

Introduction:

Let's start with some basic facts on God: In the beginning before anything was created, there was God in three persons (the "us" in Gen.1). God is eternal and self-existent; therefore, he is not bound by time or space. God created the heavens and the earth as places we call reality just by speaking them, therefore, God doesn't have to live in heaven or come to earth. If he does either one, it is because he chooses to do so. He chose to do so in the Garden of Eden. Eden was special because he did not speak it into existence but "he planted" it. Revelation 21 talks about the new heaven being in the center of the new earth and God saying that his dwelling place is now with man. He chooses to be with us. Rev. 22 talks about the Tree of Life (could Eden be like a park in the center of the city?) and the Throne of Christ in the city and that we will reign with Christ forever and ever.

Literary comparison between our origin and destiny:

Genesis 1 and 2 are not two different stories of creation. Gen 1 gives us an overview of all that was created. Gen 2 gives us specifics on the creation of man and woman and zeros in on the Garden of Eden. Interestingly, we have the same comparison in Rev 21 and 22. Rev 21 gives us an overview of the new heaven and the new earth and the work of God. Rev. 22 gives us specifics of what is at the heart of the Holy City, the tree of life and the throne of Christ.

This may be stretching the comparison for some but for me, Gen 3 on Satan and the Fall can be contrasted with Rev 19:11 (heaven opened and Jesus on the white horse leading to the destruction of the beast and the false prophet and the killing of all who came out to oppose Christ) and Chapter-20 on Satan doomed and the Final Judgments. A reading of Rev 20:1-7 gives us a summary or overview of history leading up to Satan's Doom and the creation of a new heaven and new earth in Chapter 21. Genesis 3 introduces the curse and sin and Rev. 19:11-20:15 deals with the Final Judgment and the curse removed and sin and evil no longer existing.

A. UNIO MYSTICA Am I alone? Carl Sagan says "yes."; Evolution & Atheism; rugged individualism at it's purest and worst. Divine mystery: God and man union.

LET'S GET INTO THE MYSTERY IN GOD'S WORD.

19 Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Jn 14

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. Eph 5 Divine mystery: husband and wife; Christ and the church. (Divorce, non-member Christians) **CLIP 28:55 views from public on the church.**

26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. Jn 15

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Cor 5
Divine mystery: Christ in me. (renounce Christ)

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. Jn 14

The divine mystery: The Holy Spirit and man. (quench, grieve, etc)

Father
Son (God has brought us into the Godhead, mystery.)
Holy Spirit
Man

What keeps us from unity, oneness, intimacy? Del Tagart says: "It is prostituting oneself with the world in a quest for significance." The hunger for significance.

B. Present Heaven

I have been saying all along how the Bible presents us with a temporary heaven upon death and a permanent heaven upon Jesus second coming. Scriptures clearly state this. It's such an overlooked fact that I want to restate it once more. When we die believers in Christ will not go to heaven where we'll be forever and ever. We will go to the present heaven, an intermediate place, perhaps where Eden is now, to be with Christ forever. That the first death and the first resurrection as spiritual beings with some form. God only knows what that looks like. In the present Heaven we will look forward to that time when Christ returns (second coming, the parousia) and we will receive our bodily resurrection and live in the permanent, eternal heaven centered in a new earth. In the Present Heaven we have the judgment of faith. Those in Christ go to the present heaven and those not in Christ go to Hell.

1. This present heaven was clear to those in OT times:

6 Remember him--before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, 7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecc 12

2. Jesus made a present heaven clear to the thief::

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

3. Paul made it clear to the Philippians and Corinthians:

"I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." Phil 1:23-24 "6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." 2 Co 5:8

Some Questions about the Present Heaven

1. Do we remain conscious after death? YES. Soul sleep means that there is a long period of unconsciousness after death and before the second coming. Soul sleep is to me an unscriptural teaching. "fallen asleep" is a euphemism for death in the NT. describing the bodies outward appearance. The physical

body “sleeps” until the second resurrection while the spiritual part of us relocates to a conscious existence in the Present Heaven.

2. Are we disembodied spirits? It’s a mystery what we will be like, but the term “disembodied spirit” isn’t the best term since, our spirit will have some form and the present heaven is a place. Jesus in John said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Are we outside of time and space in the present heaven? How can we be if heaven is a place (space) in John 14 and the martyrs are waiting for the time when they will receive resurrected bodies (time)? Misconception that “out of this world” means outside of “time and space.” MORE Later.

3. Will we in the present heaven remember life on earth? Yes, relationships continue. Our minds, memories and clear thinking should become more acute if we are judged by every careless word spoken on earth and our righteous deeds follow us to heaven.

