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Many theologians teach that Old Testament believers went to a place of comfort, Abraham's bosom, until their sins were paid for by Jesus Christ, thus opening up the possibility of actual entrance into the heaven which is the residency of God.

**Category #2** - The word "heaven" in the New Testament.

It is the New Testament and, specifically Jesus Christ, who takes us to a new dimension of understanding about heaven.

The most often used word for "heaven" is the N.T. Greek word "ouranos" (οὐρανός). Gerhard Kittel says that the Septuagint (Greek Translation of the O.T. Hebrew) uses this word 667 times and the New Testament uses this word 284 times (Vol. 5, p. 509, 513). **This word also refers to the upper region dwelling place and the presence and home of God.**

**QUESTION #5** – What are some other Biblical words connected with the idea of heaven?

Other than the word "heaven," there are nine more words that are used in connection to a place where one goes when one leaves this world.

**(Word #2)** - There is the noun Paradise.

The actual Greek word "paradise" (παράδεισος) is one that refers to a garden-type park that is very pleasurable. In the N.T. this word is found three times—Luke 23:43; II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7. Jewish teaching placed paradise as a part of Hades, which was a place of comfort for the believer who died. G. Abbott-Smith said that this was the "abode of the blessed dead" (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 339).

**(Word #3)** - There is the noun Sheol.

The first thing to know is that Sheol is not always an equivalent of hell. Hell refers to a place of future punishment. Sheol is an O.T. word that refers to a specific place where people go when they die. The KJV translates this word "hell" 31 times; "grave" 31 times; "pit" 3 times.

The actual Hebrew word "sheol" means a hollow, subterranean place (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 798). **Sheol is a name of a subterranean O.T. place of post mortem existence for all people who died; both believer and unbeliever. It is a subterranean place apparently comprised of two chambers, upper and lower. The upper is a place of comfort and the lower is a place of torment.**

Genesis 37:35- Sheol was the place where Jacob anticipated he would go when he died. This is the first reference to Sheol in the Bible (42:38).

Numbers 16:30 - Sheol is a place to which one descends, not ascends when one dies (v. 29).

Numbers 16:33 - Sheol is a place in which people may be sent while alive—it is a living place.

I Samuel 2:6 - God is the one who determines when a person dies and goes down into Sheol.

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- II Samuel 21:6 - David viewed Sheol as the place he would go when he died (Ps. 18:5; 116:3).
- I Kings 2:6, 9 - Sheol is a place located down where the gray-haired go when they die.
- Job 10:21-22 - the place is referred to by Job as being a “land” that is deep and dark.
- Job 17:16 - Sheol is a place where one goes when one dies.
- Job 24:19 - Sheol is a place where sinners go (not those who are righteous).
- Job 26:6 - Sheol is the place of departed spirits who tremble and who are seen by God (v. 5).
- Psalms 6:5 - Sheol is a place where doing a work for God has ceased—no more opportunity to offer public witness or public thanksgiving and praise (Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17).
- Psalms 9:17 - Sheol is a place where the wicked go.
- Psalms 31:17 - Sheol is a place where enemies of God are silenced
- Proverbs 9:18 - Sheol houses those who are dead, and there apparently are different depth levels.
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 - Sheol is a place where work has ceased—the eternal retirement village or, as Strong said, a subterranean retreat.
- Isaiah 5:14 - the space of Sheol is unlimited and can house immeasurable numbers.
- Isaiah 14:9 - the location of Sheol is below and the inhabitants of Sheol are spirits.
- Isaiah 38:10 - Sheol is said to have entrance gates and is a place that houses those who have left the land of the living and the inhabitants of the world (Is. 38:11).
- Isaiah 38:18 - Sheol is a place one goes at death and a place where one cannot see any more demonstrations of God’s faithfulness.
- Ezekiel 31:15-17 - Sheol is a real place that houses the dead and is located beneath the earth.  
It apparently has a part to it that offers comfort in a Garden of Eden-type of existence.
- Ezekiel 32:21 - Sheol is a place where there is communication between those there.

**(Word #4)** - There is the noun Hades.

This N.T. word is used to describe a place of afterlife punishment. It is a Greek word that is often used by the Septuagint to take the place of the word “sheol.” For example, in Isaiah 38:18, the Septuagint uses the Greek word “Hades” to translate the Hebrew word “sheol.”

This word is used ten times in the N.T. According to Acts 2:27, the Greek word Hades may be viewed in the same manner as the Hebrew word Sheol. In this text, Luke quotes Psalm 16:10 and replaces the Hebrew Sheol with the word “hades.” However, there are places where this place is described as a hellish burning place of torment where an unbeliever goes until one is cast into the everlasting lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). For example, it is specifically used to describe a place of terrible torment (Luke 16:23-25, 28).

