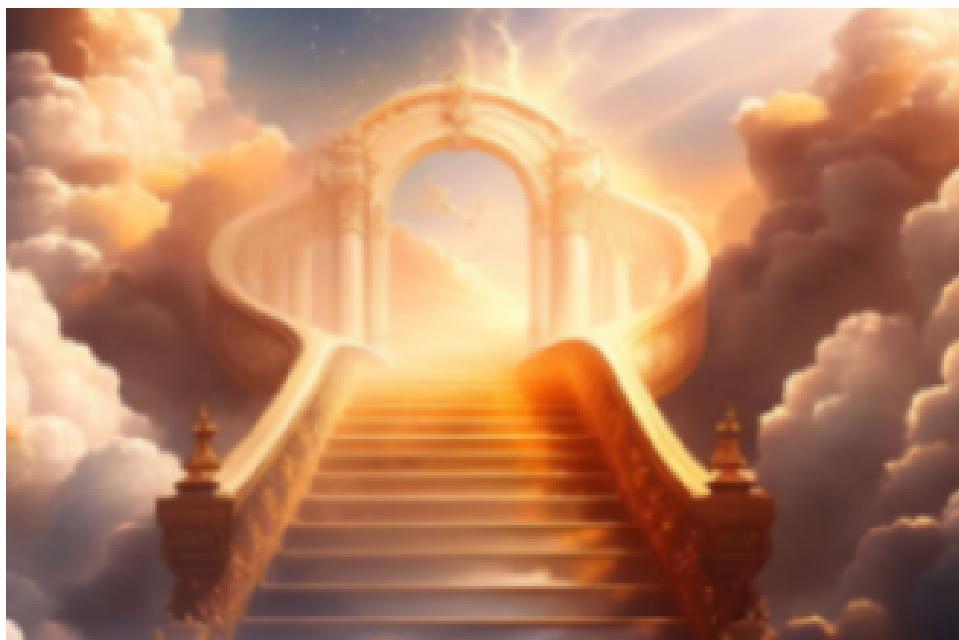


# My Home In Heaven



**“In my Father's house are many mansions:  
if it were not so, I would have told you.  
I go to prepare a place for you.  
And if I go and prepare a place for you,  
I will come again, and receive you unto myself;  
that where I am, there ye may be also.”**

**(John 14:2-3)**

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# **Hell Was Created For Satan, His Demons, and You**

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## Preface

**All of us are eternal beings because we were made in God's image. After physical death, our spirits will live forever. Where we reside—heaven or hell—will depend on whether we have accepted or rejected Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.**

Scripture teaches that all have sinned and deserve a penalty. There isn't anything we can do to earn God's forgiveness. Knowing this, our heavenly Father sent His Son Jesus to take our sins upon Himself and experience punishment in our place. In that way, we become part of God's family and look forward to spending eternity with Him in heaven. His only requirement for this amazing blessing is that we acknowledge we're sinners who need a Savior and believe that Jesus died to save us. Those who reject Christ will spend life after death separated from Him, but those who believe will live forever with Him.

**Every person will ultimately dwell in heaven or hell, both of which are real places described in the Bible. In heaven, we'll never again know pain, sorrow, or tears. But hell is the opposite. A place of punishment, it will be the scene of unending agony and torment.**

Eternal punishment and the reality of hell are never easy topics to consider, but they are vitally important because they will really happen. Don't let your emotions turn you away from the truths recorded in Scripture. Instead, take heed of the warnings, and be certain you are heaven-bound.

