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# HEAVEN

OVER  
750,000  
IN PRINT



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ALCORN

# Chapter 26

## Will There Be Space and Time?

A number of books suggest that our existence in Heaven will be without space or time. One book describes Heaven as “a mode of existence where space and time are meaningless concepts.”<sup>189</sup> Is that true?

### What Will the New Celestial Heavens Be Like?

What does the Bible mean by the term *new heavens*? Let’s look at a few passages.

The Old Testament uses no single word for *universe* or *cosmos*. When Genesis 1:1 speaks of God’s creating “the heavens and the earth,” the words are synonymous with what we mean by *universe*. *Heavens* refers to the realms above the earth: atmosphere, sun, moon, and stars, and all that’s in outer space. Then in Isaiah, God says, “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17). This corresponds to Genesis 1:1, indicating a complete renewal of the same physical universe God first created.

Revelation 21:1-2 says, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” Because “new heaven” (singular) is used here, some think it’s God’s dwelling place that passes away and is renewed. But the present Heaven is described as unshakable in ways the physical universe isn’t (Hebrews 12:26-28). The “new heaven” in Revelation 21:1 apparently refers to exactly the same atmospheric *and* celestial heavens as “heavens” does in Genesis 1:1. It also corresponds to the “new heaven(s)” of Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, and 2 Peter 3:13. In Revelation 21:2, we see God’s dwelling place isn’t replaced but *relocated* when the New Jerusalem is brought down to the New Earth.

The new heavens will surely be superior to the old heavens, which themselves are filled with untold billions of stars and perhaps trillions of planets. God’s light casts the shadows we know as stars, the lesser lights that point to God’s substance. As the source is greater than the tributary, God, the Light, is infinitely greater than those little light-bearers we know as stars.

The Bible’s final two chapters make clear that every aspect of the new creation will be greater than the old. Just as the present Jerusalem isn’t nearly as great as the New Jerusalem, no part of the present creation—including the earth and the celestial heavens—is as great as it will be in the new creation.

While some passages suggest that the universe will wear out and the stars will be destroyed, others indicate that the stars will exist forever (Psalm 148:3-6). Is this a contradiction? No. We too will be destroyed by death, yet we will last forever. The earth will be destroyed in God’s judgment, yet it will last forever. In exactly the same way, the stars will be destroyed, yet they will last forever. Based on the redemptive work of Christ, God will resurrect them.

Earth is the first domain of mankind’s stewardship, but it is not the only domain. Because the whole universe fell under mankind’s sin, we can conclude that the whole universe was intended to be under mankind’s dominion. If so, then the entire new universe will be ours to travel to, inhabit, and rule—to God’s glory.

Do I seriously believe the new heavens will include new galaxies, planets, moons, white dwarf stars, neutron stars, black holes, and quasars? Yes. The fact that they are part of the first universe and that God called them “very good,” at least in their original forms, means they will be part of the resurrected universe. When I look at the Horsehead Nebula and ask myself what it’s like there, I think that one day I’ll know. Just as I believe this “self-same body”—as the Westminster Confession put it—will be raised and the “self-same” Earth will be raised, I believe the “self-same” Horsehead Nebula will be raised. Why? Because it is part of the present heavens, and therefore will be raised as part of the new heavens.

Will the new planets be mere ornaments, or does God intend for us to reach them one day? Even under the Curse, we’ve been able to explore the moon, and we have the technology to land on Mars. What will we be able to accomplish for God’s glory when we have resurrected minds, unlimited resources, complete scientific cooperation, and no more death? Will the far edges of our galaxy be within reach? And what about other galaxies, which are plentiful as blades of grass in a meadow? I imagine we will expand the borders of righteous mankind’s Christ-centered dominion, not as conquerors who seize what belongs to others, but as faithful stewards who will occupy and manage the full extent of God’s physical creation.

## **What Is the Morning Star?**

Jesus says of the overcomer, “I will also give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:28). The morning star is a celestial object—the planet Venus. Although most people consider Jesus’ statement to be figurative, it could suggest that God might entrust to his children planets or stars (with their respective planetary systems) in the new heavens. If the new creation is indeed a resurrected version of the old, then there will be a new Venus, after all.

Currently Venus is a most inhospitable planet. Humans could never survive its incredible heat and corrosive atmosphere. However, it’s possible that indestructible resurrected bodies could endure its atmosphere. It’s also possible that when the Curse is lifted, Venus may become a beautiful paradise.

We know God will put one world under his children’s authority—Earth. If the rest of the planets and the entire universe fell with and will rise with mankind, I can easily envision our inhabiting and governing other resurrected planets.