**(Word #5)** - There is the noun Abaddon. Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Prov. 15:11; Rev. 9:11)

This is a place of the ruined dead, a place of destruction (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 1). Apparently the angel in charge of this has the same name as the place (Rev. 9:11).

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**(Word #6)** - There is "Abraham's bosom." Luke 16:22-23, 26

Abraham's bosom is a place of comfort that is in close proximity to Hades, a place of torment.

**(Word #7)** - There is the noun Tartaros. II Pet. 2:4

The Greek word refers to the abode of the damned, synonymous with being cast into hell (*Ibid.*, pp. 440). This is a word only used once in the New Testament. In Jewish literature this word described a place where the wicked are punished. It is a place of punishment for the wicked. Some have suggested this is a punishment place for angels, not humans.

**(Word #8)** - There is the word "Gehenna." Matt. 5:22

This was a specific place located in a valley outside of Jerusalem that was known for burning garbage and dead bodies of criminals. It became a term that was used as a description of a future punishment in a place of burning fire. Jesus actually uses this word this way in Matthew 23:33.

**(Word #9)** - There is the noun hell.

Actually the word "hell" is an old English word that first surfaced around A.D. 725. It was a word used to describe a place of eternal punishment of burning fire. Actually, in the Bible the word "hell" is either the word sheol, hades, gehenna or tartaros. Most of the time the New American Standard English Bible will translate the word as it is, but sometimes it uses the word hell. For example, in Matthew 5:22 the word actually is not hell, but Gehenna.

**(Word #10)** - There is the "lake of fire." Rev. 20:15

This is a specific place of eternal torment in which one is forever tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10). All unbelievers of all ages will eventually end up here.

**QUESTION #6** – What do we learn about heaven from John 14:2-3?

If there is one Person who knows a lot about heaven, it is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ told His disciples that He was sent to earth from heaven (John 6:38); He said He had previously lived in Heaven before He was born and prayed that we could see Him in heaven after He was gone (John 17:24); He died so we could go to heaven (John 14:6); He arose and went back up into heaven (Acts 1:10-11). So whenever Jesus Christ reveals something to us about heaven, it is worthy of careful analysis.

In John 14, Jesus Christ reveals some very critical data about heaven. What makes this even more weighty is that Jesus Christ was communicating these things about heaven to some very depressed disciples who knew He was about to die. There are three specific words Jesus uses here to identify heaven:

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**Word #1** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as God the Father's "house." John 14:2a

The word "house" (οικία) typically speaks of a house or home where a family resides (Joseph Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 439). G. Abbott-Smith says that this word refers to an actual piece of property and the household that lives there (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 312). Now one cannot deny that the Bible does say that there is a literal place called heaven where God resides.

As we mentioned, when Jesus taught His disciples to pray and said start the prayer off by saying "Our Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

**Word #2** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as having multiple "dwelling places."  
John 14:2b

The actual word "dwelling places" (μονη) is one that refers to actual places where people stay and live. The verb, from which this noun is derived (μενω), emphasizes that this is a particular place where people remain (Smith, pp. 296, 284).

**Word #3** - Heaven is identified by Jesus Christ as being a "place." 14:2c-3

The word "place" (τοπος) used here and again in **verse 3** refers to an actual location and specific space of occupancy (*Ibid.*, p. 448). This definitely refers to a specific spot in a specific place.

When Jesus uses these words to describe heaven, He is not metaphorically talking about a state of being; He is using words that describe heaven as being a very real, literal place in a very real location. This is clearly the idea developed by an objective analysis of these literal words. E. M. Bounds said, "Heaven is not merely a name. It is a tangible state with local inhabitants" (*Inside Heaven's Gates*, p. 14).

When Jesus was speaking to His hurting apostles shortly before He died, He communicated this idea to them—Heaven is a real place where God lives and I am going back there to get your place ready and when I come to get you to take you there, it will be to a real place where you will live.

**QUESTION #7** – Where does our journey to heaven begin?

There are three tenses to the life of every human being.

- 1) There is the past tense and what we have done and are in past time.
- 2) There is the present tense and what we are doing and are in present time.
- 3) There is the future tense and what we will do and will be in future time.

Asaph clearly develops those three tenses of life in Psalm 73:22-24. He describes what he was in past time (73:22); he describes what he is in present time (73:23); he describes what he will be in future time (73:24). Paul said that godliness is profitable concerning the present life and of that which is to come (I Tim. 4:8).