

# Heaven and Earth E1 Final

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## What is the Old Testament referring to as "Heaven"?

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(40.52)

### Speakers in the audio file:

Jon Collins

Tim Mackie

## What is the Old Testament referring to as "Heaven"?

Jon: This is Part 1 of a discussion Tim and I have about the biblical theme of heaven and biblical theme of earth and how they relate. We made a video about this. It's on our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/thebibleproject](https://youtube.com/thebibleproject). It's a five-minute animated video. It gives you an overview of the idea.

If you watch that video and you want to know more about what the Bible has to say about heaven, God's space and earth, our space, and how they connect, these are the conversations for you. I'm so excited that you're listening to them. They have been instrumental for me in my Christian faith.

Also, the song playing - a lot of people have been asking - is by a band called TENTS. They're here in Portland. They're really good friends of mine. One of my favorite bands right now. You can find them [tents-band.bandcamp.com](https://tents-band.bandcamp.com). They have just a few tracks up there because it's a brand new band.

All right. heaven and earth part one. Here we go.

All right, where should we start?

Tim: The easiest place to start is where people in our culture, how they think about heaven, and where did those ideas of this nonmaterial kind of ephemera reality in the clouds. There's a gate where Peter's there—

Jon: In my mind, it's so abstract that I know it's not clouds. I know it's on a city on a cloud, but that's the only picture I really have.

Tim: Those images are so widespread. But think about what those are. Those are caricatures. They're silly. These images to the modern mind have become so ridiculous. They're kind of like this throwback to a thing that people used to think. But now we realize is silly so well kind of make it into a character in movies, comics.

Jon: So at some point, people thought, "Oh, there might be something up there in the clouds. As we think about what might be in the clouds, let's throw a city up there, let's throw I mean, who knows?" We've never been up there. We've never been to the clouds. Who knows what's up there? And now we've been up there. We've cruised around a lot. We've got a lot of photos.

Tim: We have lots of trash floating up—

Jon: We've brought a lot of trash up into the orbit. And there is no city, there is no pearly gates, but that image has remained. And so now, it seems so silly to your point, that we haven't thrown away the image but it's become this kind of absurd character.

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Tim: That's right. To me, it's an interesting route, which the biblical idea of heaven has ended up with that depiction of heaven in our culture. This idea of this is what Christians believe and this is why we know they're stupid and silly, this idea of heaven up in the clouds. So how do we get there?

Jon: Yeah, how do we get there?

Tim: Like most things, it's a series of half-truths or images or passages from the Bible that have been badly misunderstood or understood ignoring their context in literary or ancient cultural context. The way we started this video was just like, "Let's just study the word "heaven" and all the different ways that heaven is used in the Bible." And it's really interesting, super fascinating.

This trick might get old but for me somehow it never gets old, is the first time heaven appears in the Bible. This is staged.

Jon: In Genesis 1:1.

Tim: In the first sentence of the Bible. In the beginning, God made what we have in our Bibles, the heavens and the earth. Now that itself is really interesting. It's plural "heavens." We don't use that in modern English.

Jon: Is it plural in every translation?

Tim: Good question. Let's look

Jon: Tim's typing in at Logos Bible Software.

Tim: Wow. This is interesting. All of our modern translations have "In the beginning God created the heavens" - NIV, SV, New American Standard. But the King James 1611 has "heaven." Singular.

Jon: Singular heaven?

Tim: Yeah, that's interesting. Literally, that's a true reflection...the Hebrew word shamayim, well, there's debate about if it's a certain kind of special plural or regular plural. But it's plural. The heavens. Or in English, we might say the skies.

Jon: No, we wouldn't.

Tim: We don't say the skies?

Jon: We don't say the skies.

Tim: Lighting up the skies.

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Jon: You're right.

Tim: Flying through the skies. Why do I feel like the skies appear in plural in English advertising or something? Some airline or something.

Jon: The friendly skies.

Tim: Into the friendly skies. That's what I'm thinking of. Who's that? Who's the friendly skies?

