

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THREE DEGREES OF GLORY?

One view concerning the hereafter affirms that mankind is faced with primarily three potential destinations in eternity. These possibilities are referred to as three degrees of glory, three kingdoms, or three heavens.

An entity called "the third heaven" is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Doesn't this prove the existence of a first and second heaven as well? Indeed. But what is the nature of these heavens? A comparative analysis of relevant Biblical passages is the key to developing an accurate understanding. Such a study discloses that the first heaven is the air or atmosphere. When a cloud received the ascending Christ out of His disciples' sight, an angel said to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (Acts 1:9-11). The second heaven is found in Genesis 1:1. It is the vast area of the sun, moon and stars. The third heaven is identified by David when he writes, "The Lord's throne is in heaven" (Psalm 11:4), making it the abode of God.

Since none of the above verses proves three degrees of glory, is there any other support for such a concept? Several verses in 1 Corinthians 15 are often misunderstood as teaching this doctrine. Verses 35-44 should be read carefully. As you search this section for yourself, you will discover the point is simple. Just as the earth, stars, sun and moon are different types of bodies, so the resurrection body differs from the mortal body. There is no teaching here of three degrees of glory in the sense of heavens to which we may attain.

Actually the Bible teaches only two possibilities as to our eternal destiny: heaven or hell. Read Luke 16:19-31, a true story of two men who died and what happened then. Also note verses such as John 3:36 where the two-fold choice is coupled with the means of securing heaven.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Literally scores of additional texts could be brought to bear on this crucial subject. The Bible is clear and consistent in its presentation of our choice between TWO possibilities. Which it will be is determined by whether or not we accept the Lord Jesus Christ and His work for us as completely sufficient to earn our eternal life.

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