4. Will we in the present heaven see what is happening on earth? Some glimpses from scripture say, yes. Rev 6:9-11 show the martyrs in the present heaven having some knowledge of what’s happening on earth. Rev 19 has the people in the present heaven shouting Hallelujah for specific things that will be happening on earth. Luke 15:7 says that there will be great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. 1 Tim. 3:16 says that it’s a mystery that Jesus on earth was seen by angels. Remains a mystery.

5. Will we pray in heaven for those on earth? Christ intercedes for mankind in Romans 8:34. The martyrs in Heaven in Rev 6 also pray for people on earth. Prayer is talking to God, so we will definitely do more praying in heaven than we do now. How specifically we will be praying for our loved ones depends on how much we can see what’s happening to those on earth.

C. The ETERNAL Heaven

1. Jesus told us about the new heaven as well:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” John 5:28-29

The new heaven and new earth is like the many feelings of wonder and awe that I have had for the beauty and majesty of nature and the intimacy and love I have shared with others, without sin, death, the curse, and all the personal and relational problems and disappointments created by them. So when I turn to Rev 21+22 I am not disappointed. I am filled with hope.

2. What do we find in Rev. 21 and 22

21.

- a Holy City
- the Throne of God
- God’s speaking words of cheer (Jesus said be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. God says be of Good cheer in this new earth where there is no more death, sadness, or sorrow. He is making a new order. The old order of sin and the curse and corruption is gone forever. We glimpse what it means for him to make everything new (resurrected, restored) with the fact that he chooses to be with us and we can drink freely from the spring of the water of life. Eternally Refreshed life is something entirely new also.
- elaborate descriptions of the Holy City, the bride of Christ. The Church or Assembly.
- no temple, why? because the Father and the Son are it’s temple and it’s light, no gates to keep people

away from God and Jesus, nations and Kings will honor them, nothing impure but “only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

22:1-5

- a river of life flowing from the throne of God and Jesus (space)
- the tree of life, bearing twelve crops for each month (time)
- no more curse, instead healing of nations

How do we interpret these things? Literally or figuratively?

It is true that of all books Revelation often should not be taken literally, especially certain numbers used such as 7, 12, multiples thereof (12x12=144) and 1000. There is so much symbolic significance in Revelation. But Peter and Isaiah has no suggestions that they are speaking figuratively about a new heaven and a new earth. The Gospels don’t present the resurrection in that light either. They are historical narrative. Paul is mainly instructional as well on these topics. (We’ll come back to this if there is time)

Misconceptions on heaven and hell:

I’ll just be floating on a cloud in heaven? I’ll be like God when I die. There is no Hell. The closest thing to hell is here on earth. A loving God does not send people to hell. All people go to heaven. There are many ways to get to heaven. All religions believe in the same God.

D. Hell

Hell is utter misery. In Dante’s *Inferno* the sign chiseled above the entrance to hell is “Abandon every hope, you who enter.”

1. Do we want to believe that anyone deserves to go to hell?

Only a few like Sadam or Hitler. perhaps, OJ Simpson, but no one wants to judge people and we should not. That God would inflict everlasting torture on someone is unthinkable to me. I serve a loving, gracious merciful God. I personally don’t want to believe in hell but the scriptures are clear and conclusive

Rev 20:12-15 “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

John 5:28-29 28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out -- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Matt 13: 40-42 40 “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt 25:41, 46 41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ 44

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ 46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matt 10:28 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.;

Mark 9:43-44 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where ““their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’

,Matt 8:12 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Luke 16:19-31 Rich man and Lazarus.

2. To deny hell is to depreciate what Christ did on the cross.

For Christ to not deliver us from eternal hell (what we deserve) is to think less of his sacrifice on the cross and to not praise and worship him as much as he deserves. (That is what the devil wants us to do. “Eat for surely you won’t die. You will become like God.”

3. Hell is diminished personhood in 2 Thessa 1:9 and solitary confinement in the Rich man and Lazarus story. Not a wild party.

4. Heaven and Hell are not equal just as God and Satan are not equal.

If heaven is a mansion with many rooms, hell will be a crack in the pavement. Words to describe heaven are plentiful and have many descriptions. Hell is described with an economy of words — fire, weeping and gnashing.

5. Earth is touched by both heaven and hell.

The best of life on earth is a glimmer of heaven; and, the worst of life on earth is a glimmer of hell. Stop thinking of heaven and earth as opposites and stop thinking of hell and earth as the same. We need to see them as unequal and yet overlapping circles.

Conclusion:

For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation. 2 Co 6:2

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” Col 3:1-2