

## PASSAGES OFTEN MISAPPLIED TO GOING TO HEAVEN

As stated earlier a search of an exhaustive concordance reveals that the word *heaven* is never shown to be the destiny of Christians. Also the texts of Philippians 1:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; John 14:2; Philippians 3:14; Hebrews 6:19-20 and 12:22-24 are only assumed by tradition to refer to going to heaven by the earlier false assumption that Jesus remains indefinitely in heaven (Acts 3:21). In fact, the word *heaven* is not mentioned in most of these texts; however, the Scriptures do show that humans do not have an immortal immaterial soul which can depart at death; that the dead are truly dead and such death is likened to ‘sleep’ through which there is no awareness of the passage of time. This going-to-heaven tradition originated with the acceptance of the pagan teaching that humans have a naturally immortal soul, in spite of the fact that Christians are directed to seek immortality (Rom. 2:7). Furthermore, the Scriptures show that the promised destiny of Christians is immortal life in a paradise earth.

With these facts in mind, we can now examine these more difficult passages in light of our understanding of the earlier Scriptures with a plain meaning.

### PHILIPPIANS 1:21-24 “*HAVING THE DESIRE TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST*”

This phrase is commonly used to teach that at the moment of death a Christian will immediately be in heaven with Jesus. But what did Paul really mean?

- ❖ “For to me, to live is Christ and **to die is gain**.<sup>22</sup> But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.<sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire **to depart and be with Christ**, for that is very much better;<sup>24</sup> yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.”

#### *THE TIMING OF THE EVENT WHEN ONE WILL BE WITH JESUS*

The following two Scriptures in particular show that being with Christ cannot be at the moment of death. These are *1 Corinthians 15:22, 23* and *1 Thessalonians 4:17*. Now 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 concerns the first resurrection and verse 17 says:

- ❖ “...*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up **together with them** (the resurrected ones) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord*” (*1 Thess. 4:17*).

This shows that the first resurrection will occur in total **at one time**, namely when Jesus returns “in the air”, so that it is a one-time event. This is confirmed when Paul also says:

- ❖ “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will **be made alive**.<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s **at His coming**...” (*1 Cor. 15:22, 23*).

So no Christian can be with Christ until Christ returns. Furthermore, the context within Philippians shows that Christians will see Christ first only on “*the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 1:6, 10). So scripturally the entire process of resurrection for all Christians will happen at Christ’s future return and so not at the point of their death.

#### *DEATH IS LIKENED TO SLEEP*

The Scriptures liken death to sleep (Ps. 13:3) which **negates the passage of time**, so then when a Christian dies there is **no awareness of time** and so, for him, the next moment is his being with Christ at Christ’s return. So Philippians 1:22-24 is a statement showing that for the Christian his **relationship with Christ remains unbroken** even with the event of death.

## SUMMARY

So Philippians 1:21, 23 does not teach that at the moment of death a Christian will immediately be in heaven with Jesus because the rest of the Scriptures teach that:

1. Humans do not have an immortal immaterial soul which can depart at death (*Rom 2:7*).
2. Christians will “not be found naked” or “unclothed” i.e. not living as disembodied after death (*2 Cor. 5:3, 4*).
3. The dead are truly dead (*Eccl. 9:5, 10*) until they are resurrected.
4. Death is likened to ‘sleep’ (*Ps. 13:3*) through which there is no awareness of the passage of time.
5. The promised destiny of Christians is immortal life on a paradise earth (*Prov. 11:31; Ps. 115:16; Luke 23:43*). There is no promise of going to heaven in the Scriptures (*Rom. 15:8*).
6. Christians will only be with Jesus when he returns from heaven to resurrect and reward them (*1Cor. 15:22, 23; 1Thess. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 3:20; Acts 3:20, 2*).

So we can read Philippians 1:21, 23 as:

- ❖ “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (*relief from suffering and being with Christ*) ...<sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, (*because for Paul or any Christian his next waking moment, by means of resurrection, is with Christ at his return - the parousia – 1Cor. 15:22, 23; 1Thess. 4:17*) for that is very much better.”

Paul’s option of dying would be so that he is relieved of all his suffering (2 years of imprisonment) and his next experience would be his being with Christ at Christ’s return. It is in this sense that for Paul “**to die, is gain.**” So, too for other Christians - they need never fear death because if they should die or be killed, the next thing they will know is that they are with Christ when he returns to earth.