**This booklet will show you the way to get to Heaven.**

# Introduction

**This book has been prepared specifically for you...**

- 1. If you have never heard of Jesus Christ and know nothing about Salvation, that is how you can know for sure you will go to Heaven when you die.**
- 2. If you think you are already saved and just want to make sure you will go to Heaven some day.**
- 3. If you know you are saved for sure and just want to know more about what that means in your life today.**
- 4. If you know you are saved for sure but worry you might lose your Salvation.**

**Start on Page 7 if you know nothing about Salvation.**

**Start on Page 10 if you are ready to get saved.**

**Start on Page 14 if you think you are saved but really want to know for sure.**

**Start on Page 21 if you are worried you might lose your Salvation.**



**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**  
**John 3:16**

## **God Loves You - Even You!**

**You are never too big of a mess for God to redeem. Nothing is beyond His ability to restore. There is no deep, dark pit where God cannot find you and pluck you back out of its depths. He is an all-knowing, all-consuming God who is a great defender of His children.**

**What have you lost in your past? Has someone hurt you so deeply that you can't seem to get your life back on track? Have you lost yourself, feeling as if you are drowning in the pain of yesterday's agony? Has life left you feeling defeated?**

**Today you can be set free in Jesus' name and move on to a beautiful tomorrow. Do not let someone else control your future. Do not let an event from the past dictate your "next event."**

**Whatever you have lost, God can restore it. He can heal you, refresh you, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Call on Him today and ask forgiveness for you past, moving on to a breath-taking tomorrow.**

**Yesterday is over. Good or bad; it's gone. Focus on the horizon and the unlimited potential you have through Christ Jesus.**

# All About Salvation

## What is Salvation?

Salvation is deliverance from danger or suffering. To save is to deliver or protect. The word carries the idea of victory, health, or preservation. Sometimes, the Bible uses the words saved or salvation to refer to temporal, physical deliverance, such as Paul's deliverance from prison (Philippians 1:19).

More often, the word "salvation" concerns an eternal, spiritual deliverance. When Paul told the Philippian jailer what he must do to be saved, he was referring to the jailer's eternal destiny (Acts 16:30-31). Jesus equated being saved with entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24-25).

## What do I need to be saved from?

In the Christian doctrine of salvation, we are saved from "wrath," that is, from God's judgment of sin (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Our sin has separated us from God, and the consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Biblical salvation refers to our deliverance from the consequence of sin and therefore involves the removal of sin.

## Who does the saving?

Only God can remove sin and deliver us from sin's penalty (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5).

How does God save? In the Christian doctrine of salvation, God has rescued us through Christ (John 3:17). Specifically, it was Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection that achieved our salvation (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:7). Scripture is clear that salvation is the gracious, undeserved gift of God (Ephesians 2:5, 8) and is only available through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

## How do we receive salvation?

We are saved by faith. First, we must hear the gospel—the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:13). Then, we must

believe—fully trust the Lord Jesus (Romans 1:16). This involves repentance, a changing of mind about sin and Christ (Acts 3:19), and calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:9-10, 13). A definition of the Christian doctrine of salvation would be “The deliverance, by the grace of God, from eternal punishment for sin which is granted to those who accept by faith God’s conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.” Salvation is available in Jesus alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) and is dependent on God alone for provision, assurance, and security.

# The Romans Road To Salvation

The Romans Road to salvation is a way of explaining the good news of salvation using verses from the Book of Romans. It is a simple yet powerful method of explaining why we need salvation, how God provided salvation, how we can receive salvation, and what are the results of salvation.

## We are all sinners

The first verse on the Romans Road to salvation is Romans 3:23, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' We have all sinned. We have all done things that are displeasing to God. There is no one who is innocent. Romans 3:10-18 gives a detailed picture of what sin looks like in our lives.

## The penalty for sin is hell

The second Scripture on the Romans Road to salvation, Romans 6:23, teaches us about the consequences of sin - 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The punishment that we have earned for our sins is death. Not just physical death, but eternal death!

## Jesus died to pay for our sins

The third verse on the Romans Road to salvation picks up where Romans 6:23 left off, 'but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Romans 5:8 declares, 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Jesus Christ died for us! Jesus' death paid for the price of our sins. Jesus' resurrection proves that God accepted Jesus' death as the payment for our sins.