Jon: I don't know. I'm going go with united...

Tim: The friendly skies.

Jon: ...which by the way is not the friendly skies. So I hope it's not that.

Tim: The friendly is united. Anyway. Fly the friendly skies.

Jon: Fly the friendly skies. "In a friendly airline." It should be the second part of that tag line.

Tim: So heavens. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, what that doesn't mean is, in the beginning, God created some strange place up in the sky where only He lives and where "don't you wish you could get there" kind of thing. And Earth is, "Oh, well, this is where we end up in it's secondary, and not that good."

I don't think anybody could just read Genesis 1 and realize that's not what those words mean. It's very simple what they mean. You just read through the account. The heavens are where the birds go later on in chapter 1, and it's what's up above. And earth certainly, doesn't mean globe too.

Jon: I'm sorry. Just to close the loop on the plural thing, it's plural in Hebrew?

Tim: It's plural in Hebrew.

Jon: But that's not because there's multiple skies, it's because there's so much of it, we just pluralize it? What's the idea there?

Tim: Oh, I see. That's just the Hebrew way of referring to what's up there.

Jon: The skies. The heavens.

Tim: There isn't a singular "heaven" in the Bible.

Jon: There's no singular way of referring to heaven.

## What is the Old Testament referring to as "Heaven"?

Tim: Not in the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew language, in the Old Testament, it's always "the heavens."

Jon: By nature, it's plural?

Tim: It's a plural word.

Jon: Is there anything in English that's that way? It's always plural. You can't singularize it. I just don't have a category for that. "English word that is always plural." Here. 12 nouns that are always plurals. Oxford dictionary. Trousers, scissors.

Tim: Yeah, you don't pick up a scissor.

Jon: Glasses, like eyeglasses. Clothes. That's interesting.

Tim: Put on your clothe. Yeah, you never say that.

Jon: I'm going to skip this one. I don't. This is marginalia.

Tim: Oh, marginalia.

Jon: Shenanigans, loggerheads, cahoots. They're just getting weirder. So clothes and scissors and glasses, those are all examples of an English word that's always plural. So, is that the same thing here?

Tim: I'm looking up in the Standard Hebrew Grammar by the Wilhelm Gesenius. He calls it a plural of extension. So there's a handful of Hebrew words that are always plural because they seem to be made up of multiple complex interacting parts. So "water" is in Hebrew always "the waters."

Jon: I always call it the internets because there are so many moving parts to it.

Tim: There's so many moving parts to it.

[00:09:16]

Tim: So heaven. Simple meaning of the word "heaven" or the "heavens" in the Bible is the sky.

Jon: When you told me this originally, my initial question is, is that where ancient Hebrew thinker thought God was in the sky?

Tim: Right, right. This is what's interesting is that there are many places in the Old Testament where God's space or His presence is placed in the sky. What's interesting is that it's almost always poetry. Specifically, if you

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read those passages in context, it's almost always connecting the location of God's presence in the sky was some kind of meaning - as an image of something.

I just threw two examples in your notes. Psalm 11 says, "The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne - or his throne and the heavens. From there he observes everyone on earth and his eyes examine them."

So what do we mean when we say God's in heaven? Well, heaven's up high. It's above everything. That gives God a vantage point to look down and see everything that humans are doing. So the image of God's presence being up high is an image of his status above. It's his vantage point. It's an image of transcendence.

Another example is Psalm 103:19. "The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all." If you just do a word search in the Bible of heaven with the words "throne" or "kingdom" or "rule," you'll just get a ton of hits.

So when the biblical authors want to talk about God as the king who rules or has a throne, they'll often place that "throne" in the heavens. It makes sense in English. We have even idea in English of to be exalted. To be exalted over something means that you're more important, you have authority over it.

So when the biblical authors want to use images to talk about God status: He's the king, He rules, they place his presence in heaven. It's always poetry and it's almost always connected to an image or a metaphor. So could we sit Moses or David down and be like, "Do you really think God lives up there in the sky?" I don't know. I have no idea.

