Diagram

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Where is heaven? Is it in space?

Heaven is most certainly a real place. The Bible very definitely speaks of heaven’s existence—and access to heaven through faith in Jesus Christ—but there are no verses that give us a geographical location. The short answer to this question is, “heaven is where God is.” The place referred to in this question is called the “third heaven” and “paradise” in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, where the apostle Paul tells of a living man who was “caught up” to heaven and was unable to describe it. The Greek word translated “caught up” is also used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 in describing the rapture, wherein believers will be caught up to be with the Lord.

Other verses indicating heaven to be “above” the earth” are numerous. At the Tower of Babel, God says, “Come, let us go down” (Genesis 11:7) Heaven is described as “high above the earth” in Psalm 103:11, and the place from which the Lord “looks down” in Psalm 14:2. Jesus is described as having “ascended into heaven” and “descended from heaven” in John 3:13 (ESV). In Acts 1:9–11 Jesus is described as being taken “up” into heaven, and when God takes John to heaven in Revelation 4:1, He says, “Come up here.” These passages have led to the conclusion that heaven is beyond the earth’s airspace and beyond the stars.

However, since God is spirit, “heaven” cannot signify a place remote from us which He inhabits. The Greek gods were thought of as spending most of their time far away from earth in sort of a celestial equivalent of the Bahamas, but the God of the Bible is not like this. He is always near us when we call on Him (James 4:8), and we are encouraged to “draw near” to Him (Hebrews 10:1, 22). Granted, the “heaven” where saints and angels dwell has to be thought of as a sort of locality, because saints and angels, as God’s creatures, exist in space and time. But when the Creator is said to be “in heaven,” the thought is that He exists on a different plane from us, rather than in a different place.