## We must confess our sins

The fourth stop on the Romans Road to salvation is Romans 10:9, 'that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'

## We must call on The Lord

Because of Jesus' death on our behalf, all we have to do is believe in Him, trusting His death as the payment for our sins - and we will be saved! Romans 10:13 says it again, 'for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and rescue us from eternal death. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is available to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

## What this means to you right now

The final aspect of the making the journey to salvation is the results of salvation.

Romans 5:1 has this wonderful message, 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Through Jesus Christ we can have a relationship of peace with God. Romans 8:1 teaches us, 'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' Because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we will never be condemned for our sins.

## Never worry about losing your Salvation

Finally, we have this precious promise of God from Romans 8:38-39, 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

# How To Get Saved

## 1. Admit that you are a sinner.

**Romans 3:23 KJV**

**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

**Romans 6:23 KJV**

**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

## 2. Believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins.

**John 3:16-17 KJV**

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.**

## 3. Confess your sins and Call on Jesus to save you.

**1 John 1:9 KJV**

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**Acts 2:21 KJV**

**And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

#### 4. Say The Sinner's Prayer

**God, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I deserve the consequences of my sin. However, I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I believe that His death and resurrection provided for my forgiveness. I trust in Jesus and Jesus alone as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank you Lord, for saving me and forgiving me! Amen!**

## How To Know I Am Saved

**Do you doubt your salvation? You're not alone. Many Christ-followers experience times when their faith wavers and the enemy whispers accusations that cause them to doubt if they are really saved. Just as a slow but steady drip can damage over time, repeated trials and temptations can cause cracks in our spiritual armor. We stumble, as though the ground beneath us were crumbling, although it is our steps that are uncertain; the foundation of our faith is as sure as it ever was.**

**The book of 1 John is a powerful antidote for doubting and wavering in our faith. He makes it clear that his purpose in writing is that we know that we have eternal life. We aren't meant to live in a perpetual state of doubt.**

**"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life".  
(1 John 5:13)**

**Doubt is a sickness that must be addressed; it will lay us low and keep us off the battlefield, right where the enemy would have us. To counteract doubt, here is what The Bible says and seven clear indications of true salvation that should be evident in the life of a believer.**

### What The Bible Says

**If you think you have been saved and will go to Heaven when you die but just want to make doubly sure you have found the right page. Here are some verses right out of The Bible that will reassure you.**

#### **Romans 10:9-10**

**If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with**

the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

### **John 3:16**

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

### **Ephesians 1:13-14**

**In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit.**

### **John 10:28-30**

**Jesus said I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. "I and the Father are one."**

## **7 Signs of True Salvation**

### **1. A True Believer Has a New Awareness of Sin**

**1 John 1:5-9 – This is the message we have heard from Him, and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**The unsaved man is not concerned about sin. He may have regret for his actions when the consequences are not to his liking, but he can easily set aside any lingering shame or guilt in the pursuit of his**

desires. He justifies himself when he acts outside the laws of man or morality, and when that doesn't satisfy, he redefines what sin is. He compares himself to others, always able to find someone more unworthy, so that he can feel better about himself.

In contrast, the person who has experienced salvation has an ever-heightened sense of his own sin. There is the initial, life-changing, moment-of-salvation recognition of our sinful condition before a holy God, in which we know that we are lost and condemned; this awareness results in a confession of sin. Forgiveness is humbly sought, and repentance takes place; we turn away from our sin and turn to God. A true believer also exhibits a growing awareness of his sinful flesh, as God exposes our weaknesses, failures, desires, and old habits that are displeasing to Him. The regenerated heart is continually humbled and contrite, hating all things sinful and desiring fellowship with God.

## 2. A True Believer Has a New Desire

**1 John 2:3-4** – By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

**1 John 3:3,9** – And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. ... No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because is born of God.

John is not preaching a religion of legalism, but of love for the Law-Giver. Human nature rebels against being told what to do. Adam and Eve, although created in perfection, were given the gift of free will. The exercise of their will in disobedience to the will of God is known as “The Fall,” and resulted in the separation of mankind from

his Creator. We are all born with free will and, in Adam's likeness, the unregenerate human heart has no desire to be ruled.