We tend to think of these ancient people groups as being primitive are simple-minded, and they are clearly not. Clearly, these authors wrote some most brilliant literary works that we still read today. So they're not dummies.

Jon: But they didn't know certain things that we take for granted.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That the earth isn't flat.

Tim: That's right. The earth isn't flat; the earth doesn't have a solid dome over it as is envisioned in Genesis 1. The earth isn't flat, doesn't float on the sea.

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Jon: Because that's another thing you showed me - you kind of diagrammed it out - was that an ancient understanding of this whole space is that you have earth, it's flat, it's built on pillars...

[crosstalk 00:12:44]

Tim: Yeah, the pillars of the earth.

Jon: The firmament, right?

Tim: Well, that's just the land. The firmament is how the King James translated the dome.

Jon: Okay, okay. So there's the earth, there's the dome, which is above the earth.

Tim: Yes, that blue thing.

Jon: When you wake up, and you just see blue around you, it does look kind of like a dome. That's the firmament?

Tim: In King James, it's the firmament? In many English translations, it's called the expanse.

Jon: The Expanse. Such a great word.

Tim: In the New Revised Standard Version, it's called the dome. In Hebrew, it's the Rakia, which means a solid thing, that which has been hammered out smooth like a shield.

Jon: Curved.

Tim: Yeah. That's the Rakia.

Jon: And that's different than the heavens?

Tim: Which gets named the heavens.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: In Genesis 1, God makes the Rakia and he called it the heavens. That's where the birds go. So in their conception, the blue thing is solid. Again, there's water above it because occasionally water comes down from there.

Jon: Yeah. So it must be coming from somewhere.

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Tim: Yeah, but not all the time. It just sometimes. Which means there's some mechanism to release the waters in Genesis—

Jon: The idea is the stars are in it?

Tim: The stars are shining objects placed in the Rakia. It's just a different conception of—

Jon: Now, if you sat Moses down, and you said, "Explain to me the Rakia," he'd be like, "Yeah, it's this dome. It's this solid thing and the stars are in there."

Tim: "And God's throne is above it."

Jon: "And God's throne is above it." And if you said, "Is God's throne really above it or is that a metaphor?"

Tim: Then he would also say, "Well, God's throne is also in that tent that's in the center of the camp." That's getting ahead of ourselves.

Jon: Right. Okay. I guess my point is, they're not dumb, but that is how they thought of the world.

Tim: Correct. Their cosmic geography was flat earth, solid dome. The earth's floating on the deep abyss of waters because if you dig down far enough, you eventually get to waters. But how does it not sink all the time? Well God put it on pillars. The foundations of the earth keep it suspended above the watery abyss. It's just the biblical conception of the physical construction of the world.

So the biblical authors, for them, the highest most exalted place within their cosmic geography is to be above the heavens or in the heavens. So that's where they envision God's space.

Jon: And you think if you would have pressed them, they'd have been like, "Yeah, I don't know. It's up high."

Tim: Right, it's up high.

Jon: It's exalted.

Tim: It's exalted, transcended overall. Just because the biblical author uses a metaphor or an image doesn't mean the thing is referring to isn't real. It just means that we shouldn't mistake the reality for the metaphors. The metaphor is trying to give us a grasp on something that's so real, we can only describe it as being like things that we experience or something like that.



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Jon: I guess the thing I would want to know though is, is it possible that the author didn't know they were using a metaphor?

Tim: Correct. And that is the question when we're talking about cosmic geography here. Did the author of Genesis 1 think "it's not actually solid that blue thing in the sky, but I'll just say it is because that's what all my neighbors think." Like, "No, actually ha...

Jon: And you thought that?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then if you said, "Is the throne really above?" He'd be would be like, "I don't know if it really is."

Tim: Sure. But we can't stop here because the biblical authors didn't think that God's presence and space was limited. We know that they believed that God's presence was accessible here on earth and that God's space in heaven, his throne in heaven overlapped with earth.

For me, that's a clue that for them, it's not that simple to just say, "Well, God lives up there." He also lives down here, and those are both true at the same time.

