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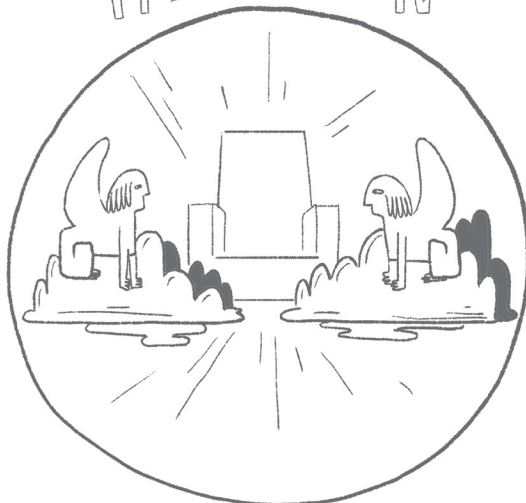


STUDY GUIDE

This study guide will be most helpful if you work through it slowly with an open Bible looking up all the references. Grab some friends and do it together!



HEAVEN



EARTH



1

In the Bible the word “heaven” is used in different ways depending on the context.

It can refer simply to “the sky.”

GENESIS 1:1

PSALM 68:34

PSALM 148:13

It can refer to “God’s space,” using the sky as a metaphor to describe God’s transcendence over all things.

DEUTERONOMY 26:15

PSALM 2:4

PSALM 115:2-3

ISAIAH 66:1

God’s space is in contrast with “earth/land” which is human space.

PSALM 115:16

There is also recognition that God isn’t literally located in the sky, but rather his presence fills all creation.

1 KINGS 8:27

ISAIAH 6:3

JEREMIAH 23:24

2

Heaven and earth are depicted as distinct but overlapping dimensions of divine space and human space.

Check out the following biblical stories that explore or assume this overlap:

JACOB'S DREAM OF ANGELS AT BETHEL

GENESIS 28:10-17

Notice how the place he lies down becomes a 'connecting point' between heaven and earth (28:12). He says "the Lord is in this place" and so he names this place, which is located on earth, "the gate of heaven" (28:17).

MOSES' ENCOUNTER WITH GOD AT THE BURNING BUSH

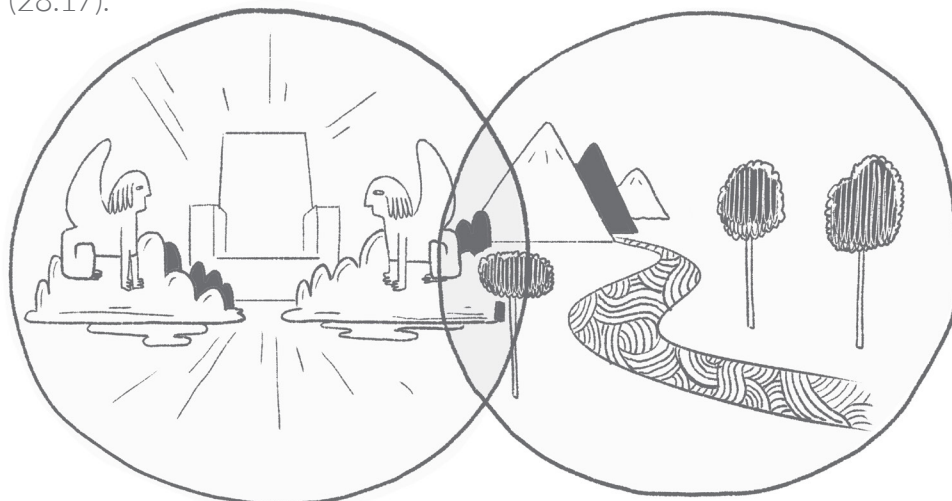
EXODUS 3:1-6

Notice in 3:5 how the space around the bush is called "holy ground," i.e. space that is marked by God's presence. See the similar story about Joshua near Jericho in Joshua 5:13-15.

MOSES' ENCOUNTER WITH GOD'S PRESENCE ON MT. SINAI

EXODUS 19:9-12

Note the descriptions of God's presence that are appearing on earth!



3

In the Bible these overlapping spaces of heaven and earth are specifically associated with Temples.

The garden in Eden is the archetypal place where heaven and earth fully overlap and humanity and God dwell together.

GENESIS 2

The two temples described in detail in Exodus and 1 Kings are full of images and materials designed to recreate the garden scene.

EXODUS 25-31

1 KINGS 6-7

God says the express purpose of the temple is to dwell among and meet with his people.

EXODUS 25:22

EXODUS 29:42-46

Solomon acknowledges that God's presence fills all of creation, however he has chosen to become uniquely present in his chosen temple in Jerusalem.

1 KINGS 8:27-30



4

Animal sacrifice is established as a means for dealing with Israel's sin and injustice which enables God to remain in their presence.