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1–9 - “ABSENT FROM THE BODY – AT HOME WITH THE LORD”

This phrase also is commonly used to teach that at the moment of death a Christian will be in a bodiless state and be in heaven with Jesus. But what did Paul really mean?

- ❖ “For we know that if the earthly **tent** which is our **house** is torn down, we have a **building** from God, a **house** not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>2</sup> For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be **clothed** with our **dwelling** from heaven,<sup>3</sup> inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found **naked**.<sup>4</sup> For indeed while we are in this **tent**, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be **unclothed** but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.<sup>5</sup> Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are **at home in the body** we are **absent from the Lord**—<sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight—<sup>8</sup> we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be **absent from the body** and to be **at home with the Lord**.<sup>9</sup> Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him” (*NASB*).

Paul here demonstrates his desire to be absent from his present mortal, dying body in which he and all Christians “groan;” and he wants to be “**clothed** with our **dwelling** from heaven...because we do not want to be unclothed [absent from the body] but to be clothed.” But what is this “**dwelling** from heaven” and does this mean that one is disembodied at any time?

## THE MEANING OF THE TERMS IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5

In these verses Paul writes figuratively using the metaphors of *tent*, *house*, *building*, *being clothed* or *unclothed (naked)*, and *at home* or *absent from home*. So a Christian will be clothed with a dwelling (not a garment). So:

- “The earthly **tent** (*flimsy*) which is our **house**” refers to ***our current mortal dying body***. (“The body of death” Rom. 7:24).
- The “**building** (*permanent*) from God, a **house** not made with hands,” and the “**dwelling** from heaven” refers to the ***future immortal body***.
- Being “**not found naked**” or “**unclothed**” refers to ***not living as disembodied after death***.
- Being “**at home in the body**” refers to ***being in our current mortal dying body***.
- Being “**absent from the body and** to be **at home with the Lord**” refers to ***being without our current mortal dying body because we have been granted the immortal body at the time of Jesus’ return*** (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

So there is no space or time for Christians to be living as disembodied persons. Here Christians are seen as either living in their ***current mortal dying bodies*** or having been given their ***immortal bodies***. As with Philippians 1:21-24 the passage of time in death is passed over as the time of “sleep.”

## THE CONTEXT

1. Firstly, Paul sets the scene in the previous chapter in 2 Corinthians when he notes:

“...that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also **raise us up with Jesus**, and **will present us with you**” (2 Cor. 4:14).

Here we get further confirmation that the resurrection that Paul had just spoken about in 1Corinthians 15 will occur for ‘God’s people’ all at the same time.

2. So **1 Corinthians 15:22-24, 35-54** is the key to understanding 2 Corinthians 5:1-9 because both have the same context of resurrection at Christ’s second coming.

From 1 Corinthians 15:35–39 we learn that in the resurrection there will be continuity between the two states of the body – mortal and immortal.

From 1 Corinthians 15:51 we see how the *mortal state of the living* will be **changed** to being an immortal state.

From 1 Corinthians 53, 54 Paul informs us that: “*that which is mortal must put on immortality;*” and so he is saying the same as in 2 Corinthians 5:5 about being “clothed” ” where he also says that: “*what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.*” Life here means the transcendent life i.e. immortality, imperishability, and power.

So the Christian’s desire is that, whilst alive, he will put on the immortal state of the body. This is not a desire to lose the existing body because verse 4 says that we: “*will not be found naked*” or “*unclothed.*” So at no time is anyone disembodied, but the mortal body puts on immortality, not at the time of death, but at the resurrection when Jesus returns as we shall see in a moment.

## THE TIMING OF THE EVENT WHEN ONE WILL BE WITH JESUS

Again we must reference **1 Corinthians 15:22-23** where Paul tells us:

- ❖ “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will **be made alive**.<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s **at His coming**...”

So the being “**made alive**” will occur **only** at the second coming of Jesus when he resurrects us. This timing is further stated in 1Thessalonians 4:17. Additionally Paul stated to Timothy that:

- ❖ "...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me **on that day**; and not only to me, but also **to all** who have loved His **appearing**" (2 Tim. 4:8).

So this shows that the Christian's rewards are granted only when Jesus returns. This is all linked with "the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:14) "when the Son of Man comes in glory" to "repay every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27).