The unsaved man resists the commands of God, but the saved man desires to please Him. This new desire to obey God's commands comes from the indwelling Spirit of God. When we meet the inherently good Law-Giver, we realize that all His commands are subsequently good – good for me, you, and all humanity. The boundaries He places on our words, actions, and thoughts are not the tired efforts of a tyrannical despot who wants to control us, but are shelters of loving protection in which we have freedom to experience all that God desires to give us. The true believer desires to obey God, and His commandments are a source of comfort and security, and wisdom for daily life.

### 3. A True Believer Has a New Love

**1 John 2:9-10** – The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

**1 John 3:14** – We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

The saved man loves his brothers and sisters. Jesus said this would be the distinguishing mark of His disciples, and that the world would know we belong to Him by how we love our brothers. John uses the word "love" 26 times in five short chapters; 16 of these refer directly to loving one another. Point made. We cannot claim to be in Christ unless we love the children of God.

A special bond exists between men and women who belong to the family of God, no matter if they speak the same language or even live in the same country. We love those whom God loves, because He first loved us (1 John 4:11,19). John gives us two litmus tests to reveal if

we are truly “loving our brother.” We love others by loving God and keeping His commands (1 John 5:2), and we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for them by meeting their needs (1 John 3:16-18).

#### 4. A True Believer Has a New Theology

**1 John 4:15 – Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.**

**1 John 2:22-23 – Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.**

John draws a theological line in the sand five times, leaving no room for misinterpretation. The true believer accepts Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ. His deity is not up for debate. He is not “like” God, just a prophet, or only a good teacher. He is the Son of God, sent from heaven to explain God to humanity (John 1:18). A true believer’s faith is rooted in the fact of Jesus’ true identity as the sinless Savior, fully God and fully human.

#### 5. A True Believer Has a New Master

**1 John 2:15-17 – Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

**1 John 5:19 – We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**

Scripture is very clear that we are either serving God or serving His enemy, Satan. Salvation is described in terms of a military operation, in which God rescues us from the domain of darkness and transfers us to the kingdom of Jesus (Colossians 1:13). As true believers, we serve a new Master. We no longer love the things of this world, and we spend our time, money, talents, strength and our very lives to do the will of God. Everything we do is evaluated and prioritized on its value to the Kingdom, in light of our salvation and the call of God.

## 6. A True Believer Has a New Power

**1 John 2:20, 27 – But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ... As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.**

**1 John 4:13 – By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.**

The true believer has something that the unsaved man can never understand or experience: the indwelling Spirit of God. Jesus promised this gift, indicating that the presence of the Spirit of God in us would be even more advantageous than Jesus Himself being present in a human body! (John 16:7-15).

The indwelling Spirit of God is described as an “anointing,” a Greek word which refers to something smeared on, as an ointment. The priests were anointed with oil, signifying they were set apart by God, for the work of God. The oils were aromatic, made of herbs, reminding us of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, where he describes the believer as one through whom God manifests the “sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

This aroma is the presence of the Spirit of God in us, giving us the power to overcome sin and temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), the power to speak the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:4), the power to understand Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:14, John 16), and the power to live a fruitful life in the image of Christ (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Peter 1:3-11, John 15:1-11).

## 7. The True Believer Has a New Purpose

**1 John 2:28** – Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

The unsaved man is not concerned about life after death, for he lives only for this world. For him, everything he can see, touch and hear is reality, and the unseen things may or may not matter to him. In contrast, it is the spiritual world that is the most real for the true believer. We understand that the physical world is temporary and will one day pass away, and that the eternal, spiritual things are the reality. We live here on earth, but our hearts and minds are looking heavenward. Our hope is not to build a good life here and die peacefully, but to abide daily in Christ, being used up, worn out, and spent for the gospel and the glory of God.

The true believer lives with anticipation of the return of the Savior, when everything will be set right, and justice and righteousness will reign. For the saved, this world holds little attraction, except to provide a temporary place to wait for our real lives to begin.

