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**THE GLORIOUS HEAVENLY HOPE**

**WHAT  
THE  
HEBREWS  
KNEW ABOUT  
HEAVEN**

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# THE GLORIOUS HEAVENLY HOPE

## *What the Hebrews Knew About Heaven*

Though the inspired writers of the Hebrew Scriptures did not write about the heavens as man's future home, they did write down several phrases about the heavens that help us to imagine our heavenly destiny. In the first book of the Bible, we are told:

“In the beginning God **created the heavens and the earth.**”  
– *Genesis 1:1* (*New International Version “NIV”*)

“Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the expanse and separated the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. And it was so. **God called the expanse Heaven.** So the evening and the morning were the second day.”  
– *Genesis 1:6-8* (*Modern English Version “MEV”*)

“And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs to indicate seasons, and days, and years. Let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth.” And it was so. **God made two great lights:** the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. **He made the stars also. Then God set them in the expanse of the heavens** to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. Then God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.”  
– *Genesis 1:14-19* (*MEV*)

“Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and **let the birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.**” – *Genesis 1:20* (*MEV*)

We acknowledge that a few Bible translations, such as the *New International Version* (*NIV*) which we use primarily in this series, selectively insert the word “sky” instead of “heaven.” But as this series of articles shows, these word can be interchanged because the sky, which reaches out into eternity, IS the heavens! This is shown in the following verse as translated in the *NIV*.

“Thus **the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.**” – *Genesis 2:1*

From the above scriptures, the first thing we learn about the heavens is that it includes created things! The stars, and the two great lights – the sun and the moon. We now know through scientific exploration that the “stars” are in actuality planets and galaxies and other solar and planetary systems. We are also told that the created birds fly in “the open expanse of the heavens.”

So the heavens, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, are not solely esoteric spirit planes. Much of the heavens are, in fact, planets and galaxies and solar or planetary systems that we can observe either with the human eye or with the aid of sophisticated equipment.

“Lift up your eyes and look to the **heavens**: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.” – *Isaiah 40:26*

But there’s more:

“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even **the highest heaven**, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” – *1 Kings 8:27*

“But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even **the highest heavens**, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?” – *2 Chronicles 2:6*

“But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even **the highest heavens**, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” – *2 Chronicles 6:18*

These writers use the phrase “the highest heavens.” That indicates that the heavens are arranged in some kind of hierarchy such that there are a series of heavens, and then a master heaven – the highest of them all! We suspect this master heaven – the highest heavens – is also material in nature or at least not completely spiritual because even the highest heaven cannot contain the Father.

We are also told:

“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? **They are higher than the heavens above**—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know?” – *Job 11:7-8*

“Is not God **in the heights of heaven**? And see how lofty are the highest stars! Yet you say, ‘What does God know? Does he judge through such darkness? Thick clouds veil him, so he does not see us as **he goes about in the vaulted heavens.**’ – *Job 22:12-14*

Here, we are told that where the Father dwells is in ‘the heights of heaven’ — a place higher than heaven. And that, in fact, he exists in the “vaulted heavens,” in other words, at the rooftop of heaven. So we now have identified at least three hierarchies of heaven – (1) the “heavens”; (2) the “highest heavens;” and (3) the “vaulted heavens.” We suspect this “vault” or roof is the actual spiritual, non-material, heaven because we are told the Father “goes about” in it.

So, what are the Father’s plans for the vast planetary heavens? We can learn something from the words of Isaiah:

“For this is what the Lord says— he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; **he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited**— he says: “I am the Lord, and there is no other.” – *Isaiah 45:18*

This scripture tells us that the Father does not create things “to be empty.” So since He formed the earth to be inhabited, we can safely assume that He formed most, if not all, of the other planets to be inhabited at some point. Science tells us our universe is billions of years old. If that is correct, it is likely that there are many other inhabited planets much older than our earth, that could very well be inhabited by humans much like ourselves. But given the vast distances between what we see as potentially habitable planets, it is unlikely that those on earth would have much interaction with those on other planets. However, there is another type of creature who has made an appearance on earth.

The Hebrew Scriptures tell us about a creation that is generically referred to as angels. Some angels act as messengers (*Genesis 16:7-12*), some are referred to as sons of God (*Job 1:6; 2:1 (MEV)*), morning stars (*Job 38:7*), holy myriads (*Deuteronomy 33:2*), seraphim (*Isaiah 6:2,6*), and cherubim (*Ezekiel 10:1-22*). We are also told about the archangel Michael, “one of the chief princes” (*Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1*). This indicates the Hebrew writers knew that the heavenly beings are also arranged in a hierarchy. Thus, we suspect there are many more angelic and heavenly creatures in the heavens who either have not had direct contact with humans on earth, or have not been revealed to us.

While the angelic beings exist in a form that is not perceptible to the human eye, they apparently have the ability to make themselves visible at will.

“The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.”  
– *Genesis 19:1*

“The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”– *Genesis 16:7-10*

The Christian writer, Paul, confirmed these encounters:

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”  
– *Hebrew 13:1-2*

We are also told that angels are made from a substance different, but not far different, from man:

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them **a little lower than the angels** and crowned them with glory and honor.”

– *Psalms 8:4-5*

Paul quoted this scripture when he wrote:

“But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them **a little lower than the angels**; you crowned them with glory and honor.” – *Hebrews 2:6-7*

From a scientific view, being made a little lower than angels could mean that man’s molecular structure vibrates at a lower rate than angels. We are on a lower frequency. Since we can only see things that vibrate on our own frequency, that would explain why we do not have the visual capability to see angelic creatures in their natural form. It would also explain how an angel could make itself visible, namely by slowing down its own rate of vibration.

It further seems likely that since our earth vibrates at the same rate as humans, the angels would have dwelling places that vibrate at their rate. So we can safely assume that some of the planets are not visible to the human eye, likely the “highest heavens.” And, of course, the “vaulted heavens” where the Father resides. Hmmm. But enough of science.

The point we are making is that it appears that the heavens are partly material (the heavens), partly spiritual (the vaulted heavens), and partly in between material and spiritual (the highest heavens). And it appears that the heavens are inhabited with different types of creatures. If the angels vibrate at a higher frequency than man, perhaps there are other creatures who vibrate higher than angels. And when we consider the vast gulf between God and man – from the earth, to the heavens, to the highest heavens, to the vaulted heaven – we can presume there are many different levels of beings that we could possibly encounter in the heavens.

In spite of the ancient Hebrew encounters with angels, nothing in their writing expresses a desire to live among the heavens, or contains any insight of heavenly life for humans. Neither do we read anything that invites them to enter the heavens. It simply was not in their world view.

But when Christ came, he advanced mankind’s spiritual view and correspondingly expanded his possibilities. Let’s see what we can glean from the writings of the Christian Bible writers of the New Testament in the next article, “**The Christian Revelations of Heaven.**”

We welcome your comments.

*“Elaia Luchnia”*