So 2 Corinthians 5:2-4, 6, 8 fits entirely with this scenario and has nothing to do with any 'immortal soul' going off to Jesus at the point of death. Yet because Jesus' future parousia/Kingdom has not yet occurred/arrived, living Christians remain absent from him. This is a spatial, geographical metaphor i.e. at home or absent from home. Here Paul prefers, **as a living Christian**, to "*be with the Lord*" and clothed with immortality **when he returns at the parousia** (1 Thess. 4:17). This is when "Death is swallowed up forever" for Christians (1 Cor. 15:54). However, if Paul should not live till then, he expects, by means of resurrection, "to be with the Lord" **at the parousia** (1 Cor. 15:23) and so he must patiently wait as he stated in Philippians 3:20-21:

- ❖ "But our citizenship is in **heaven**, and **from it we await a Saviour**, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (ESV).

#### SUMMARY

So 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 contains no thought of the pagan Greek idea of anyone living as a disembodied person or as one who must later be re-embodied, and so does not teach that at the moment of death a Christian will be in a bodiless state and be in heaven with Jesus. This is because this passage concerns the same subject as the 'resurrection chapter' 1 Corinthians 15 which shows that: "*that which is mortal must put on immortality*" (vss. 53, 54) as a parallel thought to what Paul also says in 2 Corinthians 5:5 i.e. "*what is mortal will be swallowed up by life* (Gk *zoe*)." Life here means the transcendent life i.e. immortality, imperishability, and power. Furthermore, the rest of the Scriptures do not teach that at the moment of death a Christian will be in a bodiless state and be in heaven with Jesus because:

1. Humans do not have an immortal immaterial soul which can depart at death (Rom 2:7).
2. Christians will "not be found naked" or "unclothed" i.e. not living as disembodied after death.
3. The dead are truly dead (Eccl. 9:5, 10) until they are resurrected (1Cor. 15:22, 23).
4. Death is likened to 'sleep' (Ps. 13:3) through which there is no awareness of the passage of time.
5. The promised destiny of Christians is immortal life in a paradise earth (Prov. 11:31; Luke 23:43). There is no promise of going to heaven in the Scriptures (Rom. 15:8).
6. Christians will only be with Jesus when he returns from heaven to resurrect and reward them (1Cor. 15:22, 23; 1Thess. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 3:20; Acts 3:20, 2).

So we can read 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 as:

- ❖ "“For we know that if the earthly tent (*the mortal dying body*) which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed (*at the parousia – 1Cor. 15:22, 23; 1Thess. 4:17*) with our dwelling from heaven (*the immortal body*), <sup>3</sup> inasmuch as we, having put it on (*the Greek verb means ‘to put one garment on over another’*), will not be found naked (*not living as disembodied after death*). <sup>4</sup> For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed (*not living as disembodied after death*) but to be clothed (*with the immortal body*), so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life ... <sup>6</sup> and knowing that while we are at

home in the (*mortal dying*) body we are absent from the Lord— ...<sup>8</sup> we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the (*mortal dying*) body and to be at home with the Lord (*at his parousia and in our immortal bodies*).

Therefore, Christians need never fear death because “if their house is torn down” by dying or by being killed, the next thing they will know is that they are with Christ when he returns to earth.

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#### JOHN 14:2 – “IN THE HOUSE OF MY FATHER THERE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES”

This is expressed figuratively just as the kingdom of Israel was called “the house of Israel.” Also, the temple was God’s house.

##### WHAT IS THE FATHER’S HOUSE?

- ❖ “...for the judgment to begin at **the house of God**” (1 Pet. 4:17).  
*The house of God refers to God’s people as prospective members of the kingdom.*
- ❖ “Now Moses was faithful in all **God’s house** as a servant ... but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And **we are his house**...” (Heb. 3:5-6 ESV).
- ❖ “...for we are **a temple** of the living God” (2 Cor. 6:16 S&G).
- ❖ “The slave does not remain in the **house** forever; the Son remains forever” (John 8:35).

