

The background of the cover is a dark, star-filled space. A vibrant rainbow arches across the left side, its colors transitioning from red to violet. In the lower-left, a bright yellow star with a four-pointed diffraction pattern is visible. To the right, a large, glowing blue and white nebula or galaxy cluster is prominent. Numerous other stars of various colors (yellow, white, blue) are scattered throughout the scene.

# Christmas in Heaven

Henry M. Morris

## *Christmas in Heaven*

by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D.

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Dr. Henry M. Morris was Founder and President Emeritus of the Institute for Creation Research.

# CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

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Several years ago, a wonderful Christian lady in our church was diagnosed with an incurable disease and given only a few weeks to live. She had lived a long and productive life serving Christ and so was not at all fearful of death. In fact, as she told her loving husband (who was also a faithful Christian of many years service), she was actually looking forward to “spending Christmas in heaven.”

She had spent many, many years enjoying each Christmas with her husband and family here on Earth, but that year it would be different, for she was expected to die just a few days before Christmas. But she knew and believed that those whose loved ones truly die in Christ “*sorrow not, even as others which have no hope*” (I Thessalonians 4: 13), and thus she frequently expressed her joy at the prospect of being in heaven in time to celebrate Christmas there with her Lord.

Indeed she did go to heaven just a few days before Christmas as she had hoped. Consequently, the theme of her pastor’s memorial service was exactly that—the joyful privilege of being in heaven for Christmas, with all those friends and loved ones who had gone before, and especially with the Lord Jesus Himself.

Which naturally leads us to wonder just what Christmas will be like in heaven. There will be no Santa Claus or Christmas trees, of course, or mirthful partying or frantic shopping at heavenly department stores, or other such familiar scenes associated with our terrestrial Christmas. But just how will it be observed, or will it be ignored or banned altogether?

We have to recognize first of all that the Bible is silent on this subject, and it would certainly be presumptuous to speak dogmatically on such a theme. Nevertheless, we can make some reverent speculations that may be of possible encouragement as we await that coming time in our own lives.

We observe quite a number of special days here in America which would have no particular significance in heaven, Independence Day, Labor Day, President's Day, Veteran's Day, etc., and thus will certainly not continue to be observed in the future life. Thanksgiving would be properly observed *every* day in heaven, so there would be little need to devote a special day there. Halloween would be altogether out of order, and so would April Fool's Day. Days honoring certain famous individuals (e.g., St. Patrick, Martin Luther King) would surely be inappropriate, and even such great Christian leaders as the apostle Paul, John Wesley, William Tyndale, D. L. Moody, etc., would never countenance a special day honoring *them*. They, like we, would know and insist that all honor and worship belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what about Christmas? And are there any other special days that will continue to be relevant even in eternity?

The Sabbath Day comes to mind, certainly. After all, God told Moses that the Sabbath would be "*a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed*" (Exodus 31:17).

Although the Sabbath was a special sign for Israel, it was to commemorate God's completed work of Creation, and thus was an event of significance to every nation. Even in "*the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make,*" says the Lord, "*from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to*

*worship before me*” (Isaiah 66:22-23). If one takes such a statement literally, he must conclude that the Sabbath day will continue to be commemorated as a special day of rest and worship through all eternity.

It should be understood, however, that the Hebrew word for “Sabbath,” simply means “rest,” not “Saturday” or “Sunday” or even “seventh.” The principle was, and eternally will be, it would seem, that God wants His people never to forget that the wonderful Creation, which they will be enjoying forever, was created by Him alone. Therefore, in eternity, every seventh day will be observed as a special day of rest and worship, recognizing that His work of creating all things had taken six days. Then He “rested” on the seventh.

But will there be work in eternity from which we will need to stop and rest every seventh day?

Yes, indeed, there will be work! *“His servants shall serve Him”* (Revelation 22:3). It will certainly not be the difficult toil associated with the Adamic Curse (Genesis 3:17-19), but rather it will be rewarding, productive contributions to God’s eternal purpose for His Creation.

We know little about the details of our future service as yet, but we can be sure it will be a labor of love. In some ways, it will probably be related to how we have served Him here on Earth. One of His last promises while on Earth was: *“And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12).

But whatever we shall be doing, we shall almost certainly be happy to stop and rest once every seven days for a time of worship and thanksgiving, and contemplation of the wonders of God’s amazing Creation. For that Creation is

boundless and eternal and filled with an infinite variety of marvelous evidences of our Maker's wisdom and grace. We shall have eternal time in which to explore the endless delights of His awesome Creation and so can never run out of time or opportunities. Truly, all *"The heavens [will eternally] declare the glory of God: and the firmament [perpetually] sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge"* (Psalm 19:1-2).

But will there actually be days and nights in heaven? After all, the Bible says that, in the holy city of New Jerusalem, *"there shall be no night there"* (Revelation 22:5). The city will have *"no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"* (Revelation 21:23).

