

Beyond The Terrestrial



Heaven and Hell

HEAVEN

Etymology

English: Akin to the word "heave," and refers to that which lifted or pushed up, hence, high, literally or figuratively.

Hebrew: *Shamayim*, expanse, or heaved up things; the heights above, the upper regions – occurring 419 times in the Old Testament – in the King James Version translated "air" 21 times (Genesis 1:26,28,30; 2:19,30; 6:7; 7:3; 9:2; Deuteronomy 4:17; 28:26; 1 Samuel 17:44,46; 2 Samuel 21:10; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Job 12:7; 28:21; Psalm 8:8 Proverbs 30:19; Ecclesiastes 10:20) – but these as well as all other occurrences are translated as "heaven" or "heavens" in the American Standard Version.

Greek: *Ouranos*, from a root meaning "to cover," "encompass"; and, in imitation of the Hebrew *shamayim*, properly of the heights above, or heaved up things; probably, says vine, akin to *ornumi*, to lift, to heave – occurring 278 times in the New Testament – in the King James Version translated as "air" ten times (Matthew 6:26; 8:20; 13:32; Mark 4:4,32; Luke 8:5; 9:58; 13:19; Acts 10:12; 11:6 – but these and all other occurrences are translated as "heaven," or "heavens" in the American Standard Version.

Distinctions

a. The vaulted expanse of the sky with all things in it:

- (1) Opposite of the earth, as in expressions of "heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 12:25-28; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 20:11; 21:1) – embracing the aerial and sidereal, the next two numbers.
- (2) Aerial or atmospheric heavens, as "birds of heaven" or "clouds of heaven" (Matthew 6:26; 8:20; Acts 10:12; 11:6; James 5:18).

(3) Siderial heavens, the region of the "sun," "moon," and "stars" (Genesis 1:14-16; Psalm 8:3-4; Matthew 24:29,35; Mark 13:15,31; Hebrews 11:12; Revelation 6:14; 20:11).

b. The region above the siderial heavens – the seat of things eternal and consummately perfect, where God and other heavenly beings dwell (Matthew 5:16; 12:50; Revelation 3:12; 11:13; 16:11; 20:9) –the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2) – "heaven of heavens" (1 Kings 8:27). (Cf. Ephesians 4:10, "far above all heavens," Hebrews 1:3, and Revelation 3:21-22.)

NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

The first mention of "new heavens and a new earth" is found in Isaiah 65:17 and is repeated and its discussion climaxed in Chapter 66:22-24. This seems to be figurative language referring primarily to a new order that is not other-worldly, with reference to Jerusalem and Israel after the exile and into the Messianic age. But part of its language is employed in 2 Peter 3:1-13 and given a higher and seemingly literal application, "according to promise," to "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" after the destruction of the present physical earth and its surrounding elements by fire, just as the world of mankind perished by the waters of the flood in Noah's day.

Then, however, it was mostly the surface of the earth and its inhabitants that were affected rather than the earth itself being removed, whereas the future destruction Peter was foretelling will be much more extensive and pervasive. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall [be] burned up" – and, the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

NOTE" Some have thought "the elements" of the preceding verses (10 and 12) refer to the "heavenly bodies," so that the margin of the American Standard Version gives that as an alternate reading. But this is disputed, and actually is not crucial. Reference may

simply be to the elements of our earthly atmosphere, but, more probably, to the elements of the entire cosmos – the earth and the aerial and siderial heavens visible from it – not the third heaven. (Cf. Hebrews 1:10-12; Revelation 20:13.)

In Revelation 20:11, reference is made to "the earth and the heavens" fleeing away from the face of him sitting upon the "great white throne," before which the dead stand to be judged at the end of history on the present earth. And, in Chapter 21:1-5, the writer (John) further states: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall dwell with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. And he that sitteth on the throne said, behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true."

Also, in Revelation 22:1-5 John climaxes by saying, "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The Pulpit Commentary has the following comment on 2 Peter 3:13, with which we conclude: "St. John, like St. Peter, speaks of a new earth, and tells us that the new earth will be the dwelling place

of the blessed. He saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven; the throne of God and of the Lamb (he tells us) shall be in it. 'The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them.' The holy city, Jerusalem, which is above, is in heaven (Phil.111,20). But heaven will come down to earth; the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there; there his servants shall serve him. The distinction between heaven and earth shall be abolished: for where God is, there is heaven."

HELL

Etymology

English: An Anglo-Saxon term meaning "concealed," and therefore unseen, and used broadly as the Hebrew *sheol*, including the grave – but not properly covered by the Greek word Hades, as it is improperly translated in the King James Version in 1 Corinthians 15:55 from the Textus Receptus, where other recensions of the Greek text have *thanatos*, "death." Elsewhere in the King James Version, "grave" is from the Greek *mnema* (Revelation 11:9) and *mnemeion* (Matthew 27:52-53; Luke 11:44; John 5:28; 11:17,31,38; 12:17) – rendered "tomb" in the American Standard Version.