Jon: So obviously there's some sort of complexity in their thinking.

Tim: That's right. This kind of lead us to the next thing. When we want to talk about God as exalted and ruler overall, and separate, and transcendent, they'll talk about his throne up in heaven. But the biblical authors also have a conception that God's space that is exalted is accessible and overlaps here with earth where we live. It overlaps and intersects. And this is where really the whole biblical vision of what temples are unfolds from that idea - the overlap of heaven and earth.

In the video, we drew those with the two circles of Venn diagram overlapping.

Jon: So, to say that sky is overlapped with earth, you're like, "No, that was a metaphor. We're talking about something else now. We're talking about God's presence."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. So you have this little idea of the heavens and the earth, Genesis 1:1, the sky and the land. But then biblical authors will use "the sky" as a way of talking about the nature of God space. That it's high, it's transcendent, it's authoritative, it's where He sees everything and rules everything. And "earth" is where we live, it's below the heavens, it's subservient to it.

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But then to talk about heaven as God's space where his unique presence is and that it overlaps with it, you have to say, "Okay, we're dropping the sky thing and now we're talking about just heaven as God's personal presence."

Jon: Because if we just had the sky thing, then we wouldn't have this sense of God's presence with us, which is an important understanding, which then brings us to the idea of the temple.

Tim: That's right.

[00:19:18]

Tim: The Israelites, but not only the Israelites - as far as we can tell it was a common conception among Israel's neighbors too - the temples are this place where the divine space and human space meet and overlap. But for Israel, had the conviction that it's God wasn't just a tribal regional God, but the creator of all it is. So this is the overlapping of the creator's divine space with human space.

There's a story in the book of Genesis where this gets unpacked. And it's really cool because it's about this very concept of the surprising places where heaven and earth overlap. And it's the story Jacob's dream at night out in the field and Genesis 28.

So he's running from his family; his brother wants to kill him. And so, he's hungry and tired and running away and he goes to sleep in a field and he has this dream. In this dream, he sees a ramp or sometimes translated a stairway. It's definitely not a ladder.

[crosstalk 00:20:29]

Jon: ...ladder.

Tim: Yes, even though that becomes really popular way of it. So it's don't think of a ladder with rungs. Think a huge stone stairway or—

Jon: Like would have been part of those - what are those called?

Tim: The ziggurat.

Jon: The ziggurat?

Tim: Yeah. Or a ramp. Sometimes those weren't stairways but just steep incline ramp so they could roll things up and down and so on. The word occurs only here in all of a Hebrew literature in the story.

Jon: Oh, really? So we don't really know exactly what it is?

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Tim: Not precisely. Is it stairs or ramp? But it's the kind of ramp that would be on the ascent to an ancient temple.

Jon: That's cool.

Tim: And what he sees are the inhabitants of God's space, which are angels, God's messengers and they're ascending and descending throughout space on the ramp.

Jon: So like to an ancient reader, they'd be like, "He's dreaming about a temple."

Tim: Yeah, he's dreaming about a temple. Yes, that's right, he's dreaming about a temple.

Jon: They'd be like, "Oh, he's dreaming about a temple where he's—

Tim: "Where heaven and earth meet and where the divine space is, all of a sudden, open and accessible to human space."

So he wakes up from the dream. So God speaks to him and affirms the promises to Abraham to him. And then he wakes up from the dream and he says, "Oh, my gosh, God was in this place and I didn't know it." So he names the place Bethel, which means House of God. Then he makes an offering on some stone alter that he makes. And then later an Israelite shrine temple is actually built on that spot that the prophets refer to, and so on.

So God's space and human space overlap. And heaven is meant to overlap earth. But Jacob lives in a world where that's surprising. It's not you walk around any corner and just be like, "Oh, here's where heaven and earth overlap."

Jon: "Here's the hotspot."

Tim: It's surprising. Somehow heaven on earth—

Jon: It's like for us, I walk around the city and expect to have Wi-Fi everywhere. So it's like someone coming and being like, "Whoa, there's Wi-Fi everywhere" and they expected just to be...They are in like a couple spots.

