in the New Testament. For instance, letting the New Testament comment on the Old Testament, certain realities become crystal clear.

Did Believers before Calvary Look Forward to Heaven?

- **Hebrews 11:9, 10, 13-16:** *By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents. . . ; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died in faith, **not** having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. . . . now they desire a better, that is, a **heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Note: While these pre-Calvary saints sojourned on earth, they knew they didn't belong here. Instead, what they looked for was a *Heavenly* homeland, built and prepared by God Himself.

- **Hebrews 11:39, 40:** *And all these (sixteen OT believers named, plus “the prophets”), having obtained a good testimony through faith, did **not** receive the promise (singular), God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. **Note:** The “something better” is *Heaven*, as seen in the foregoing context.*

- **Hebrews 9:24:** *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. **Note:** All of these items for worship were only “copies” of Heavenly realities. *Heaven* is the true -- in contrast to those earthly things. Christ returned to a place, Heaven, and is there now in the Father’s presence, and on our behalf. A very important verse!*

- **Hebrews 12:22-24:** *But you have come to. . . the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are registered in Heaven, to God the Judge of all, . . . , to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. **Note:** Christ as Mediator of the *New Covenant* is an important truth in the Bible. The *Old Covenant* (which dealt with earthly things) has been “done away” in Christ (carefully read Heb. 8:1-10:18), and has been replaced by the New (heavenly) Covenant (cp. II Corinthians 3:5-4:2).*

Notice, too, these statements from Old Testament saints who apparently knew quite a bit more about Heaven than some give them credit for: **Joshua** 2:11; **Psalms** 11:4; 14:2; 20:6; 33:13; 53:2; 57:3; 73:25; 76:8; 80:14; 85:11; 89:6; 102:19; 115:2, 3, 16; 119:89; 123:1; 136:26; 139:8; **Isaiah** 14:12, 13; 63:15; **Jeremiah** 31:37; **Lamentations** 3:50; **Daniel** 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44; 4:35, 37; 5:23; **Jonah** 1:9.

Heaven in the New Testament

- Christ came from Heaven; it is a real place: John 3:12, 13, 31; 6:33, 38, 41, 50, 51.

- It is a place where there are many “mansions” (dwellings). Believers will be received up to Him in order that “where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2, 3). *AND WHERE IS HE?* No doubt about it -- in *HEAVEN* (Hebrews 9:24)!

- Furthermore, It is His “Father’s house -- where He lives -- a *real place* In addition to John 14:2, these other verses verify this same truth: Matt. 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 9, 10, 20; 7:11, 21; 10:32; 12:50; 16:17; 18:14, 19; 23:9; Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 11:2; cp. Rev. 11:13. In fact, Revelation has fifty-six direct references to Heaven, most of them speaking of it as being God’s dwelling.

- The angels of God also live there: Matthew 22:30; 24:36; Mark 12:25; Luke 22:43; Galatians 1:8.

- There is “joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents”: Luke 15:7, 10.

- The names of the redeemed are recorded in Heaven: Luke 10:20; cp. Hebrews 12:23.

- Believer’s rewards are in Heaven: Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:23; 18:22; Heb. 10:34; I Pet. 1:4.

- We have a Master in Heaven (Col. 4:1) who has gone back “*into Heaven itself*” (Heb. 9:24; I Pet.3:22), and we “wait for Him *from Heaven*” (I Th. 1:10); when He judges, He will be revealed *from Heaven* (II Th. 1:7).

- One day there will be “a new Heaven in which righteousness dwells” (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-4).

- Believers who are alive at the Rapture will be “caught up. . . to meet the Lord in the air. *And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*” *AND WHERE IS HE?* No doubt about it -- *in HEAVEN* (Heb. 9:24)! And from where will He come? “The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven” (v. 16).

It Couldn’t Be Clearer

Philippians 1:23: *For I (Paul) am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. *AND WHERE IS HE?* No doubt about it - *in HEAVEN!* (Heb. 9:24). Paul knew that when he would die he would “depart” from his earthly body and would immediately be “with Christ.”*

Philippians 3:20, 21: *For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. . . .*

II Corinthians 5:1-8: *. . . we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from Heaven. . . . Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. . . . We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. *AND WHERE IS HE?* No doubt about it -- *in HEAVEN* (Hebrews 9:24)!*

Luke 23:42, 43: *Then he (the thief) said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Jesus identified His “kingdom” as a *place* called Paradise, and the apostle Paul clearly identifies Paradise as “the third Heaven” -- where God is (II Corinthians 12:2-4). Compare Luke 16:22, 26 where Lazarus went to a *place* -- “Abraham’s bosom” -- which was separated from hades (another *place*) where the rich man was in torments.*

Colossians 1:3-5: *We give thanks to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . because of the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, of which (Heavenly hope) you heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel.*

Note: *Going to Heaven* is not all there is to the salvation message, but obviously *it is a vital part of the Good News we are to share with the lost!* Thank God! ×

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Clarity Trumpet #23

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