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)

## Can I Lose My Salvation?

If you hear anyone preach that you can lose your salvation because you have done something bad after you got saved please remember the following:

1. Just because you got saved it does not mean you will never sin again. It is in our human nature to sin. The only person to ever walk the face of this earth without sinning was Jesus Christ.
2. When Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins it included every sin you had ever made in your past and every sin you would ever make in your future.
3. Jesus is incapable of lying so when He said “I give eternal life to you, and you will never perish; and no one will snatch you out of My hand” He meant it!!!
4. When The Bible said That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life He was including you!!!

# Preserving Your Assurance Of Salvation

Satan is an enemy of every believer, and his lies gnaw away at our faith. The apostle Paul calls his schemes “flaming arrows” and assures us that our shield of faith is able to extinguish all of them (Eph. 6:16). But the devil still tries to put doubts about our salvation into our minds, hoping that we’ll drop our shield of faith and believe him. However, if we understand his methods, we can be vigilant and avoid his traps.

## Unconfessed sin

Satan tempts us to sin, and if we yield, he whispers, “You can’t be saved. Look at what you just did.” This harassment cycle continues until we finally confess the sin and claim God’s promise that those who receive Christ are saved (1 John 5:10-12).

## Ignorance of God’s Word

If a believer isn’t well grounded scripturally, he can be fooled by false teaching. For example, it’s not uncommon to hear that we can’t be certain of redemption or that salvation can be lost. But we have the sword of the Spirit to silence the lies, because false doctrines simply do not withstand biblical scrutiny. That’s why it’s essential to study the Word.

## Reliance on emotion

When we rely on feelings and experiences rather than the truth of God’s Word, the ordinary ups and downs in our spiritual life may cause us to “feel” unsaved. However, genuine assurance is built on faith in the Lord and the promises in His Word—not on emotions.

**Hold up your shield of faith, take the sword of God’s Word, and trust Him to fight for you in battles against the enemy. The Lord is your defense and protection.**

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.**

## **Ephesians 6:10-20**

**11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**

**12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

**13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.**

**14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,**

**15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;**

**16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

**17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

**18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,**

**19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,**

**20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

## I Just Got Saved - What Just Happened?

In Christian circles, we often hear people talk about grace, but do we understand what it means? Scripture uses this word in reference to God's goodness and kindness, which is freely extended to those who are utterly undeserving—and that includes all of us.

**God's grace is the means of our salvation through Christ and the basis by which He sees us. By grace, we are...**

**Declared righteous.** All of our guilt and shame have been removed, and Christ's righteousness is credited to us as our own (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now we can live boldly for Jesus no matter who we once were.

**Part of God's family.** A spiritual adoption has taken place so that we might become children of God and call Him Father (Eph. 1:5). Although the world may see us as insignificant, we should remember we're children of the King.

**Made co-heirs with Christ.** Our inheritance is guaranteed and kept for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:4). We've been set free from the lure of materialism because we're rich in the only way that matters (2 Corinthians 8:9).

**Given new life.** When we trust in the Savior, we are born again and receive a fresh start (2 Corinthians 5:17). The seal of this new life is the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit, who transforms us into the image of Christ and guarantees our future resurrection (Eph. 1:13-14).

**Freed from the power of sin, Satan, and self. Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and live righteously in obedience to God (Titus 2:11-12).**

**From the beginning of salvation to our eternal future in heaven, we are covered by God's unending grace.**

# I Just Got Saved - Now What?

## 1. Make sure you understand salvation.

First John 5:13 tells us, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” God wants us to understand salvation. God wants us to have the confidence of knowing for sure that we are saved. Briefly, let’s go over the key points of salvation:

- (a) We have all sinned. We have all done things that are displeasing to God (Romans 3:23).
- (b) Because of our sin, we deserve to be punished with eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).
- (c) Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved. Jesus’ resurrection proved that His death was sufficient to pay for our sins.
- (d) God grants forgiveness and salvation to all those who place their faith in Jesus—trusting His death as the payment for our sins (John 3:16; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1).
- (e) The Holy Spirit comes to reside permanently within at the moment of faith. He assures us of everlasting life. He teaches us God’s Word and empowers us to live according to it.

