

New Heavens

- Hebrews 12:26 Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also heaven (from Haggai 2:6)
- Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.
- Isaiah 65:17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.
- 2 Peter 3:7 – 13 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men...but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons out you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- “Heaven” or “heavens” can be applied in three ways. In Hebrew writing, the first heaven is where birds fly; the second heaven is where the celestial bodies are; and the third heaven is where God is. In the 2 Corinthians 12:1 – 4, “third heaven” and “Paradise” are synonymous.
- In the vast majority of cases in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Genesis 1:8), “heaven” or “heavens” clearly refers to the atmosphere or to outer space.
- The word “heaven” has been used by God as a physical illustration of the realm of spirits. In many contexts, the illustration and the reality are both present. For example, God “called from heaven” to many people. The physical understanding is that a voice came out of the sky. But also present is the image that God called from His dwelling place. In many places, people are told to “look to heaven,” having the physical meaning of looking upward, but also referring to where God dwells, which does not have a physical direction.
- Isaiah 65:17 and following refer to the eternal kingdom, where physical realities (weeping, death, losing the work of one’s hands to another) will be no more. Since the contrast is with the physical, Isaiah’s application concerns a kingdom of spirits, calling it “new heavens and a new earth.” The thought continues through the end of Isaiah. “The new heavens and the new earth” are contrasted to eternal torment in 66:22 – 24.
- 1 Corinthians 15:35 – 58 contains Paul’s argument directed specifically to the issue of the inhabitants of the kingdom of spirits. We will spend eternity in “spiritual bodies.”
- The phrase “new heaven and a new earth” has several applications. First, the fact that heaven and earth are both mentioned illustrates that everything will be new. All of the physical reality will pass away. Second, the spirits of faithful people are not simply transported to where God dwells. They will exist eternally in a created existence that is not currently inhabited. God will be in this new existence (Revelation 21:3). Paradise is good; the new heaven is better.
- The old dwelling of God needs renovation. Satan and his angels formerly had free access. A war happened there (Revelation 12:7 – 9), after which Jesus cleansed the furniture with His blood (Hebrews 9:11 – 12). Spirits can still choose to leave, as they have left before. According to 1 Corinthians 15:26, when physical death (the illustration of separation of a spirit from God) is destroyed, there can be no more flunking out of God’s presence. When a God-given illustration passes away, so does the thing it symbolizes. This is the new heaven.