Tim: Hotspots. That's what we call them.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Hotspots of God's presence.

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Jon: So Jacob realizes this is a hotspot.

Tim: This is a hotspot. And so he makes an offering, later the Israelites build a temple there to enshrine the idea that this is one of the special places where heaven and earth overlap.

Jon: And so, here's Jacob going, "Whoa, something's happening in here. There's a divine presence here overlapping in a way that it's not in other places."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Now, to get ahead of ourselves, but because it's a cool illusion, Jesus refers to the story. There's a story in John 1 where Jesus approaches a guy named Nathaniel and says, "Hey, you're a man of integrity. There's no deceit in you." It's the first time they've met apparently. Nathaniel's like, "What? How do you know who I am?" And Jesus says, "Oh, I saw you hanging out under the fig tree earlier today." He's like, "What? You're the Son of God? Who are you?"

And then he says, "Listen, you think I'm impressive just because I saw you prophetically under a fig tree earlier today. Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending." He's quoting that story from Genesis 28. "You will see heaven open and you're going to see a place where heaven and earth meet and where heaven has a highway going to and from earth from God's space." But it's not the stairway.

He says, "You'll see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Which was Jesus were referring to himself. So Jesus is taken up the story about a unique meeting place of heaven on earth, but he's made himself the stairway, the ramp. "So you think it's impressive that I knew where you were earlier today, but actually I'm calling you to join my circle of followers as the people who understand that I am the place where heaven and earth truly meet." It's very cool.

Jon: Yeah, it's cool.

[00:25:43]

Jon: So Jacob stumbles upon a place where heaven and earth overlap. Is this the first time in the Bible that we have that realization that heaven and earth overlap?

Tim: It's a good illustration of the story of the surprising place where heaven and earth overlap. But actually, the first time it occurs, this is the whole vision of what the Garden of Eden is in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, where all creation is depicted as God's space and human space at the same time.

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So you get this temple imagery connected to Genesis 1 and 2, like the seven-day process of Genesis 1. It was John Walton, a Hebrew Bible scholar who drew attention to this, that the seven-day process of Genesis 1 has an interesting connection to the seven-day consecration feast that Solomon had when he inaugurated the temple in Jerusalem. And we know this from other ancient Near Eastern texts - of this practice. So he thinks Genesis 1 is alluding to this.

Jon: To a celebration. A temple celebration.

Tim: Yeah, a temple celebration after the completion of all creation in Genesis 1. Then, it's actually all of the garden imagery is temple connected. Because if you go read the descriptions of the tabernacle and the temple later on in the Old Testament, they're using all of that garden imagery to describe the inside of these sacred spaces.

Jon: So the first idea is that all of earth is a temple/

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Or at least the garden?

Tim: Yeah. Or the earth is heaven.

Jon: Or the earth is heaven.

Tim: The heaven is earth and earth is heaven. They overlap. God's space and human space, as we said in the video, they overlap.

Jon: And I think what's confusing them when we say, "earth is heaven," we're using that the English way, not the Hebrew. The skies are the—

Tim: Correct.

Jon: We're saying, "God's space." Is that why you always use "God's space" instead of "heaven" just to draw more clarity?

Tim: That's right, yeah. There's heaven literally a sky, and there's heaven as an image or metaphor of God's space. But God's space isn't only up in the sky, it's also here on earth.

Jon: It's here on earth.

Tim: Yeah. And in the story of the Bible, it begins with God's space completely overlapping with human space. That's the ideal. That's the whole point is for God and humans to be in the same space. That's the image of the Garden of Eden. That's why all of the temple imagery echoes back to the Garden of Eden. That's why this description of the new creation in the

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prophets also goes back to the Garden of Eden to describe this ideal vision of where God's space and human space overlap.