For those of us who love astronomy and for fantasy and science-fiction fans, this has exciting implications. I believe the great nebula of Orion, which has drawn hearts, including mine, to worship through its expansive beauty and wonder, will be refashioned as part of the new heavens. Will we see a new Saturn, new Jupiter, new Ganymede, new Pleiades, and a new Milky Way? I think that’s the logical conclusion based on what Scripture reveals. In the same way that the New Earth will be refashioned and still be a true Earth, *with continuity to the old*, the new cosmic heavens will likewise be the old renewed.

In my novel *Dominion* I try to depict this in a scene in which Jesus takes a woman who has died to a new world:

Eventually they arrived on a world more beautiful than Dani could fathom—cascading waterfalls, rainbows of a hundred colors, mountain peaks five times higher than any on earth. Oceans with blue-green water, and waves crashing upon rocks the

size of mountains. Grassy meadows, fields of multicolored flowers—colors she had never seen before. This place seemed somehow familiar to her, yet how could it, since it was like nothing she'd ever seen? Still, she felt profoundly at home.

“Why hasn't anyone told me of this place until now? I'd think it would be the talk of heaven!”

The Carpenter smiled at her. “They did not tell you because they do not know of it. They've never been here.”

“What do you mean?”

“You are the first to visit this world.”

“No,” she said, then her face flushed. “How could that be?”

“This is yours. As your father once built you that tree house, I fashioned this place just for you.”

Nancy beamed. “He gave us our own worlds too,” she said. “Beautiful as this is, mine seems the perfect one for me. The Master tells me each world he gives is tailor-made to the receiver.”

“This is all for me?”

“Yes,” the Carpenter said. “Do you like it?”

“Oh, I love it. And I haven't even begun to explore it! Thank you. Oh, thank you.” She hugged him tight. He took delight in her delight.

“This is not the ultimate place I have prepared for you, my daughter. But it is a pleasant beginning, isn't it?”<sup>190</sup>

God has built into us the longing to see the wonders of his far-flung creation. The popularity of science fiction reflects that longing. Visiting a Star Trek convention demonstrates how this—like anything else—can become a substitute religion, but the fervor points to a truth: We do possess a God-given longing to know a greater intelligence and to explore what lies beyond our horizons.

In the Star Trek movie *Generations*, the character Guinan tells Captain Picard about a place called the Nexus. She describes it this way: “It was like being inside joy, as if joy was something tangible, and you could wrap yourself up in it like a blanket.”

I don't believe in the Nexus. But I do believe in the new heavens and the New Earth. What will the new heavens be like? Like being inside joy, as if joy were something tangible, and you could wrap yourself up in it like a blanket.

Scottish novelist George MacDonald wrote to his dying daughter, “I do live expecting great things in the life that is ripening for me and all mine—when we shall have all the universe for our own, and be good merry helpful children in the great house of our father. Then, darling, you and I and all will have grand liberty wherewith Christ makes free—opening his hand to send us out like white doves to range the universe.”<sup>191</sup>

What has God made in the heights of distant galaxies, never seen by human eyes? One day we'll behold those wonders, soaking them in with openmouthed awe. And if that won't be enough, we may see wonders God held back in his first creation, wonders that will cause us to marvel and drop to our knees in worship when we behold them in the new creation.

## Will We Live in a Spatial World?

The doctrine of resurrection is an emphatic statement that we will forever occupy space. We'll be physical human beings living in a physical universe. The resurrected Christ said, "Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). He walked on Earth; we will walk on Earth. He occupied space; we will occupy space.

We are finite physical creatures, and that means we *must* live in space and time. Where else would we live? Eden was in space and time, and the New Earth will be in space and time. We will be delivered from all evil, but space isn't evil. It's good. God made it. It's Christoplatonism that tries to persuade us something's wrong with space and time.

One writer says of Heaven, "It is certainly justifiable to abandon the scheme of time and space and to put in its place a divine simultaneity."<sup>192</sup> This has a high-sounding resonance, but what does it mean? That we can be a thousand places at once, doing ten thousand different things? Those are the Creator's attributes, not the creature's. There's no evidence that we could be several places at once. The promise of Heaven is not that we will become infinite—that would be to become inhuman. It's that we'll be far better finite humans than we have ever been. Even if we're able to move rapidly from one place to another or to pass our resurrected molecules through solid objects, as the risen Jesus did, we'll still be finite. (As I said before, I'm not certain we'll have that power, though it's possible.)

If we plan to get together with friends, the question is, "Where and when?" *Where* is space; *when* is time. The three gates on the west side of the New Jerusalem are a minimum of fourteen hundred miles from the gates on the east side. If I wait for you at a gate on the west side, you won't see me if you show up at a gate on the east side. (Even if the stated dimensions are figurative, the principle remains the same.) When we walk outside the city gate, we won't remain inside. People, even resurrected people, can be in only one place at one time. There's no suggestion that even the resurrected Jesus was in two places at once.

