

Heaven

#3 Intermediate Heaven

I. Introduction: At death a believer goes to be with Christ

Luke 23:43 "Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

2 Cor. 5:6-8: "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷We live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Phil. 1:23-24: "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."

II. The nature of the "intermediate" heaven:

A. Its much better than our present state (Phil. 1:23)

B. It's a conscious life in the presence of God.

1. Look at the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:22-31.
2. Consider the activity of the martyrs in Rev. 6:9-11
3. Isa. 14:3-4, 9-11, 16: The king of Babylon is recognized by those in Hades.
Eze. 32:17-32: Pharoah and his army are recognized by others in Hades.
4. There is no biblical support for "soul sleep" ("Fallen Asleep" 1 Thes. 4:13), purgatory or limbo.

C. It's a temporary "heaven," not our final destination.

1. The eternal heaven involves the new earth and its not here yet.
2. In a sense, its all still heaven

"The 'new Jerusalem' ...does not remain in 'heaven' far off in space, but it comes down to the renewed earth; there the redeemed will spend eternity in resurrection bodies. So heaven and earth, now separated, will then be merged: the new earth will also be heaven, since God will dwell there with

his people. Glorified believers, in other words, will continue to be in heaven while they are inhabiting the new earth” (Anthony Hoekema)

D. It will be filled with activity

1. Judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14: 10-12, 2 Cor. 5:10)
2. Marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-10)

E. It's a physical place

1. Perhaps God is not finished with Eden. Consider the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24 and Rev. 2:7)
2. Perhaps we will have “temporary bodies.” The resurrection of our heavenly bodies has not yet taken place (1 Cor. 15:12-32). This is not a “one-at-a-time” resurrection.

“Given the consistent physical descriptions of the intermediate Heaven and those who dwell there, it seems possible – though this is certainly debatable – that between our earthly life and our bodily resurrection God may grant us some physical form that will allow us to function as human beings while in that unnatural state ‘between bodies,’ awaiting our resurrection. Just as the intermediate state is a bridge between life on the old Earth and the New Earth, perhaps intermediate bodies, or at least a physical form of some sort, serve as bridges between our present bodies and our resurrected bodies.” (Heaven, p. 57)

3. Regarding the physical nature of the Intermediate Heaven, consider this Biblical evidence:
 - a. Martyrs wearing clothes (Rev.6:9-11)
 - b. Martyrs are referred to as spirits (psuche) which refers to the whole person. Rev. 12:11

“According to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, [Psuche] does not carry with it any clear distinction between noncorporeal and a corporeal state....The reference is not a part of man that has survived death, but to the total existence of man.” (Heaven, p. 58)

- c. John apparently had a body in heaven. (Rev. 10:9-10)
- d. Paul may have had a body in heaven. (2 Cor. 12:3)

4. Some observations by Randy Alcorn (Heaven, p. 65-67) regarding Rev. 6:9-11:
 - a. When people died they went to heaven (v.9)
 - b. People in heaven will be remembered for their lives on earth. (v.9)
 - c. They used their voices. (v.10)
 - d. They appear to know what's going on, on earth (v.10) See Rev. 19:1-5
 - e. Each one is distinct. (v. 11)
 - f. Robes suggest bodies (v. 11)
 - g. They are waiting in anticipation of the future fulfillment of all of God's promises (v. 11)

5. Other evidence that folks in heaven seem to know what's going happening on earth.

Luke 15:7,10 "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent... In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Suggested Bibliography:

Heaven, Randy Alcorn

Heaven: Your Real Home, Joni Erickson Tada

In Light of Eternity, Randy Alcorn

The Glory of Heaven, John MacArthur

Beyond the Shadowlands, (CS Lewis on Heave and Hell) Wayne Martindale

Made for Heaven, CS Lewis