Another interesting story we didn't talk about in the video is, this is how the Israelites conceived of their temple. So the story in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah is in the temple in a vision, and he sees the God of Israel, but it's all cloudy, but what he actually sees is God's lower half. He says, from the waist down he saw the train of his robe - from the waist down - filling the temple.

So he sees the lower half of a throne and the lower half of these royal robes flowing out in the temple that becomes smoke in the vision. So where's God's top half? It almost certainly hits the ceiling.

Jon: The temple.

Tim: Yeah. So it's the image that God's lower half is right here and that his top half...It's almost like the temple has a portal to God's space - heaven.

Jon: Got it. Is it the same way that that ramp thing was like a portal?

Tim: Yeah, that's right. So Isaiah's vision of seeing the lower half of God is similar to Jacobs vision of the ramp. God is simultaneously in his space and in our space at the same time. And that's heaven. In that image gets unpack later in the book of Isaiah. In chapter 66, God says - in the first verse of that chapter, "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. What then is a house that you can build for me?"

Jon: Bethel.

Tim: Yeah, that's interesting. So it's acknowledging even like, "Listen, actually, all of creation is heaven, the skies, which are all creation..."

Jon: "That's where I sit."

Tim: "Listen, the whole earth is my footstool." So this temple is a place where heaven and earth overlap.

Jon: So if I were to be here, my presence was going to be here fully, I would be sitting across all the skies and my feet would be resting all of the earth.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: So if you're going to think about this in this metaphor, it's big. I mean, I'm everywhere.

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Tim: I'm everywhere. And that's what Solomon...he has an interesting prayer in 1 Kings 8, where he inaugurates the temple. He has this prayer. His opening prayer is, "Oh, God of Israel, creator of all, the heavens and the highest heavens can't contain you." And then he says, "So how much less is this little house, temple able to contain you?" That's his inaugural prayer is to like diminish the importance of the temple.

Jon: You make this beautiful, amazing temple and be like, "Yeah, not so great."

Tim: Yeah. Once again, I think we're seeing the sophistication of these people. That for them they didn't actually think this is the only place where God lives in this little building.

Jon: "We got him in here, he's ours now."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. For them, it's an image. It's a pointer to the reality that all of heaven is God's temple, all of earth is his footstool. He's everywhere. But this temple marks a unique hotspot. There's something unique about the space where God's presence is especially accessible or present with his people.

Jon: In the same way, there was something unique about Bethel.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: You just said, "The heavens, even the highest heavens?" What's that about? Is there layers of heavens?

Tim: Yes, that's one. Let me just look it up. It's very fascinating. 1 Kings 8. Here we go. 1 Kings 8. This is so interesting.

What Solomon says in 1 Kings 8 is he says, "Can God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the heavens of the heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built."

Jon: The skies of the skies?

Tim: Yes. It's almost an absurd image literally kind of the way we might say a gazillion. Something like that.

It's like, "Oh, yeah."

Jon: My germs have germs. Have you heard that? I don't know. "I'm so sick my germs have germs."

Tim: Yeah. I'll kill you dead. So it's taking something that we know there's a limit to and then giving it an even greater limit or something.

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Jon: It could have been that, but it couldn't have been that maybe Solomon was like, "Who knows what's beyond the skies? Maybe more skies."

Tim: I think that's true. This lead to...we know it led to later on tradition and speculation about layers or tiers of heaven. There's a unique passage. Paul refers to a vision that he has in 2 Corinthians and he calls it the third heaven.

Jon: That's right.

Tim: He says, "I know a man speaking of himself—

Jon: Where is this?

Tim: This is in 2 Corinthians 12 - Paul refers to a vision that he has. He talks about himself anonymously. "I know a man in Christ, who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether I was in my body or out of the body, I don't know. God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know, God knows, was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things." So Paul's talking about a very powerful vision he had while he was in God's presence.

Jon: He calls it the third heaven.

Jon: He calls it the third heaven. Isn't that fascinating?

Jon: And we don't know what he means?

Tim: Well, I think what Paul's using is an image drawn from this Jewish tradition of speculating about tiers of heaven.

Jon: That might have started with Solomon.