##### INTERPRETATION

- “Many dwelling places” i.e. *the ample space for all in the kingdom. Possibly the individual Christians in whom God and Christ will live (verse 23) and so giving them reassurance.*
- “...to prepare a place (*it does not say ‘in heaven’*) for you.” i.e. *the preparation for the Kingdom is by means of Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension.*
- “I will *come again* and will take you to myself” i.e. *at the parousia to set up the kingdom.*
- “...that *where I am* you may be also” i.e. *in the Kingdom on earth.*

So just as with Philippians 1:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 5: 1-8 so also John 14:2 does not teach that at the moment of death a Christian will immediately be in heaven with Jesus, because the rest of the Scriptures teach that:

1. Humans do not have an immortal immaterial soul which can depart at death (Rom 2:7).
2. Christians will “not be found naked” or “unclothed” i.e. not living as disembodied after death (2 Cor. 5:1-9).
3. The dead are truly dead (Eccl. 9:5, 10) until they are resurrected (1Cor. 15:22, 23).
4. Death is likened to ‘sleep’ (Ps. 13:3) through which there is no awareness of the passage of time.
5. The promised destiny of Christians is immortal life in a paradise earth (Prov. 11:31; Luke 23:43). There is no promise of going to heaven in the Scriptures (Rom. 15:8).
6. Christians will only be with Jesus when he returns from heaven to resurrect and reward them (1Cor. 15:22, 23; 1Thess. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 3:20; Acts 3:20, 2)

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## PHILIPPIANS 3:14 “THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD”

The interlinear rendering is: “...the prize of the **high calling** (Greek ‘*ano*’) of God” (UBS). However, it is rendered in many translations as: “*the prize of the upward call of God*” and interpreted in the NIV paraphrase as “*God has called me heavenward*” (also in most paraphrased versions) as if to imply that Paul would be going to heaven. However, the Greek word *ano* means ‘**above**’ as in “*the Jerusalem above (Gk ‘ano’)*.” It is really God’s calling of Christians to the higher reward of the first resurrection at Christ’s coming (1 Cor. 15:24). Marshall’s interlinear renders it as: “**The above calling.**” It is rendered as: “*the high calling*” in ASV, Young’s, NSB, KJV and all earlier Bibles, “*the high call*” in Moffatt, “*the call from above*” in Wuest, “*the higher calling*” in the Unvarnished NT, and “*my reward the honour of being called by God*” in Phillips. Furthermore, when the HCSB, GWT, and ISV use the phrase “*God’s heavenly call,*” this is simply descriptive of the quality of the call because it is from God. It does not refer to any supposed departure to heaven for the Christian. Similarly with the NLT’s rendering of: “*the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*”

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## HEBREWS 12: 22-24 – “ENROLLED IN HEAVEN”

- ❖ “But you **have come to Mount Zion** and to the city of the living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who **are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

Christians on earth, figuratively/spiritually, already “have come to Mount Zion” to God and to Christ as mediator in heaven. This is the pre-existent heavenly New Jerusalem as the archetype of the future Jerusalem. So Christians make, not a literal, but a spiritual ascent to heaven.

### CHRISTIANS ARE “IN CHRIST” AND SO ARE SPIRITUALLY WITH HIM IN HEAVEN

Jesus is literally in heaven and Christians are **now “in him”** i.e. in association with or in union with him so “that they [are] one even as [Jesus and his Father] are one” (John 17:11). Faithful Christians are symbolized as branches attached to Jesus who is “the true vine” (John 15:1-5). This situation is one that they experience throughout their lives until Christ returns to be literally/physically with them.

### CHRISTIANS ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

- ❖ “But our **citizenship is in heaven**, and **from it we await a Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ...”  
(Phil. 3:20).

The following texts are not teaching that Christians proleptically (i.e. the future stated as now existing in anticipation) will literally go to heaven. This is because it is “*from [heaven] we await a Savior.*”

### SPIRITUALLY SEATED WITH CHRIST IN HEAVEN

- ❖ “...and raised us up with him and **seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...**”  
(Eph. 2:6).

Living Christians are currently “raised us up with” Jesus “and seated...with him.” So they are **viewed by God as though they are now in heaven**, that is, they are spiritually in heaven with Christ even though they are and **always will be on earth.**

NOTE: The one exception will be when Christians will be “in the air” i.e. earth’s atmosphere for a short period at the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

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## HEBREWS 6:19-20 – “JESUS – A FORERUNNER ON OUR BEHALF”

- ❖ “We have this [*hope*] as a sure and steadfast **anchor** of the soul, a hope that enters into **the inner place behind the curtain**, where Jesus has gone as *a forerunner on our behalf*, having become *a high priest* forever...”