One author says, "Time and space will not be the same as known here on earth, and relationships will be of a different order. This being so, it is clear that the life of the new humanity in their resurrection bodies of glory can be described only in symbolic terms."<sup>193</sup> But what's the biblical evidence for this claim? The biblical texts speak of time and space in the New Earth similarly to how they speak of them here and now. By reducing resurrected life to symbols, don't we undermine the meaning of humanity, Earth, and resurrection?

Jesus spoke of the uttermost parts or farthest ends of Heaven (Mark 13:27, NKJV). Even the intermediate Heaven appears to occupy space. But certainly the new heavens and the New Earth will. Resurrection doesn't eliminate space and time; it redeems them.

In the heavenly realms, even angels, whom we think of as disembodied spirits, can be hindered in space and time due to combat with fallen angels (Daniel 10:13). In other words, they can be delayed (time) from arriving at a particular destination (space).

People imagine they're making Heaven sound wondrous when they say there's no space and time there. (If it doesn't have space, it's not even a "there.") In fact, they make Heaven sound utterly alien and unappealing. We don't want to live in a realm—in fact, it couldn't even *be* a realm—that's devoid of space and time any more than a fish wants to

live in a realm without water. If fish could think, try telling one, “When you die, you’ll go to fish Heaven and— isn’t this great?—there will be no water! You won’t have fins, and you won’t swim. And you won’t eat because you won’t need food. I’ll bet you can’t wait to get there!” After hearing our christoplatonic statements about Heaven, stripped of the meaning of resurrection, no wonder we and our children don’t get excited about Heaven.

Sir Isaac Newton said of God, “He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity.”<sup>194</sup> God is the one “who inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15, NKJV). Creatures inhabit time. Jesus, as the God-man, inhabits both. By being with him on the New Earth, we will share space and time with God.

## Will We Experience Time in Heaven?

Scripture says, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Peter 3:8). Does this mean there will be no time in Heaven?

The natural understanding of a New Earth is that it would exist in space and time, with a future unfolding progressively, just as it does now. Yet people repeatedly say there will be “no time in Heaven.” One theologian argues, “What a relief and what joy to know that in heaven there will be no more time.”<sup>195</sup> Another writer says, “Heaven will be a place where time will stand still.”<sup>196</sup>

Where do such ideas come from? A misleading translation in the King James Version of the Bible says that “there should be time no longer” (Revelation 10:6). This was the basis for theologians such as Abraham Kuyper to conclude there will be no time in Heaven. But other versions correctly translate this phrase “There will be no more delay!” (NIV, RSV), which means not that time itself will cease but that there is no time left before God’s judgment is executed.

Other people are confused because they remember the phrase “Time shall be no more” and think it’s from the Bible. It’s actually from a hymn. Ironically, the same hymn speaks of “When the morning breaks . . .” Both the words *morning* and *when* are references to time.

John Newton’s hymn “Amazing Grace” demonstrates a better grasp of time:

*When we’ve been there ten thousand years,*

Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,  
Than when we’d first begun.<sup>197</sup>

Scripture contains many other evidences of time in Heaven:

- Heaven’s inhabitants track with events happening in time, right down to rejoicing the moment a sinner on Earth repents (Luke 15:7).
- Martyrs in Heaven are told to “wait a little longer” when they ask “how long” before Christ will judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge the martyrs’ blood (Revelation 6:10-11). Those in Heaven couldn’t ask “how long” or be told “wait a little longer” unless time passes in Heaven.
- Paul spoke of Heaven in terms of “the coming ages” (Ephesians 2:7). He speaks not just of a future age but of ages (plural).

- God’s people in Heaven “serve him day and night in his temple” (Revelation 7:15).
- The tree of life on the New Earth will be “yielding its fruit every month” (Revelation 22:2). There are days and months both in the intermediate and eternal Heaven.
- God says, “The new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me. . . . From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me” (Isaiah 66:22-23). New Moons and Sabbaths require moon, sun, and time.
- God said, “Summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Genesis 8:22). This wasn’t the result of the Curse; it was God’s original design.
- We’re told that “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (Revelation 8:1).
- The book of Revelation shows the intermediate Heaven’s inhabitants operating within time. The descriptions of worship include successive actions, such as falling down at God’s throne and casting crowns before him (Revelation 4:10). There’s a sequence of events; things occur one after another, not all at once.
- The inhabitants of Heaven sing (Revelation 5:9-12). Music in Heaven requires time. Meter, tempo, and rests are all essential components of music, and each is time-related. Certain notes are held longer than others. Songs have a beginning, middle, and end. That means they take place in time.

