

# Heaven

## Key verses

● “Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament (the sea) from the waters which were above the firmament; (the clouds) and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.” Gen.1:7-8

## The ‘firmament’ heaven

- “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?” Job 38:33
- “Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes the grass to grow on the mountains.” Psa.147:8

The firmament refers to the great expanse of air between the sea and the clouds which God calls “heaven” (Gen.1:8). Even though there are other uses for the word heaven in Scripture we should not forget this meaning given in Genesis. Verses which we may have interpreted in the past to mean, “God’s heaven”, may when read in context be referring to no more than the “firmament heaven” of Genesis ch1. Rain is described as coming from heaven (Gen.8:2, Deut.11:11) and clouds are described by Job as, “the bottles of heaven” (Job 38:37). The prophet Jeremiah describes birds as, “the fowls of heaven” (Jer.7:33, 15:3, 16:4 AV). He also describes wind as coming from, “the four quarters of heaven” (Jer.49:36).

See sheet 21 re “the gate of heaven”.

## The Hebrew heavens

- “Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it” Isa.42:5

The Hebrew’s concept of the heavens above was like a giant pudding bowl covering a flat earth and spreading no larger than the then known world. In this giant pudding bowl the sun, moon and stars are described as being fixed (Gen.1:16-17). This is borne out in Isaiah 40:22, where the heavens are described as, “a tent to dwell in”. The place on the horizon where the ‘pudding bowl’ heaven joined the earth is alluded to in Isaiah 13:5, where the nation of Persia is described as coming “from a far country, from the end of heaven” (Isa.13:5). The sun is said to rise, “from one end of heaven” continuing to, “the other end” (Psa.19:6).

When you read the words “heaven” and “earth” in the Bible, keep in mind how a person in biblical times would have understood these words. You will find that an immense amount of Scripture will have new meaning for you. This is because we as a society brought up on knowledge accumulated over the last 400 years can fail to appreciate that God naturally revealed His word in biblical times in terms that people of the time could readily understand.

## The ‘highest heavens’

- “Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it.”

Deut.10:14

- “But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!” 2 Chron.6:18

Even though God dwells everywhere by His Spirit power (Jer.23:23-24), the “heaven of heavens” is depicted by king Solomon as still being insufficient to contain Him. The “highest heavens” are described as being God’s exclusive domain. See Solomon’s prayer of temple dedication in 2 Chron.ch6. See also 2 Chron.2:6

## God's Throne is in heaven

- “Thus says the LORD: Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.” Isa.66: 1
- “...We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”

Heb.8:1

God’s dwelling place in the heavens is also referred to as His Throne. The Throne in the first verse above would denote authority although we cannot rule out the existence of a literal throne. Our lack of authority as humans is symbolised as a “footstool” (Psa.132:7).

## Our reward comes from heaven

- “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

Rev.22:12

- “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...” Phil.3:20-21
- “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” 2 Tim.4:1
- “...say to the daughter of Zion, 'surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Isa.62:11

As disciples of Jesus we will receive our reward of eternal life when Jesus returns from heaven. We do not go to heaven to receive this reward (Rev.22:12).

## Powers of heaven ‘shaken’

The words of Jesus in Luke ch21 use the natural elements in symbol to describe the state of the earth just before He returns. “Heaven” is used in Scripture to depict human government and authority, and Jesus tells us that these human heavens will be “shaken” and in great distress. Worldwide terrorism is increasing fear and uncertainty in both individuals and governments.

(See Heaven and Earth symbology, sheet 26)

All Scripture quoted on this sheet is from the N.K.J.V. unless indicated