## SPIRITUAL ACCESS TO THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

- ❖ “These preparations having thus been made, **the priests** go regularly *into the first section*, performing their ritual duties, but *into the second only the high priest goes*, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that *the way into the holy places is not yet opened* as long as the first section is still standing (which **is symbolic** for the present age). ... <sup>11</sup> *But when Christ appeared as a high priest* of the good things that have come, then through **the greater and more perfect tent** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus *securing an eternal redemption*. ... <sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into **heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God **on our behalf**” (*Heb. 9:6-9, 11, 12, 24*).

The sanctuary structure (Gk. *naos*) on earth comprised two sections: the Most Holy and the Holy Place. In the heavenly original sanctuary Jesus entered into both these sections—“the true things” in heaven itself. So because of Jesus’ literal entry into the heavenly Most Holy it is now possible for Christians to enter spiritually (Eph. 2:6 and Phil. 3:20) into “the holy places” in heaven. Also the term *forerunner* highlights Jesus as being the first fruits of the New Creation and that his high priestly service “*on our behalf*” makes it possible for Christians to approach God in priestly service. So they too are viewed as being in “the holy places” spiritually speaking. Because it was only the high priest in Israel who physically entered within the curtain, it is only Christ who literally enters heaven. It is **our hope** that is anchored behind the curtain because our high priest is there standing before God on our behalf. This secures for the Christian the purification that enables him to draw close to God, but in no way implies that Christians will go physically “behind the curtain” by going to heaven.

## THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

It is in “the holy places” that the priestly spiritual sacrifices and services of Christians are now offered by Christians on earth as:

- ❖ “... a spiritual house, to be **a holy priesthood**, to offer **spiritual sacrifices**” (*1 Pet. 2:5*).
- ❖ “Do you not realize that you are a temple of God...” (*1 Cor. 3:16 NJB*) and YLT: “Know ye not that ye are a sanctuary of God.”

*NOTE:* The Christian Scriptures differentiate between the literal temple both in Jerusalem and in heaven as being “**the** temple” and Christians as being metaphorically “**a** temple.”

- ❖ “Therefore, brothers, *since we have confidence to enter the holy places* by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the **curtain**, that is, through **his flesh**, and since we have *a great priest* over the house of God let us **draw near** with a true heart in the full assurance of faith” (*Heb. 10:19-22*).

The Christian priesthood does not “enter the holy places” physically, but rather it is figuratively a drawing “near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith” so that, **now**, here on earth, we may have free entry to God through our high priest.

#### GOD'S THRONE IS IN THE HEAVENLY MOST HOLY

The temple is the place of God's throne (Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 43:6). More specifically, in ancient times, it was in the Most Holy that God's presence was to be found by the high priest and it was the cherubim located **within the Most Holy** compartment that were envisaged as forming the throne on which Yahweh sat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1).

❖ “**Let us** then with confidence **draw near to the throne** of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (*Heb. 4:16*).

*Because this is a present tense admonition Christians cannot literally/physically “draw near to the throne of grace” in heaven—so it is in a figurative/spiritual sense that they do so:*

❖ “After this I looked, and behold, **a door standing open in (the) heaven!** And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘*Come up here*, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once ***I was in the Spirit***, and behold, **a throne stood in heaven**, with one seated on the throne ... 6 and **before the throne** there was as it were **a sea of glass**, like crystal”

(*Rev. 4:1, 2, 6*).

This is not any kind of literal taking of John to heaven in the 1<sup>st</sup> century or even a picture of the future rapture. There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that John is representative of the body of Christians. He was, in fact, spiritually in God's presence in the heavenly sanctuary in preparation to receive the visions that he was to record.

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#### CHRISTIANS ON EARTH AS SPIRITUALLY IN HEAVEN IN THE END-TIME IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

##### THREE REALMS OF HUMANITY

“**THOSE DWELLING IN HEAVEN**” — Symbolic of **Christian Holy Ones**.  
(Heaven is associated physically with Mount Zion).

1. “**THOSE DWELLING ON EARTH**” — Symbolic of **followers of antichrist**.  
(The earth is associated physically with Palestine).
2. “**THOSE DWELLING IN THE SEA**” (the abyss) — Symbolic of **Satan's domain**  
(The sea is associated physically with the Mediterranean).

##### **THOSE DWELLING IN HEAVEN**

❖ “Therefore, rejoice, **O heavens** and **you who dwell** (Gk. *skynontes*) **in them!** But woe to you, **O earth and sea**, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (*Rev. 12:12*).