Furthermore, many writers have called attention to an important passage in which the great angel (probably Christ Himself), standing astride the sea and the earth, *"sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, . . . that there should be time no longer"* (Revelation 10:6).

This proclamation could hardly mean, however, that the entity of "time" will no longer exist. Our universe is a universe of space-time, so "space" would likewise cease to exist if that were so. What the great angel is telling the people living in that time, the time of great tribulation that is coming on earth, is that there will be "delay no longer," in quickly carrying to completion God's period of tribulation and judgment on the earth. The Greek word is *chronos*, which can also be translated by "space" or "while." For example, the Lord Jesus used this word when He said about a woman in the church at Thyatira, *"I gave her space to repent"* (Revelation 2:21), and when He said to the Pharisees. *"Yet a little while am with you"* (John

7:33).

Thus “time” will certainly continue, and will, in fact, never end. For that matter, the description of New Jerusalem itself speaks of *“the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month”* (Revelation 22:2).

If “months” are being noted in heaven, as well as “weeks.” then it follows that “days” and “years” must be as well. Even though the sun and moon are not *needed* for light in the holy city, they are still *there*, fulfilling their appointed rounds.

In fact the Bible makes that fact quite clear. The sun, moon, and stars will, like the new earth, continue forever. Note the following Scriptures for example:

*“Praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all ye stars of light. . . . He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass”* (Psalm 148:3,6).

*“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”* (Daniel 12:3).

The heavenly bodies, like the earth, will presumably be made new, purging away the age-long effects of sin and the Curse so that they will never burn out and can continue forever fulfilling their primeval function of serving to *“give light upon the earth”* and to *“be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years”* (Genesis 1:17,14).

There will apparently be a *“new sun,”* just as there will be a *“new earth,”* but these will be essentially the old made new,

still carrying out their original missions just as they were created to do in the beginning. After all, God is the Creator, not the “uncreator” or “decreator.” It is true that Jesus said that “heaven and earth shall pass away.” but that was in reference to this present sin-scarred heaven and earth which were to be drastically changed, though not annihilated.

*“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him”*  
(Ecclesiastes 3:14).

Even though Peter predicts that “*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (II Peter 3:10), they are not to be annihilated.

Rather, the solid matter of the heavens and earth, at that time, will suddenly undergo a mass/energy conversion, changing into sound energy, heat energy, etc. Then, God will bring it all together again in a great energy/mass conversion, thereby creating and making “*the new heavens and the new earth*” which “*shall remain before me, saith the LORD*” (Isaiah 66:22; see also Isaiah 65:17) and “*wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (II Peter 3:13).

Now, since time will continue to be counted just as it has from the beginning (with perhaps a slight change back into a 360-day year, with twelve 30-day months), it would certainly be possible for those in the New Earth (as well as those in heaven right now) to continue to recognize special days, such as the weekly rest day.

So there would be no physical reason why Christians could not also observe Christmas in heaven and in the coming New



Earth. But would it be appropriate and, if so, just how would it be done?

They certainly would not observe it in the way so many people do now here on Earth. with Christmas trees and Santa Claus and commercialism and even hilarity and intoxication. Nor would there be manger scenes or magi or even Christmas carols. It seems doubtful that there would be any emphasis on Christ's birth in Bethlehem at all.

For it was not at the time of His human birth that our great Creator left heaven to also become our redeeming Savior, but rather at the time of His miraculous incarnation, nine months earlier. *That* was when there was a tremendous change observed by the marveling angelic host of heaven.

If we try to imagine the scene using our very limited human understanding, we must first remember that He did not become the Son of God at the time of His birth, or even at His incarnation. He had been the only begotten Son of God from eternity, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, "*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*" (Micah 5:2). From time immemorial, He had always been "*the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father*" (John 1:18).

Theologians, trying to comprehend in some small degree this incomprehensible mystery, have called this concept the doctrine of eternal generations. "*No man hath seen God at any time*" (John 1:18), as He is forever "*dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto*" (I Timothy 6:16). Men have never "*seen His shape*" (John 5:37), and it seems probable that neither have the angels actually *seen* God in His fullness (or, at least, there is no Scripture that says so). Whenever men have seen God, it was really the eternally begotten Son who was being seen, for it is He that "*hath declared Him*" (John 1:18).

But there finally came that day, as long promised and prophesied, when that glorious Second Person would not only manifest God from time to time in a theophany, such as when Jacob “*wrestled*” with God and said: “*I have seen God face to face*” (Genesis 32:24,30), and on many other occasions, but would actually BECOME A MAN!

He, though “*being in the form of God*” and “*equal with God*” yet, because it was the will of His eternal Father, “*made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:6,7). In the wonderful words of His beloved disciple: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1-3,14).

The heavenly host had sung together and “*shouted for joy*” when the earth was created (Job 38:7) and then had been intensely involved with God as “*ministers of His*” (Psalm 103:21) in all the momentous events of history ever since the great judgment of the Flood, the dispersion of the nations at Babel, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and all the rest.

