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THE
**SEVEN
HEAVENS**

MINI BOOK

MIKE MAZZALONGO

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14998 E. Reno

Choctaw, Oklahoma 73020

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I want to go to heaven.

No matter what happens here on Earth, the one thing that will make it all worthwhile is that after death I will open my eyes and find myself in heaven. I don't think this is a unique thought or desire. I believe that, if asked, most people would want the same thing.

The problem in our world is not the desire of mankind to go to heaven, the problem is that there are several "heavens" being

marketed out there. I'd like to review the various "heavens" that are being promoted so that you will know the difference between these and the one we are truly called to.

1. Material Heaven

This is the heaven that atheists are striving for. Atheists are those who believe that this physical universe is the only thing that exists. They come in all shapes and sizes. For example:

- Secular humanists
(man is at the center)
- Communists
(the state is at the center)
- Evolutionists
(nature is at the center)

Regardless of the type, atheists seek their heavenly reward here on this earth. It may be fame, wealth, power, pleasure, advanced intellectual achievement, even the pleasure of making the world a better place somehow. But material heaven is the one where all you will ever receive is here in this life because there is nothing after this life is over.

2. Mystic Heaven

Mystic heaven is the paradise promoted by most Eastern and Far Eastern religions. It is the heaven of the Hindus, the Buddhists, and all of the ancient nature religions of the Native Americans, Africans, South Americans, etc. It is the heaven of the ancient fables, gods and goddesses of the Greeks. In the mystic heaven of all types:

- You are immersed or swallowed up by the great force of the universe - (the Hindu religion calls it Brahma; Buddhists refer to it as Nirvana)
- Or, you join the pantheon of the gods (Greeks/Native peoples)

There are no historical foundations for the mystic heaven, simply stories and legends intertwined and handed down from generation to generation. The problem with mystic heaven is that the nature of the place and requirements for entry change from generation to generation as new religions and variations occur.

3. Earthly Heaven

I refer to the Paradise of Islam (Muslim religion) as one of the Earthly heavens.

Their view of heaven is the reverse of the atheists:

- Atheists look for heaven on earth
- Muslims look for earth in heaven

In other words, the promise is an afterlife that is very much like life on earth but without the natural restrictions. For example: good food, lovely companions, the total victory of Muslim ideology (Sharia law – which features a severe form of male domination).

A particular feature of Islam's heaven is that it appeals mainly to men and their human appetites. In their view there are levels in heaven and only a few reach the top tier to be with God.

4. Silent Heaven

Silent heaven is the heaven of those who view this world as a bad and scary place. It is the heaven of those who have made death their primary reference point.

Death is the mystery; death is the peak experience, murder and violence are the way to power and enlightenment. The Columbine shooters in Colorado believed in the silent heaven because once they tasted the glory of taking life by killing thirteen innocent people, they sent each other to silent heaven where there is no feeling or awareness - just the quiet sleep of death. Silent heaven is the place depressed and suicidal people desire in order to escape the painful experience of this life.

5. Sectarian Heaven

All those who think they are the only ones going to heaven because they've understood a special teaching or follow a certain "human" leader - these people are going to sectarian heaven. Just you and your special group are going to make it - this is at once the core teaching and appeal of this destination. For example:

- Mormons will spend eternity populating the planets of the universe - according to the writings of their leader and founder, Joseph Smith (1830)
- Jehovah's Witnesses will have 144,000 and only that number in their sectarian heaven - a teaching promoted by their founder, Charles Russell (1872)

- The modern Jewish religions also promote the idea that only their culture and nation will be revived to eternal glory

The biggest clue to knowing if you are headed for sectarian heaven is usually the fact that it's a heaven according to the ideas of one person and a pretty ordinary person at that.

6. Secular Heaven

Some believe that the universe itself is eternal (that it has always been). They can't prove this and it defies logic and science, however, they believe nevertheless and make secular heaven the basis of their faith system.

They also reason that all of history is circular where we simply go round and

round repeating the same events over again forever. The "big bang" is both the beginning and the end as everything is continually renewed for endless repetition. This is the basis of thinking for time travel and time tunnels in science-fiction movies where the hero who travels to the past is forbidden to change any event because doing so will cause the system to unravel. Fate is the by-word of those who believe in this circular theory of man's existence.

Heaven, in this worldview, is the ability to fit into the groove of history or find your spiritual balance (e.g. yin/yang). Many religions and self-awareness/improvement systems are built on this idea of becoming "one" with the world around you to find your "place" in the universe. You have found secular heaven when you have

learned where you fit in this never-ending world.

7. The Third Heaven

The third heaven is the heaven described in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 Paul refers to this place:

Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— was

caught up into Paradise and heard
inexpressible words, which a man
is not permitted to speak.

- II Corinthians 12:1-4

Note that he also refers to it as "Paradise."
The person he is referring to may be
himself and the occasion, a time when the
Lord revealed Himself to Paul. Others in
the Bible were permitted a glimpse of this
spiritual dimension while still in their
human bodies. For example:

ISAIAH

In the year of King Uzziah's death I
saw the Lord sitting on a throne,
lofty and exalted, with the train of
His robe filling the temple.