❖ “It [*the beast out of the sea*] opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and **his dwelling**, that is, those who dwell (Gk. *skynontas*) **in heaven**” (*Rev. 13:6*).

It is sometimes assumed that the phrase “*those who dwell in heaven*” is a reference to angelic beings. However, all derivatives of the Greek verb *skynoo*, which means “to dwell” or “to tabernacle,” are used in the Scriptures with reference only to humans and to God rather than to angels. This fits with the fact that in Daniel 8 “the holy ones” on earth are called “*the host of heaven*.” Hence the phrase is symbolic of Christian Holy Ones who, although literally on earth, are spiritually in heaven and are actually viewed as God's dwelling.

##### BECAUSE THEY ARE GOD'S DWELLING CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED “HEAVEN”

❖ “Rejoice over her, **heaven, you holy ones**, apostles and prophets. For God has judged your case against her” (*Rev. 18:20*).

The NAB, NRSV, REB, Amplified Bible and UVNT all set “heaven” in apposition to “holy ones.” This shows that the holy ones are actually called “heaven” and figuratively “dwell in heaven” although they are literally on earth.

**THOSE DWELLING ON EARTH** - (Symbolic of Followers of antichrist).

- ❖ “It was granted to him [*the beast out of the sea*] to make **war with the saints** and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. **All who dwell on the earth** will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (*Rev. 13:7, 8*).

**THOSE DWELLING IN THE SEA** - (Symbolic of Satan’s domain).

- ❖ “The great prostitute who is seated on **many waters** ... and the angel said to me, “The **waters** that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are **peoples** and multitudes and nations and languages” (*Rev. 17:1, 15*). *Also see Isa. 17:12*.

- ❖ ““But the wicked are like the **tossing sea**; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for **the wicked**” (*Isa. 57:20, 21*).

*This might include the rivers and springs of water although not so turbulent* (*Rev. 8:10; 16:4*).

#### SPIRITUALLY IN THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE IN THE TIME OF THE END

The book of Revelation provides pictures of Christians in the time of the end from several different aspects i.e. the 144,000, the Holy Ones, the Great Multitude and the Bride. They are all shown to be before the throne of God in the temple sanctuary which, throughout Revelation, is the *naos*—the building housing the *Holy* and the *Most Holy* compartments rather than the *hieron*—the entire temple complex. The following passages in Revelation also show Christians, while on earth before, during and after the Great Tribulation to be spiritually in heaven with Christ. As with the earlier Scriptures Revelation is also not presenting a proleptic view as though Christians will one day literally be in heaven, but rather it demonstrates their holy position “in Christ” at the time of the Great Tribulation.

#### *THE SEPARATING OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE WORLD*

- ❖ “Then I was given a long cane like a measuring rod, and I was told, “Get up and **measure God’s sanctuary** (*naos*), and the altar and **the people** [*the Holy Ones*] **who worship there**; but exclude *the outer court* and do not measure it; because it has been handed over to the gentiles—they will **trample the holy city** for forty-two months” (*Rev. 11:1 NJB*).

Here Christians are seen to be spiritually in the heavenly sanctuary. Because they worship in the heavenly sanctuary they will be separated from the world. The measuring done here is that of judging who will be sealed for spiritual protection (7:1-8) during the 42 months of trampling. John, here, is alluding to the trampling of “the host of heaven” in Daniel 8:11. *NOTE*: The altar is most likely the altar of incense.

#### *THE INVITATION FOR CHRISTIANS WHO ARE CONQUERING*

- ❖ “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who **has the key** of David, **who opens** and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you **an open door**, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name ...” 10 ‘Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from **the hour of trial** that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize **your crown**. The one who conquers (Lit. *conquering*), I

will make him a **pillar in the temple [sanctuary]** of my God. *Never shall he go out of it*, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem...” (Rev. 3:7-8, 10-12).

- ❖ “You have made them [*the Holy Ones*] a kingdom and **priests** to our God, and they shall reign on earth” (Rev. 5:10).
- ❖ “...a **white robe** (Gk. *stole*) was given each of them [*martyred Holy Ones*]” (Rev. 6:11).

*NOTE:* The *stole*, translated “robe”, as worn by the martyred *Holy Ones* and the **Great Multitude**, was a robe of rank – a **stately robe** and was “the best” robe provided for the prodigal son. Because Christians are shown to be priests, then, whenever the white robe is mentioned it indicates their priesthood.

### DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION CHRISTIANS ARE SPIRITUALLY IN THE SANCTUARY”

❖ “...*behold a great multitude*...from every nation, from all **tribes** and peoples and languages ... standing **before the throne** and before the Lamb, **clothed in white robes** (Gk *stole*) ... crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb ...’ These are the ones [*a great multitude*] **coming out of** the Great Tribulation. They have washed their **robes** and made **white** in the blood of the Lamb ... they are **before the throne** of God, and **serve him** day and night **in his temple** (sanctuary *naos*). They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, *nor any scorching heat*. For **the Lamb in the midst of** the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:9, 10, 14-17).

*This description of the Great Multitude of Christians shows them serving figuratively as priests even though they are seen to be still “coming out of* the Great Tribulation”. The *scorching heat* may be a reference to the fourth bowl of God’s wrath. After the Great Tribulation is over these Holy Ones are seen as being figuratively “*beside the sea of glass*” in the temple:

❖ “And I saw what appeared to be *a sea of glass* mingled with fire—and also those [*the Holy Ones*] who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, **standing beside the sea of glass** with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways...’” (Rev. 15:2-4).

*NOTE:* Revelation 4:6 states that “**before the throne** there was a *sea of glass*, like crystal” This is likely a reference to “the bronze sea” that was outside the *naos* and in the courtyard of the priests in Solomon’s temple for their ceremonial washing.

### AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION — THE RAPTURE

The great multitude of Christians is described in Revelation 19:1 as “in heaven.” Many times in the book of Revelation the word “the heaven” is a reference to the sky (Gk. *ouranios*). So too with Revelation 19:1 as presented in the UVNT “*After that I seemed to hear the sound of a great multitude of people in the sky saying...*” This matches the description of the rapture into “the air” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) and being “caught up in a cloud” (Rev. 11:12). This is further indicated because the marriage of the Lamb mentioned in verses 7, 8 takes place on earth (Luke 22:18):

❖ “After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of *a great multitude* in (the) **heaven [i.e. the sky]**, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God’ ... 6 Then I heard

what seemed to be the voice of *a great multitude*, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his **Bride** has made herself ready; it was granted her to **clothe herself with fine linen** (Gk. *byssinos*), **bright and pure**’— for the fine linen is the *righteous deeds of the saints*” (Rev. 19: 1, 6-8).

CHRISTIANS ARE THE ARMIES OF HEAVEN

❖ “And **the armies of heaven**, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses” (Rev. 19:14).

KJV, NKJV and Weymouth give: “armies **in** heaven” YLT and Darby give: “armies **in the** heaven” which is according to the literal Greek.

The UVNT translates *ouranos* as “sky.” This would most likely make the original meaning: “**the armies in the sky.**” These are the Christian “Holy Ones” because they are dressed in the same garment as the Bride (fine linen Gk. *byssinos*) and are the same as **the host of heaven—the saints** in Daniel 8 below. Also they are “the called and chosen and faithful” (17:14) that are associated with Christ when he battles the ten kings:

❖ “Out of one of them came a little horn ... 10 It grew great, even to **the host of heaven**. And **some of the host** and some of the stars *it threw down* to the ground and *trampled on them* ... 12 And **a host** will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. 24 His [*little horn*’s] power shall be great — but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, *and destroy* mighty men and the people who are **the saints**” (Dan. 8:9, 10, 12, 24).

The descriptions in both these passages show them to apply to faithful Christians during and just after the time of the Great Tribulation. They are not in heaven where God is located but either they are in “the air” just after the rapture or they are being viewed as belonging to heaven.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of biblical texts in STUDY 5 showed that God’s plan for mankind is to inherit the earth as God intended it to be and with mankind granted perfection and immortality. From this it is evident that He does not intend for any of humankind to be in His literal heavenly location, other than Jesus’ temporary time there in acting as our mediator and high priest. From this study it is evident that Christians belong to God and to Christ and that whilst Christ is in heaven Christians are called “heaven,” “dwellers in heaven” and have a spiritual access to heaven in acting as priests by the offering of spiritual sacrifices in the heavenly sanctuary. This arrangement applies also during and immediately after the Christian experience of the Great Tribulation. Only in this spiritual way are Christians “before the throne of God” in heaven. They are never shown in the Scriptures to be literally there.

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