How can Scripture be any more clear about time in Heaven? (Right down to silence in Heaven for half an hour.) To say we’ll exist outside of time is like saying we’ll know everything. It confuses eternity with infinity. We’ll live for eternity as finite beings. God can accommodate to us by putting himself into time, but we can’t accommodate to him by becoming timeless. It’s not in us to do so because we’re not God.

Writers frequently distinguish between the Greek words *kronos* and *kairos*, viewing the former as “human time” or “quantity of time” and the latter as “God’s time” or “quality of time.” It’s suggested that in eternity we’ll live no longer in *kronos* but in *kairos*. However, it’s unclear what this means. Will we still live in chronological sequence, where one word, step, or event follows the previous and is followed by the next? The Bible’s answer is *yes*.

## Is Time Bad or Good?

One writer maintains, “The end of the world is the end of time. Time will cease to exist. Time is a mark of the fallen state of the world.”<sup>198</sup> But this would be true only if Adam and Eve existed outside of time—and they didn’t. The sun rose and set in their perfect world. The sixth day of creation was followed by a day of rest. Time was *not* a mark of the world’s fallen state.

God knows and can access past and future as readily as present. We can remember the past and anticipate the future, but we can live only in the present. Time is our environment. Just as a fish cannot live outside of water, so we cannot live outside of time and space.

Another author says, “Over everything on earth hangs the dark shadow of time.”<sup>199</sup> But the shadow is not time. The shadow is death, which is a loss of resources and opportunity. People imagine time is an enemy because the clock seems to move so slowly when we’re having a root canal and so quickly when we’re doing what we love. But time isn’t the problem, the Curse is. Time isn’t the enemy, death is (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Time predated sin and the Curse. When the Curse is lifted, time will remain. Without the Curse, time will never work against us. We won't run out of it. Time will bring gain, not loss. The passing of time will no longer threaten us. It will bring new adventures without a sense of loss for what must end.

We'll live *with* time, no longer *under* its pressure. When we see God face-to-face, time will pass, but we'll be lost in him. We'll be busy exploring his universe, working on projects, fellowshiping with him and each other, listening to and telling great stories. We'll delight in time because it's part of what God calls "very good." It's a dimension in which we'll enjoy God.

When we say good-bye in Heaven, we'll know people won't die before we see them next. Time will no longer be an hourglass in which the sands go from a limited past to a limited future. Our future will be unlimited. We'll no longer have to "number our days" (Psalm 90:12) or redeem the time, for time won't be a diminishing resource about to end.

Theologian Henry Berkhof anticipates that time itself will be resurrected to what God created it to be:

Time is the mould of our created human existence. Sin led to the fact that we have no time, and that we spend a hurried existence between past and future. But the consummation as the glorification of existence will not mean that we are taken out of time and delivered from time, but that time as the form of our glorified existence will also be fulfilled and glorified. Consummation means to live again in the succession of past, present, and future, but in such a way that the past moves along with us as a blessing and the future radiates through the present so that we strive without restlessness and rest without idleness, and so that, though always progressing, we are always at our destination.<sup>200</sup>

Buddhism, which knows no resurrection, teaches that time will be extinguished. Christianity, solidly based on a resurrection of cosmic dimensions, teaches time will go on forever. For too long we've allowed an unbiblical assumption ("there will be no time in Heaven") to obscure overwhelming biblical revelation to the contrary. This has served Satan's purposes of dehumanizing Heaven and divorcing it from the existence we know. Since we cannot desire what we can't imagine, this misunderstanding has robbed us of desire for Heaven.





eternal perspective ministries  
with author Randy Alcorn

## Learn more about *Heaven*

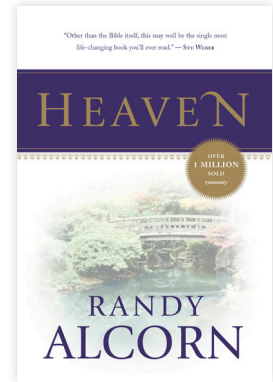
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## About Randy Alcorn

Randy is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries and the best-selling author of over 50 books (over nine million in print) including *Heaven*, *The Treasure Principle*, and the Gold Medallion winner *Safely Home*.

Randy resides in Gresham, Oregon with his wife, Nanci. They have two married daughters and five grandsons. He enjoys hanging out with his family, biking, tennis, research, and reading.



## About Eternal Perspective Ministries

Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM) is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to teaching principles of God’s Word and assisting the church in ministering to the unreached, unfed, unborn, uneducated, unreconciled, and unsupported people around the world. The common element in all of our writing and teaching ministry is an emphasis on seeing life through the eyes of eternity, and thereby learning to live now to the glory of God.

You can order all of Randy’s books and products through EPM’s online store at [www.epm.org](http://www.epm.org).