

HEAVEN DEFINED

Contrary to popular belief in the contemporary Church, according to Scripture there is not one, but three Heavens in the Universe created by God in the beginning (CP Gen 1:1). Note that *Heavens* is plural (except KJV Bible, where it is recorded in the singular form *Heaven*, although it is also plural in the **Textus Receptus** Mss from which KJV Bible is translated). The first Heaven is the atmospheric Heaven. This is the atmosphere surrounding the surface of the earth - the locality of the clouds (CP Gen 1:6-8; Psa 77:17-18; 104:1-3, 13). The second Heaven is the vast stretched out expanse of sky above earth's atmosphere where the sun, moon and stars are located - the Firmament (CP Gen 1:14-17; 15:5; 22:17; Psa 19:1; 150:1; Isa 13:13). The Third Heaven, or *Heaven of Heavens*, is the dwelling place of God - Paradise - where Jesus sits at God's right hand on the Throne of Heaven (CP De 10:14; 26:15(A); 1Ki 8:27, 30, 39, 43, 49; 22:19; 2Chr 6:18; 18:18; Neh 9:6; Psa 80:14; Isa 14:12-14; 40:22; 66:1; Eze 1:22-26; Amos 9:6; Mt 5:34; 6:9; 7:21; Lu 23:43; He 4:14-16; Rev 2:7; 3:21; 4:1-11).

It was the Third Heaven to which Paul was translated alive for a time of learning with Jesus Himself, shortly after he began his ministry (CP 2Cor 12:1-7). Jesus will descend from the Third Heaven with all the redeemed of God and the Angels of Heaven at His Second Coming for the Battle of Armageddon, to end the Great Tribulation (CP Rev 19:11-21). Although the Third Heaven is God's dwelling place, He is present everywhere - Omnipresent - which is what 1Ki 8:27 and 2Chr 6:18 above teach. Let us look at them again (CP 1Ki 8:27; 2Chr 6:18). *The Stories in the Heavens* in Amos 9:6 (KJV), refers to the spheres one would have to go through or the ascensions that would have to be made to reach the Third Heaven. Let us look at that passage of scripture again also (CP Amos 9:6). The **NKJV Bible** renders this "... *He who builds His layers in the sky*". The **NIV Bible** renders it "... *He who builds His lofty palace in the Heavens*". The literal English translation, according to **The Interlinear Bible** is "... *He who builds His staircase in the Heavens*" (CP also Gen 28:10-17). See also author's comments on Lu 23:43, 2Cor 12:7, He 4:14-16 and Rev 3:7-13 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament** and his studies *God's Perfect Self-Revelation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, and *The Six Days of Creation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 3)**.

It should be noted here before moving on that there is

an obscure teaching in the contemporary Church that Heaven, like earth, is a material planet. But there are no defining Scriptures in the Bible to prove that teaching, so it must be rejected out of hand completely (CP De 19:15; Mt 18:16; 2Cor 13:1 with 1Th 5:21).

Most Christians in the contemporary Church define Heaven as their final destination in Eternity where they will live forever with Jesus after their life on earth is finished. But that is not what Scriptures teach. Scriptures teach that the final destination in Eternity for all the redeemed of God - Old Testament Saints and New Testament Christians alike - is New Jerusalem, the Holy City, the City of God, which God promised to the Old Testament Saints and Jesus promised to New Testament Christians. It will come down from Heaven to earth at the end of Christ's Millennial - thousand years - Reign on earth. It will be the Seat of Government in the New Earth for both God and Jesus, as well as the habitation of all the redeemed of God, from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Tribulation, and will also include the Hundred and Forty-four Thousand Jews - the First fruits of a New Redeemed Israel - throughout Eternity (CP Isa 2:1-4; 65:18-23; Mic 4:1-3; Jn 14:1-3; He 11:8-16; 12:22-24; 13:12-14; Rev 3:12; 7:1-8; 12:1-5; 14:1-5; 21:1-22:19).

Scriptures unequivocally - clear and unmistakably - teach that New Jerusalem is the "Bride of Christ", not the New Testament Church as has been claimed by Christians for centuries. When the Angel took John to see *the Bride, the Lamb's Wife* in Rev 21:9-10 he carried John up to a mountain and showed him *the Holy City, New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God, prepared as a Bride, adorned for her Husband*. This is the complete and final revelation of the Bride of Christ in Scripture - nothing more, nothing less. We do not have to search for hidden meanings all the time in Scripture - just accept the literal teaching at face value, where it applies. As the final destination in Eternity for all the redeemed of God, New Jerusalem in the New Earth is also the final realisation of the Eternal Plan of God for man and the earth (CP Zech 2:10-11; 8:3; Isa 52:17; Eze 43:7). See also author's comments on Jn 14:1-3; 2Cor 11:2; Ga 4:21-31; Eph 2:15-16 (B), 4:13, 5:25-32; He 12:18-24, 13:14; Rev 7:1-8, 12:1-5, 19:7-9, 21:2, 21:3-8, 21:12-18, 21:23-25, 22:4 and 22:17 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.