The King James Version translates all four of the following Hebrew and Greek words as "hell," because representing a realm unseen by the eyes of mortals. The American Standard Version leaves Sheol and Hades untranslated, but translates *Tartarus* and *Gehenna* as "hell" – the words *Tartarus* and *Gehenna* always being associated with punishment, but Sheol and Hades not always so.

Hebrew: *Sheol*, the unseen state or realm – occurring 65 times in the Old Testament, in the King James Version translated "hell" 31 times, "grave" 31 times, and "pit" three times – but in American Standard Version always left untranslated but simply transliterated (that is, spelled with English letters) – and applying vaguely to either of the unseen states variously referred to

by the Greek words of the New Testament mentioned below, plus *mnemeion* as mentioned above.

Greek:

Hades, the unseen state or realm, and used of the place of the spirits of the dead between death and the resurrection (see Luke 16:22-23,27-31). The soul of both the righteous and the wicked go there at the death of the body (see Acts 2:27,31; Luke 16:23) – but are separated by a "great gulf" (Luke 16:26).

NOTE: The body without the spirit or soul, but not the spirit without the body, is said to be "dead" (James 2:26; cf. Genesis 35:18). "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). That is, the spirit gives life to the flesh, or body; the body does not give life to the spirit. The faculties of the spirit are not lost upon leaving the body (cf. Luke 16:19-31). So there is a sense in which the dead are still alive (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16; Matthew 22:31-32 – fundamental to the concept and fact of the resurrection).

The place in Hades where the righteous go is referred to by Christ as "Paradise" (Luke 23:43) – *Paradeisos*, a garden or park. Evidently that is where Abraham was when Lazarus borne by angels to Abraham's bosom" at the death of the body of Lazarus on earth (Luke 16:22). For the place in Hades where the wicked go at death, see (2) below.

NOTE: (a) "Jehovah god planted a garden (GE. *Paradeisos*) eastward in Eden; and there he put man whom he had formed" (Genesis 2:8), which was forfeited when he sinned (3:22-24). (b) In Hades there is a Paradise for the righteous between death and the resurrection (Luke 23:43). And (c) in eternity, there will be a Paradise in heaven for the redeemed (Revelation 2:7; 22:2).

Tartarus is a term found in 2 Peter 2:4 as being the place where sinful angels have been cast down, "to be reserved unto judgment" – "unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6) – evi-

dently the judgment of Acts 17:31 and Matthew 25:31-46 at the second coming of Christ – likely when we "shall judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:3). "The Greeks used the word *Tartarus* to refer to a lower realm of Hades where departed spirits were punished." (Raymond C. Kelcy, "The Letters of Peter and Jude," in the Living Word Commentary (1972). This would make it the part of Hades in which the rich man of Luke 16:19-31 was consigned at death, which seems probable.

Gehenna in its literal sense was the Valley of Hinnom on the south and east of Jerusalem, which had been used during days of apostasy as a place of offering a child sacrifice by fire, and after the reform of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) was used as a city dump site for all kinds of refuse, including the dead bodies of animals and of criminals not buried. It is said that fire was kept burning continually, and that worms infested the edges where fire had not consumed. The term was used figuratively 11 times by our Lord of the place of eternal punishment of the wicked (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 22:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 2:5), and once by James (in 3:6) – with some imagery furnished by characteristics of the eternal Gehenna, as the following: "Whole body ... cast in hell" (Matthew 5:29); "unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43), "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (v.48). THIS IS THE HELL REPRESENTED IN THE DIAGRAM.

Other descriptions include the following: "furnace of fire; [where] there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42); "the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41); "perdition," that is, destruction (not of being, but of well-being. Philippians 3:19); "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thessalonians 1:9); "the second death" (Revelation 2:11); "cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone, ... tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10); "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Purgatory

That word does not occur in the scriptures, but suggests the idea of a place of purgation or purification. Webster defines it as follows:

"An intermediate state after death for expiatory purification. The Roman Catholic Church teaches, as defined in the councils of Florence and Trent, that purgatory is a place or state of punishment wherein the souls of those who die in God's grace may expiate venial sins, or satisfy divine justice for temporal punishment still due remitted mortal sins."

That is confirmed by James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, in his Question Box (1929 Edition), pages 393-94, in the following paragraph:

"The Catholic Church has defined the existence of Purgatory in the Decree of Union drawn up at the Council of Florence in 1439, and again in the Council of Trent (Sess. xxv.) which says: 'The Catholic Church instructed by the Holy Ghost, has from Sacred Scriptures and the ancient traditions of the Fathers, taught in Sacred Councils, and very recently in the Ecumenical Synod (Sess. Vi., can.30; Sess. xxii., chs.2,3), that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls therein detained are helped by suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the office of the altar."