That is the message of salvation! If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are saved! All of your sins are forgiven, and God promises to never leave you or forsake you (Romans 8:38-39; Matthew 28:20). Remember, your salvation is secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:28-29). If you are trusting in Jesus

alone as your Savior, you can have confidence that you will spend eternity with God in heaven!

## **2. Find a good church that teaches the Bible.**

Don't think of the church as a building. The church is the people. It is very important that believers in Jesus Christ fellowship with one another. That is one of the primary purposes of the church. Now that you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, we strongly encourage you to find a Bible-believing church in your area and speak to the pastor. Let him know about your new faith in Jesus Christ.

A second purpose of the church is to teach the Bible. You can learn how to apply God's instructions to your life. Understanding the Bible is key to living a successful and powerful Christian life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

A third purpose of the church is worship. Worship is thanking God for all He has done! God has saved us. God loves us. God provides for us. God guides and directs us. How could we not thank Him? God is holy, righteous, loving, merciful, and full of grace. Revelation 4:11 declares, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

## **3. Set aside time each day to focus on God.**

It is very important for us to spend time each day focusing on God. Some people call this a "quiet time." Others call it "devotions," because it is a time when we devote ourselves to God. Some prefer to set aside time in the mornings, while others prefer the evenings. It does not matter what you call this time or when you do it. What

matters is that you regularly spend time with God. What events make up our time with God?

(a) **Prayer.** Prayer is simply talking to God. Talk to God about your concerns and problems. Ask God to give you wisdom and guidance. Ask God to provide for your needs. Tell God how much you love Him and how much you appreciate all He does for you. That is what prayer is all about.

(b) **Bible Reading.** In addition to being taught the Bible in church, Sunday School, and/or Bible studies – you need to be reading the Bible for yourself. The Bible contains everything you need to know in order to live a successful Christian life. It contains God's guidance for how to make wise decisions, how to know God's will, how to minister to others, and how to grow spiritually. The Bible is God's Word to us. The Bible is essentially God's instruction manual for how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him and satisfying to us.

#### **4. Develop relationships with people who can help you spiritually.**

1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” The Bible is full of warnings about the influence “bad” people can have on us. Spending time with those who engage in sinful activities will cause us to be tempted by those activities. The character of those we are around will “rub off” on us. That is why it is so important to surround ourselves with other people who love the Lord and are committed to Him.

Try to find a friend or two, perhaps from your church, who can help you and encourage you (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24). Ask your friends to keep you accountable in regard to your quiet time, your activities, and your walk with God. Ask if you can do the same for them. This does not mean you have to give up all your friends who do not know the

Lord Jesus as their Savior. Continue to be their friend and love them. Simply let them know that Jesus has changed your life and you cannot do all the same things you used to do. Ask God to give you opportunities to share Jesus with your friends.

## 5. Be baptized.

Many people have a misunderstanding of baptism. The word baptize means “to immerse in water.” Baptism is the biblical way of publicly proclaiming your new faith in Christ and your commitment to follow Him. The action of being immersed in the water illustrates being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ’s resurrection. Being baptized is identifying yourself with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4).

Baptism is not what saves you. Baptism does not wash away your sins. Baptism is simply a step of obedience, a public proclamation of your faith in Christ alone for salvation. Baptism is important because it is a step of obedience – publicly declaring faith in Christ and your commitment to Him. If you are ready to be baptized, you should speak with a pastor.

## Does heaven exist?

Few people object to the existence of heaven on moral grounds. The idea of a rewarding afterlife appeals to most people, particularly since most are convinced they'll find themselves there (Matthew 7:13–14). Some disbelieve in heaven on spiritual grounds, believing instead in reincarnation or simply oblivion after death. The Bible describes a real, eternal, and aware eternity after death for all people. For those who have trusted in Christ, this state of being is without sickness, death, or pain in the presence of God (Revelation 21:1–4).