But never before had there been anything like this, for God to become a man! The mighty Creator Himself had somehow condescended to become one of His own human creatures, in order to pay the awful price for humanity’s redemption. The very thought overwhelms the mind, and the angels could only marvel at the infinite grace and love being manifested by their God on behalf of those unworthy and

rebellious humans. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”* (Romans 11:33).

There had never been such a day in the courts of heaven as that day, when the Son of God left to become also the Son of man. He would have to undergo all the phases of human life, from conception to birth to growth to *death!* He, the very Creator of life, somehow must suffer death, for that must be the wages of human redemption from human sin.

The mighty archangel Gabriel was first dispatched to prepare those who had been chosen to serve as His human parents. And then, *“when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman . . .”* (Galatians 4:4).

He was sent forth, not as a mighty man, or even as a newborn babe, but as a very special “Seed,” placed in the womb of a godly virgin in Israel, God’s chosen nation. Nine months later, Mary brought Him forth as her firstborn son, fully human, yet still divine, God and man together in a truly substantive union, the God-man.

And when He was born, *“a multitude of the heavenly host”* (Luke 2:13) suddenly appeared in the skies near Bethlehem, praising God and informing a group of humble shepherds about the great event that had just taken place near their field.

That host from heaven, probably led by Michael the archangel, had been waiting in awe for the nine months since God’s Word had first become flesh, so they could convey the glorious news to these selected messengers. Then the shepherds, after seeing the babe, quickly became His first human witnesses, *“glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them”* (Luke 2:20).

But to the angelic host, the greater event had been the

Incarnation, for that was when their Creator left His home in “*the ivory palaces*” of the Father’s house (Psalm 45:8), and entered a world of woe. That must have been a day to remember! On that never-to-be-forgotten day, God became a man. Furthermore, He will always be a man: even today, there is “*a man in the glory,*” as some have expressed it, and He will always be there, with the men and women He has redeemed. His human body is no longer frail and subject to death, of course, but resurrected and glorified, “*alive for evermore*” (Revelation 1:18).

To His multitude of angels, His continuing presence as the God-man will remind them eternally of that grand day long ago when He first left heaven to become a man, and doing so by initially taking up a nine-month residence in the womb of a chosen virgin mother.

So it would seem (though this is obviously not something revealed in the Bible, and so is necessarily mere reverent speculation) that, if any particular date is to be specially memorialized in heaven, it would be the date of the Incarnation, rather than the date of His birth.

*That was when “God sent forth His Son”* (Galatians 4:4), and that was when “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (I Timothy 1:15). Just perhaps, therefore, that is the way Christmas is celebrated in heaven even today, not only by the angels but also by the great assembly of the redeemed as a day of praise and thanksgiving when He became our wonderful Immanuel, “*God with us,*” Creator and Incarnate Savior!

And, strange as it may seem, that date could well be on or near the date of December 25, the day many have been calling Christmas. Practically all Bible students agree that Christ’s human birth was in the early fall, when the shepherds were

actually “*abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night*” (Luke 2:8). The most probable date might well be September 29, a date long observed in Christendom as Michaelmas, in honor of the archangel Michael, who very likely was the leader of the angelic host who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on that holy night. For that particular date, September 29, occurs just about nine months after December 25.

Now it is commonly believed that Michaelmas refers to the Catholic “mass” honoring Michael. Likewise, Christmas is said to refer to “Christ’s mass.”

That may be the current understanding of things, but the fact is that the word “mass” is derived from the Latin *missa*, used when a religious service was “dismissed” and the people “sent forth” originally derived from the Latin *mittere* (“to send”). Thus Christmas probably originally meant “Christ-sent” and Michaelmas meant “Michael sent.” The term “mission” is related to the same source.

With this understanding, the date of Michaelmas could very possibly have referred to the sending of Michael and his angels down to Earth to announce the birth of Jesus. The term “Christmas,” therefore, would refer to the sending forth of Christ from heaven to Earth, and that would be at the Incarnation! “Christmas” thus literally means “Christ sent” or even “Christ’s mission.”

When we view Christmas in that light, it should immediately become a more serious, a more sacred time, a more glorious time! Whether or not the suggested dates are correct, or whether the inference is right that Christmas is observed in heaven as the great time when our Lord Jesus Christ left His glorious home in heaven to become the promised “Seed of the woman,” it would seem fitting to center

our own observance of Christmas here on Earth as a time for meditating (and rejoicing!) over His Incarnation rather than on His birth as a babe in a Bethlehem manger.

*That* was when He came to be with us, not to be admired as a beautiful baby but rather as a tiny human fetus ready to undergo *all* the vicissitudes of human gestation, birth, life, and finally agonizing death in order to pay the redemption price for our poor lost souls!

*“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*

*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:9-10).

## **Other Christmas Booklets of Interest**

*The Gifts of God*  
*God's Only Begotten Son*  
*Creation and the Virgin Birth*  
*When God Became Man*  
*His Son's Name*  
*When They Saw the Star*  
*Christmas: Christian or Pagan?*

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