Tim: Yeah, or that Solomon is expressing something that [inaudible 00:34:17] to. Isn't that interesting?

Jon: Yeah, it's interesting.

Tim: The third heaven. What is that? 2 Corinthians 12. Do you want me to see what some commentators say about that?

Jon: Sure.

Tim: Paul Barnett. Let's see what Paul Barnett...it's a good commentary. "What does Paul mean by his use of the third heaven?" asks Ralph Martin in his commentary. "A survey of all the existing literature provides no clear answer to the question. The New Testament is relatively silent concerning



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the number of heavens that we know exist in other Jewish cosmology. The idea of the heavens lines up to a three-fold division for.

Oh, 1 Kings 8, he references. In this threefold division. We know from other literature, there's the atmospheric heaven, a stellar heaven, and then the limitless [SP] spiritual heaven of God's space. Well, that's interesting. They're saying that this idea is acknowledging there's where the birds go, there's where the stars are, that thing, the Rakia and then above that, which is God's transcendent kingdom space. That's interesting.

But this conclusion is not certain for another Jewish literature. There are different numbers of tiers of the heavens. Anyway.

Jon: But here's the significance, if I can try to summarize, is that it's important to think about where does God live, whereas God's divine presence. The first mentioned of it is with us. It's just everywhere.

Tim: It's heaven and earth connected together.

Jon: It's creation.

Tim: Yes. creation itself is God's space.

Jon: And God's with Adam and Eve in some special way.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. It's the ideal vision of the purpose of humans to be these partners with God in heaven and earth, but a place where humans have freedom and responsibility to work with God in the garden commission.

That's as far as the story went, and we needed to name, the idea that God's presence was there. We wouldn't use the word "sky." We would just say, "Here." Where does God live? Here.

Tim: Yeah, God's in this place as Jacob says.

Jon: God's in this place. Then later, we start hearing biblical authors refer to where God's presence is in the sky. And that's where the word "heaven"...that word literally means "sky."

Tim: Would literally means sky.

Jon: And then we took it to just mean "Oh, it's the place you go to when you die." But really, it's just the sky as a way to explain how God's presence is transcendent from us. It's higher. It's got more authority.

## What is the Old Testament referring to as "Heaven"?

Tim: And very often talking about God's space in heaven is in the context connected with God's rule, or kingdom or authority. In the Old Testament, there's no concept of you going up to that space.

Jon: At all?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Didn't someone get zapped up?

Tim: Elijah is swept up into the heavens. But the whole point is those are so unique and unrepeatable that that's not—

Jon: No one else is going to get beamed up there.

Tim: No. Humans go into the dirt. In the Old Testament, you're buried. That's where you go after you die - into the grave. The whole point is that the idea of humans going up to God space in the heavens, that it's not a hope or portrayed as something...That's not the point. Actually, what's way better is for God to come here because this is where we live.

Jon: Yeah, God's kingdom is going to come and be here.

Tim: Temples are the pointers to the reality that God's presence should ought to and will one day once again permeate all of his world, just like it was back in the ideal. Which raises the question, well, where did it go? Where did God space go? Why is Jacob surprised? Why is it random, remote, unique places where you meet God's presence and find heavens? Why isn't it everywhere anymore?

That is how this whole set of concepts is a really a cool way of looking at the story of the whole Bible as the story of the reunion of heaven and earth.

Jon: That's it for Part 1 of heaven and earth. Up next is Part 2. We're going to talk about Jesus and how he thinks of himself as Jacob's ladder, although it's not really a ladder. How he said, "Tear down this temple and I'll build it back in three days," and how he was referring to himself as the temple, as the place where heaven and earth connect in himself. It's a really great conversation. So join us for Part 2.

If you haven't watched the video, it's on our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/thebibleproject](https://youtube.com/thebibleproject). Check them out. You can also find us on Facebook, [facebook.com/jointhebibleproject](https://facebook.com/jointhebibleproject), and Twitter, @JoinBibleProj. Thanks a lot for listening and we'll catch you next time.