Objections to the existence of heaven, on spiritual or religious grounds, are best answered by comparing the truth claims of each faith. Such an effort is beyond the scope of this article.

A more common objection to heaven has less to do with spirituality and more to do with popular culture. Many people turn away from the idea of heaven as a land of fluffy clouds, harps, white robes, and so forth. Others dislike the idea of a never-ending church service. Neither of these views of heaven is a biblically supported concept, so correcting misconceptions is key to removing these particular objections to the existence of heaven.

The Bible affirms that heaven, defined as “the place where God dwells,” does indeed exist. In the Bible, the term heaven generally refers to areas beyond the earth. These areas can be the air, outer space, or the realm of God (often called the “highest heaven”). According to the Bible, after the return of Christ, believers will live with God in a New Jerusalem on a reformed Earth. The “heaven” Christians are promised is a restored garden of Eden, not a wispy cloud and a golden instrument.

While we don't know exactly what heaven will be like, the Bible suggests that it won't be static or boring (Revelation 21:23–24). Yes,

heaven exists. And, according to the Bible, it will be the most glorious place imaginable.

## Who will go to heaven?

People have different ideas about heaven. Many have no understanding of God at all but still like to think of heaven as the “better place” where we all go when we die. Ideas about heaven are often no more than vague hopes, on par with “maybe I’ll win the lottery someday.” Most people don’t give heaven much thought until they attend a funeral or a loved one dies. It is popular to refer to heaven as the place where “the good people go.” And of course, everyone they know and love is included in the category of “good people.”

But the Bible has a lot to say about life after death, and it contradicts popular opinion. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Then in verse 36, Jesus goes on to say, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.” Hebrews 9:27 says, “People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” According to these verses, everyone dies, but not everyone goes to heaven (see also Matthew 25:46; Romans 6:23; Luke 12:5; Mark 9:43).

God is holy and perfect. Heaven, His dwelling place, is holy and perfect, too (Psalm 68:5; Nehemiah 1:5; Revelation 11:19). According to Romans 3:10, “there is no one righteous, not even one.” No human being is holy and perfect. No one is “good enough” for heaven. The people we call “good” are not good at all compared to the sinless perfection of God. If God allowed sinful humans to enter the perfection of heaven, that place would no longer be perfect. What standard should be used to determine who is “good enough?” God’s standard is the only one that counts, and He has already ruled. Romans 3:23 says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God.” And the payment for that sin is eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).

Sin has to be punished, or God is not just (2 Thessalonians 1:6). The judgment we face at death is simply God bringing our accounts up to date and passing sentence on our crimes against Him. We have no way to make our wrongs right. Our good does not outweigh our bad. Just as one drop of arsenic in a glass of water poisons the whole glass, one sin ruins perfection.

So, God became man and took our punishment upon Himself. Jesus is God in the flesh. He lived a sinless life of obedience to His Father (Hebrews 4:15). He had no sin, yet at the cross He took our sin and made it His own. Once He paid the price for our sin, we could be declared holy and perfect (2 Corinthians 5:21). When we confess our sin to Him and ask His forgiveness on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice, He saves us. It’s as if He stamps “Paid in Full” over our debt of sin (see Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 Peter 3:18).

When we stand before God one day, we cannot beg entrance to heaven based on our own merit. We have none to offer. Compared to God’s standard of holiness, not one of us is good enough. But Jesus is good enough, and it is by His merit we can enter heaven. First Corinthians 6:9–11 says, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” The sacrifice of Jesus covers it all.

The people who go to heaven are all alike in one way: they are sinners who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9). They have recognized their need for a Savior

and humbly accepted God's offer of forgiveness. They have repented of their old ways of living and set their course to follow Christ (Mark 8:34; John 15:14). They have not attempted to earn God's forgiveness but have served Him gladly from grateful hearts (Psalm 100:2). The kind of faith that saves a soul is one that transforms a life (James 2:26; 1 John 3:9–10) and rests fully on the grace of God.