Seraphim stood above Him, each
having six wings: with two he

covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said,

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,

The whole earth is full of His glory."

- Isaiah 6:1-3

JOHN

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

- Revelation 4:1

If you examine the New Testament carefully you will note that Jesus Himself makes the most references to heaven. He usually says one of two things about it:

1. **It is a kingdom.**

Meaning that it has structure, rulership, a population of beings.

2. **It is where He and the Father dwell.**

Suggesting that this is the source of the power He displayed on earth.

Later on, we see Jesus also mention heaven as the ultimate reward for those who believe in Him as the Son of God (Luke 6:23). Peter explains it in detail in his first epistle:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

- I Peter 1:3-4

The reward Peter mentions is a state of perfection.

- Perfect peace with God
- Perfect virtue
- Perfect existence / experience / understanding
- Perfect joy / power / all perfected forever.

- Perfect everything because the causes of imperfection (Satan's influence/personal sin) will no longer exist.

Jesus defeated Satan and wiped away all sin at the cross (Romans 6:10). The third heaven (as Paul describes it) is Paradise, or the Kingdom of Heaven - these refer to the heaven of the Bible, the heaven promised and revealed by God in His word. It is not only different than the other heavens mentioned, a brief comparison with these will also show that it is superior in its essence and promises as well:

A. It is not a physical or material place.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" in John 18:36. The Bible likens it to physical things like gold and precious gems (Revelation) but this is imagery used to

describe its beauty, not its actual substance. It is experientially far greater than anything this world has to offer.

B. It is not a mystical place conjured up by the dreams of men.

Jesus says that He has come from this realm, returned to this dimension, and will come once again at the end of the world to bring the church into this place - where only He can lead the way (II Thessalonians 4:13-18). We know Jesus' description of heaven is accurate because His resurrection establishes His credibility (Romans 1:4).

C. The third heaven will be an experience completely unlike our earthly one.

Jesus says that there is no marriage there (no need for reproduction because there is no death) and we will take the form of angels (Matthew 22:30). Never mind better, Biblical heaven will not be anything like our earthly experience. We are transported there by faith because there is no physical power or delivery system here that can bring us there.

D. Biblical heaven is full of rejoicing angels and saints.

There is an awareness of self and others, as well as an appreciation of God's presence (Revelation 4:8-11). There is peace in heaven but not a silent, unconscious peace. There is peace because there is no cause for war or hatred, all are at peace with one another.

E. The third heaven is not populated by just a few of one sect or culture - but by people of every tribe on earth.

Rich and poor, male, and female, black or white and every shade in between. The common experience that all share is that they have all been cleansed from their sins in the blood of Christ and have remained faithful unto death.

This is not the commands or teachings of men, but the command and teaching of the Lord of heaven - Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

F. The heaven of Christ is eternal, but not in the cyclical way promoted by the "eternal matter" people.

In their scheme of things we continue forever in the same sequence of good and

bad - doomed to repeat everything on an endless treadmill. In the third heaven, however, everything will be made new without imperfection, and the guarantee is that it will always be this way (Revelation 21:21). If Jesus could inhabit a weak human body and live among sinful men in a fallen world where He was constantly tormented by Satan himself, and never sin (I Peter 2:21-22), imagine the quality of existence He can give us in a place where none of these impediments exist.

SUMMARY

There are many "heavens" promoted in our world today. I believe that this is one more way for Satan, in his disguise as the angel of light/knowledge (II Corinthians 11:14), to confuse and lead people astray.

There is only one real heaven, and it is the heaven described in the Bible.

We are not being "sectarian" when we say these things because this teaching is not from some guru, prophet, or religious teacher. We know that the third heaven is the legitimate heaven because only Jesus has been there (John 8:23-24), described it to us, and confirmed this fact with His resurrection.

No other person has these credentials, and no other teacher has a mountain of evidence that proves his claims are true. The great blessing here is that the third heaven is offered to all, and God has made no secret of it. The God of heaven, through His Son Jesus Christ, offers everyone the opportunity of joining Him there. Here is the way to the only heaven that exists:

1. Believe that Jesus is what the Bible claims He is, the Son of God, and be prepared to acknowledge this before others. Paul the Apostle says it this way:

...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.
- Romans 10:9

2. Repent of your sins and be baptized to receive forgiveness. Or as Peter explains,

Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 2:38

The process is not simply to believe in your heart or acknowledge that Jesus is your savior, but the entire process, from initial faith to final submission in the waters of baptism – this is what the God of Heaven has commanded us to do.

If you've not done this, you've not obeyed. If you've done more than this you've not obeyed. Of course, you can choose another heaven – each has its own promise. But if you want to be where Jesus is now, then faith, repentance, and baptism is the course to follow.

Please don't put it off because, unlike the third heaven, this world does have an end and when it comes there will be no tomorrow, only judgement (I Thessalonians 5:2-3).

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