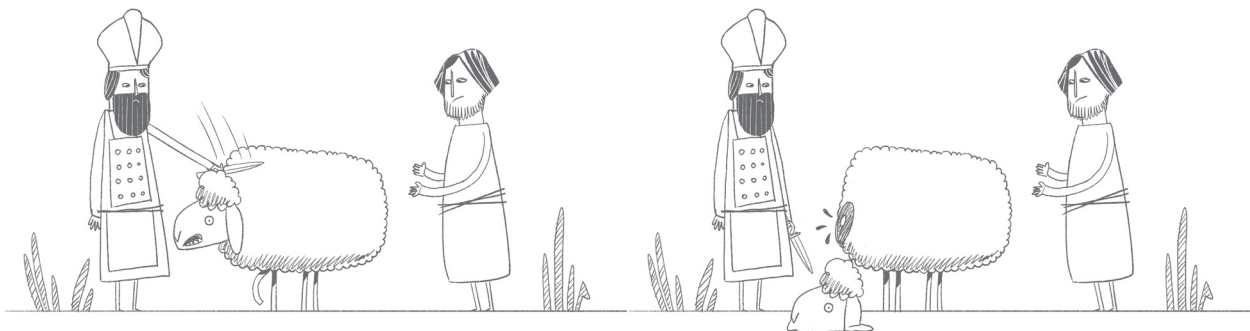
The animal's life is offered in place of the one offering for their sin.

LEVITICUS 16

On the Day of Atonement two animals are sacrificed for the sins of Israel. Note how in 16:21-22 the priest confesses Israel's sin and places it symbolically on the animal.

LEVITICUS 17:11

"For the life of a creature is in its blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the alter; it is the blood that makes atonement."



5

In the New Testament Jesus is described as the temple where heaven and earth overlap as well as the animal sacrifice offered for sin.

JESUS AS THE TEMPLE

“Made his dwelling” is intentionally connecting to Exodus 29:44-46.

JOHN 1:14

Jesus clears the Jerusalem temple and claims that he is the temple.

JOHN 2:18-22

“The fullness of God’s presence” is a reference to Isaiah 6:3.

COLOSSIANS 1:19, 2:9

JESUS AS THE SACRIFICE

Jesus is a lamb who carries the world’s sin.

JOHN 1:29

Jesus is a Passover Lamb

1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

Jesus’ death was like a Day of Atonement sacrifice.

1 PETER 1:18-19

6

Through the presence of Jesus among his followers by the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes a temple where God's space and human space overlap.

THE CHURCH AT PENTECOST

ACTS 2:1-4

The fiery cloud coming to rest over each person refers back to the divine fire resting over the temple in Exodus 40:34-38.

THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

Jesus' followers are described as a temple where God's presence dwells by his Spirit.

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS AS STONES IN THE TEMPLE

1 PETER 2:4-5

Peter describes Jesus' followers as stones that make up God's temple.

7

New Creation is a rejoining of heaven and earth.

1

Jesus, Peter, and Paul all speak about God's future restoration of all creation as the ultimate goal of Christian hope.

JESUS

MATTHEW 19:28

“

the renewal of all things

”

PETER

ACTS 3:21

“

the restoration of
all things

”

PAUL

ROMANS 8:21

“

creation itself will be
liberated from
bondage to decay

”

2

The Christian's ultimate destiny is resurrection life in the new creation.

LUKE 23:42-43

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-24

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9

3

The new creation is described with language and imagery from the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle and temple.

GENESIS 1-2

EXODUS 25-31

1 KINGS 6-7

4

The Bible ends in Revelation 21-22 with the heavenly presence of God being fully rejoining and integrated into earth.

REVELATION 21:10, 22

But what happens when I die?

CHRISTIANS HAVE THE COMFORTING HOPE OF BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS AFTER THEY DIE.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

ROMANS 6:4-5

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

1

WHAT ARE THE IMAGES THAT COME INTO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF “HEAVEN”? WHERE DID THOSE IMAGES AND IDEAS COME FROM?

2

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE BIBLICAL PASSAGES THAT SHOW HEAVEN AND EARTH AS “OVERLAPPING” SPACES? IS THIS A NEW CONCEPT FOR YOU? WHAT ARE ITS IMPLICATIONS?

GENESIS 28:10-17

EXODUS 3:1-6

EXODUS 19:9-12

3

LOOK UP ALL THE PASSAGES MENTIONED IN POINT 5 WHERE JESUS IS DESCRIBED IN THE LANGUAGE OF TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS BEING TALKED ABOUT IN THIS WAY?

JOHN 1:14

JOHN 2:18-22

COLOSSIANS

1:19, 2:9

4

IS THE IDEA OF HEAVEN AND EARTH REJOINING AT THE END OF THE BIBLICAL STORY A NEW CONCEPT FOR YOU? READ REVELATION 21-22 AND DISCUSS HOW IT DIFFERS FROM POPULAR CONCEPTIONS OF THE END OF THE WORLD.

REVELATION

21-22