"The same Council taught (Sess. xiv., can. 12), in accordance with the Scriptures (Num. xx. 12; 2 Kings xii, 13, 14) that God does not always remit all the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin. The Scriptures teach that nothing defiled can enter heaven (Wisdom. Vii. 25; Isa. xxv. 8; Hab. I. 13; Apoc. xxi. 7), and that Christians often die with venial sins upon their souls. All, therefore, who die in venial sins, or with temporal punishment of their sins still unpaid must atone for them in Purgatory."

OBSERVATION: But such does not accord with the statements of scripture that (a) "the blood of Jesus his son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7) and that (b) we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, "that each one may receive [for] the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Limbo

This is another word not found in scripture. And Webster says it literally means "in or on the border," before giving the following definitions:

1. In some Christian theologies, a region bordering on hell, the abode of the souls of good men who lived before the coming of Christ and the souls of unbaptized babies.
2. A prison or imprisonment.
3. A place or condition of neglect or oblivion to which unwanted things or persons are relegated."

Again, Cardinal Gibbons, in his Question Box (pages 390-91), in which he distinguishes "Limbo of the Fathers" and "Limbo of the Children, corroborates as follows":

"Our Lord himself frequently refers to the Limbo of the Fathers, where the just were detained until Ascension Day, under the figure of a banquet (Matt. viii. 43), or of a marriage feast (Matt. xxv. 10). He also calls it Abraham's bosom ... (Luke xvi. 22), and 'paradise' ... (Luke xxiii.43). Once Christ appeared, the just souls began to enjoy the Beatific Vision, and Limbo was at once changed into heaven.

"The Limbo of Children means the state of natural happiness enjoyed by all those who die in original sin, without ever having been

guilty of grievous personal sin. St. Thomas holds that these enjoy a positive happiness, being united to God by a knowledge and love proportionate to their capacity (De Malo, art. iii.)."

OBSERVATION: Again, the scriptures do not accord with the concept that the place of departed spirits of the righteous before the ascension of Christ became heaven either then or afterward, the apostle Peter saying on Pentecost the days after Ascension Day that "David ascended not into the heavens" (Acts 2:34) – equivalent to saying he was not yet in heaven. Moreover, the "Paradise" where our Lord's soul went at the death of his body was in Hades (Acts 2:27,31), and Hades was not to be done away with (cast into the "lake of fire") until after the general resurrection, when physical death would be no more (Revelation 20:11-15) – that being a resurrection of both the just and unjust (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15) at the second coming of Christ and the end of earthly history (1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

Moreover, the souls of children are not charged with sin, either "original" (the sin of Adam) or personal, so as to remain in "Limbo" in eternity. For, from Hebrews 12:9 it would seem that our souls (spirits) do not come through Adam as do our bodies. And Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). And, again: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such [as they are] belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

"Limbo" is therefore a human fiction, not a biblical doctrine.

RESURRECTION

A universal resurrection is seen not only from the proceeding, but also from Revelation 20:11-15, for the Apostle John "saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books opened" ... and the dead were judged out of things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up

the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them [another way of saying they were raised from the dead, the word "resurrection" being *anastasis*, a standing or rising up]: and they were judged every man according to their works."

The dead also rise with a body suited to whichever destiny awaits. Though the wicked shall be "destroy[ed] both soul and body in "hell" (Matthew 10:28), it is not a destruction of the being of either but of the well-being of both – otherwise there would be no "eternal punishment" – no "torment day and night for ever and ever." If the fire should be literal, the Lord could still provide a body that would not be consumed, just as he appeared to Moses at Sinai in the bush that "burned with fire, and ... was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2).

"It is not yet made manifest [in complete detail] what we shall be. [But] We know that if he [Christ] shall be manifest, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2). And he "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that we may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Philippines 3:21).

In 1 Corinthians 15:35-54, the apostle Paul does describe the bodies of the saints as far surpassing their earthly bodies in numerous respects, and assuring that the saints living when Christ comes will undergo a comparable change without having to experience death – "corruptible" bodies putting on "incorruption" (not any longer subject to dissolution), and "mortal" bodies putting on "immortality" (not any longer subject to death) – these changes being necessary to "inherit the kingdom of God" (verses 50-54).

JUDGMENT

Universal judgment prior to eternal destiny has already been noted in Matthew 25:31-46 ("all the nations") ; 2 Peter 2:4; and Jude 6 (the angels that sinned). It is likewise evident from Revelation 20:11-15 ("the dead, the great and the small"). It will be a judgment of "the world," in regard to "righteousness" (Acts 17:30-31),

and according to each individual's works (Revelation 20:13). "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive [for] things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

According to Acts 17:30-31, God will do the judging, but do it by Jesus Christ; and in Matthew 25:31-46, we learn that universal judgment will take place at the second coming of Christ, at which time "all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good , unto the resurrection of life [eternal life]; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment [eternal punishment]" (John 5:28-29). But prior to their respective assignments, they will be gathered before him as he sits "on the throne of his glory," and shall be separated one from the other, "the sheep" on the right hand, and "the goats" on the left (Matthew 25:31-32).