



DIGGING DEEPER

Heaven: Ascension

“This week we continue our conversation about what Heaven is like from a biblical perspective, challenging our own ideas about naked babies playing harps on clouds. We will walk through the usage of the words used to describe heaven and try to start framing our understanding of this topic. Be prepared to have some ideas about heaven shifted and learn to embrace the wonder as all of our questions are not answered. Looking forward to studying this together with all of you!”

Heaven in the Bible...

You asked... here are a few verses that I was looking through these past few weeks: Deut. 10:14; 2 Samuel 22:14; 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 2:1, 11; 2 Chronicles 2:6, 6:18, 21-39; 2 Chronicles 7:14, 18:18, 20:6, Nehemiah 9:6; Job 25:2; Psalm 11:4; Psalm 14:2; Psalm 20:6; Psalm 33:13; Psalm 53:2; Psalm 80:14; Psalm 102:25; Psalm 103:19; Psalm 115:3; Psalm 123:1; Ecclesiastes 5:2; Isaiah 66:1; Lamentations 3:41, 50; Daniel 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44; Jonah 1:9; Matt. 3:2, 4:17, 5:3, 5:10, 5:12, 5:16, 5:19, 5:20, 5:34, 5:45, 5:48, 6:1, 6:9, 6:10, 6:14, 6:20, 6:26, 6:32, 7:11, 7:21, 8:11, 10:7, 10:32, 10:33, 11:11, 11:12, 11:23, 12:50, 13:11, 13:24, 13:31, 13:33, 13:44, 13:45, 13:47, 13:52, 15:13, 16:1, 16:17, 16:19, 18:1, 18:3, 18:4, 18:10, 18:14, 18:18, 18:19, 18:23, 18:35, 19:12, 19:14, 19:21, 19:23, 20:1, 21:25, 22:2, 22:30, 23:9, 23:13, 23:22, 24:36, 25:1, 28:2, 28:18, Mark 10:21, 11:25, 11:30, 11:31, 12:25, 13:32, 16:19; Luke 6:23, 10:15, 10:20, 11:13, 11:16, 12:33, 15:7, 15:18, 15:21, 18:22, 19:38, 20:4, 21:11, 22:43; John 1:51, 3:12, 3:13, 3:27, 3:31, 6:33, 6:38, 6:42; Acts 1:11, 2:34, 3:21, 4:12, 7:49, 7:56; Romans 1:18, 10:6; 1 Corinthians 15:40, 47, 48; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 2, 12:2;

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Galatians 1:8, Ephesians 1:3, 10, 20, 2:6, 3:10, 3:15, 4:10, 6:9, 6:12; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:5, 16, 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 3:1, 6:4, 8:1, 8:5, 9:23-24, 11:16, 12:22-23, 12:25-26. Enjoy!

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Word: שָׁמַיִם

Transliteration: shamayim

Phonetic Spelling: (shaw-mah'-yim)

Usages/Definitions:

Sky/Space- Ps. 68:34; Gen 1; Ps 148:13;

God's Space- Deut. 26:15; Ps. 2:4; Isa. 66:1;

An expanse separate from earth- Ps 115:16; Gen 1;

Heaven & Earth

In the NT often the descriptions given for Heaven starts to beg us to think about it differently:

The Gospel of Mathew:

4:8 *"a high mountain" from which Jesus can see all the kingdoms of the earth*

4:17 *"Kingdom of the heavens has come near"*

6:9-10: *Lord's prayer, "God's kingdom/will here on earth as in heaven"*

11:23 *Capernaum, a city, not exalted up to heaven, but going down to Sheol/Hades*

12:41 *Sign of Jonah: belly of whale // "heart of the earth"*

12:42 *Queen of the South comes "from the ends of the earth"*

28:16-20: *On a mountain, the risen Jesus says, "All authority on heaven and earth belongs to me."*

The letters of Paul

Phil 2:9-10, the exalted Jesus was raised high, so every "in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."

Ephesians: 1:19-22: Jesus' resurrection exalted him to "sit at the right hand in the heavenly places"

Ephesians 2:1-7: We have been raised from the dead and "raised up and seated with him in the heavenly places"

2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul talks about "a guy I know" (= himself!) who had a vision and "apocalypse" where he ascended up to the "third heaven." What?

The Revelation:

21:1-3: *new heaven and earth, a city descending from heaven, presumably the new one coming to a new earth, but it's called a tabernacle*

21:10: *the city coming down again, described as a temple-Jerusalem-Garden-Throne of God*

What is going on? It is becoming clear that, the authors of the Old Testament, Jesus, and the apostles imagined and inhabited a universe that was very different from the one we are taught about in modern times. If we are going to understand the Bible on its own terms, will need to have to do some unlearning and relearning when it came to the biblical conception of the cosmos, that is, "heaven and earth."

Three options for how God relates to us

