

# The Three Heavens: A Biblical Journey Through the Skies

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## **The Three Heavens: A Biblical Journey Through the Skies**

Most believers have never been taught to distinguish between the three heavens described in Scripture, yet understanding these realms can transform how you perceive God’s Word. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible refers to “heaven” over 500 times, but the term doesn’t always mean the same thing. In Genesis 1:20, heaven is where birds soar. In Psalm 19:1, it’s the cosmos declaring God’s glory. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul describes being caught up to the *third heaven*, a place he calls paradise, where he heard “inexpressible things.” Three distinct contexts, one word—heaven. Misinterpreting these can obscure the truth God intends for us. This article takes you on a journey through the three heavens: the physical sky we see, the cosmic and spiritual battleground beyond, and the divine throne room of God Himself. By the end, you’ll never read “heaven” in the Bible the same way again.

### **The First Heaven: The Sky Above Us**

The first heaven is the most familiar—it’s the sky we see every day, though we rarely think of it as “heaven.” In Genesis 1:20, God commands the waters to teem with life and the skies to fill with birds that “fly across the expanse of the heavens.” The Hebrew word *pene* (face) describes this expanse as the open sky where birds soar, clouds gather, and winds sweep across the earth. This is the atmosphere—the air we breathe, where weather forms and rain falls.

Deuteronomy 11:11 describes the Promised Land as one of hills and valleys that “drinks water from the rain of heaven.” This first heaven is where God’s provision and judgment are displayed. Rain signifies blessing, watering crops and sustaining life, as seen in the covenant rainbow of

Genesis 9:13—a promise visible in the sky. Conversely, drought, like the one Elijah declared in 1 Kings 17:1, signals judgment, with the heavens “shut” until repentance comes.

Psalms 19:1 declares, “The heavens proclaim the glory of God; the skies display his craftsmanship.” Every sunrise, storm, and gentle breeze in this first heaven testifies to God’s faithfulness, power, and provision. Jesus pointed to this realm in Matthew 6:26, urging us to “look at the birds of the air” that neither sow nor reap, yet are fed by our Heavenly Father. The first heaven isn’t just a backdrop; it’s God’s canvas, actively revealing His presence in our daily lives.

### **The Second Heaven: The Cosmic Battleground**

Beyond the clouds lies the second heaven—a vast, mysterious realm of cosmic wonder and spiritual warfare. Genesis 1:14-17 describes God placing lights in the “expanse of the heavens” to mark days, seasons, and years: the sun, moon, and stars. To the ancient Hebrews, this was the cosmic heaven, a breathtaking expanse far beyond human reach. Psalm 8:3 marvels, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?”

Yet, this second heaven is more than a celestial display. It’s a spiritual battleground where angelic and demonic forces clash. Ephesians 6:12 reveals that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against “rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” These “heavenly realms” are not God’s throne but the second heaven, where spiritual conflict unfolds.

A vivid example is Daniel 10:12-13, where an angel tells Daniel his prayers were heard from the first day, but the “prince of the Persian kingdom” resisted the angel for 21 days until the archangel Michael intervened. This demonic entity, operating in the second heaven, delayed God’s response—not because of divine neglect but due to unseen spiritual warfare. This realm reminds us that some delays in answered prayers may stem from battles we cannot see.

The second heaven challenges us to persevere in prayer, as Daniel did, and to put on the “full armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11). It’s a place of beauty and conflict, where God’s purposes prevail despite opposition. Understanding this realm deepens our faith, encouraging us to trust God’s timing amid delays.

### **The Third Heaven: God’s Throne Room**

Beyond the stars and spiritual battles lies the third heaven, the holiest and most awe-inspiring reality—God’s own dwelling place. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul describes being “caught up to the third heaven,” a place he calls paradise, where he heard “inexpressible things” not

permitted to be told. This is not the sky or the cosmos but the divine throne room, where God reigns in unapproachable holiness and peace, untouched by conflict or corruption.

The third heaven is referenced when Jesus speaks of “your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9), pointing to God’s sovereign presence, not the clouds. Revelation 4:2-3 offers a glimpse: a throne in heaven, with One seated on it, surrounded by a rainbow and elders worshiping. This is the ultimate destination for believers, where God’s glory is fully revealed, and His will is perfectly accomplished.

Understanding the third heaven reorients our perspective. It’s not just a future hope but the source of our present strength. Our prayers ascend to this throne, where God hears and responds, even if the second heaven delays the answer. This realm assures us that God’s purposes are unshakable, offering peace amid earthly and spiritual struggles.

### **Conclusion: Seeing Heaven Anew**

The Bible’s three heavens—the atmospheric sky, the cosmic battleground, and God’s throne room—reveal a layered reality that enriches our understanding of Scripture. The first heaven displays God’s provision in the world around us. The second heaven reminds us of the spiritual battles that require perseverance. The third heaven anchors our hope in God’s eternal presence. Together, they show that heaven is not a single, distant place but a multifaceted reality woven into creation, conflict, and divine glory. Next time you read “heaven” in the Bible, pause and consider: Which heaven is this? The answer will deepen your faith and transform how you see God’s Word.

We pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for revealing to us that heaven is Your glorious throne, the place where You will reign forever. Open our hearts and minds so that we can understand and long for this eternal home. Help us not only to think about the things that are fleeting, but to always look to heaven and remember that our true kingdom is in You. Lord, let our hearts always be connected to You with awe and hope, because we know that heaven is the place where You are with you and the dwelling place where You will always reign. May we prepare ourselves every day while we are on earth to live a life that pleases You, so that we can live with You in Your glorious kingdom in the future.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.