## Who will go to hell?

Hell has become a controversial subject in recent years, even among Christians. However, the controversy is entirely man-made. The rejection of the reality of hell stems from a human inability to reconcile the love of God with eternal punishment or from an outright rejection of God's Word. Even some professing Christians have come to unbiblical conclusions. Some have tried to redefine hell, create an intermediate state not found in Scripture, or deny hell altogether. In doing so, they are ignoring Jesus' warning in Revelation 22:19, "If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll."

Hell is mentioned 167 times in the Bible, sometimes called Gehenna, Hades, the pit, the Abyss, or everlasting punishment (Proverbs 7:27; Luke 8:31; 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Jesus spoke of heaven and hell as real places (Matthew 13:41–42; 23:33; Mark 9:43–47; Luke 12:5). The story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus was an actual event that demonstrated the reality of the two eternal destinations (Luke 16:19–31). Heaven is the dwelling place of God (2 Chronicles 30:27) where Jesus has gone to "prepare a place" for those who love Him (John 14:2). Hell was created for "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). But because every human being is a sinner, every person past the age of accountability has already been condemned to hell (Romans 3:10; 5:12; John 3:18). We all deserve hell as the just punishment for our rebellion against God (Romans 6:23).

Jesus was clear that "no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3). He was also clear that hell is an eternal punishment for those who do not obey Him (Matthew 25:46). Second Thessalonians 1:8–9 says that in the end God "will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the

presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” John the Baptist said about Jesus, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

John 3:18 explains in the simplest terms who will go to heaven and who will go to hell: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” So, those who go to hell are specifically those who do not believe in Jesus’ name. To “believe” goes beyond a mental recognition of the truth. To believe in Christ for salvation requires a transfer of allegiance. We stop worshiping ourselves, we forsake our sin, and we begin to worship God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:36–37; Mark 12:30).

God desires that every person spend eternity with Him (Matthew 18:14; 2 Peter 3:9), but He honors our decision to accept or reject Him (John 4:14). Anyone who so desires can go to heaven (John 1:12). Jesus already paid the price for our salvation, but we must accept that gift and transfer ownership of our lives to Him (Luke 9:23). Heaven is perfect, and God cannot take anyone there who insists on holding on to his or her sin. We must allow Him to cleanse us of our sin and make us righteous in His sight (2 Corinthians 5:21). John 1:10–12 shows us the problem and the solution: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

We can choose to trust in Jesus’ payment for our sin, or we can choose to pay for our sins ourselves—but we must remember that the payment for our sin is eternity in hell. C. S. Lewis said it this way: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God,

**‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”**

## **Do believers immediately go to heaven when they die?**

Yes, believers in Jesus Christ go immediately to heaven when they die. By “heaven,” we mean a real place of comfort and blessedness where God dwells. Of course, the bodies of believers remain on earth, awaiting the resurrection, but their souls/spirits go to be with the Lord (see 2 Corinthians 5:8).

The biblical teaching that believers immediately go to heaven when they die differs from what some groups teach. According to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, faithful Jehovah’s Witnesses who die remain in an unconscious state of “soul sleep” until the resurrection. At the resurrection, Jehovah “remembers” them, and they are brought back to life. The doctrine of soul sleep is also taught by Seventh-day Adventists. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that all believers, Catholic and non-Catholic, who die enter a place of punishment, purgatory, to atone for the sins not covered by Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. Once these sins have been sufficiently punished, the faithful, now purified, may enter paradise. Proponents of both views make seemingly good arguments in favor of their beliefs, but neither the doctrine of soul sleep nor the teaching of purgatory is biblical.

**As our Lord Jesus suffered on the cross, another condemned prisoner sought forgiveness. Our Lord’s response to the repentant thief’s request refutes both the doctrine of soul sleep and the belief in purgatory:**

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And

he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:39–43, ESV).

Jesus did not say, “After a determined time of misery and suffering, you will be with me in paradise”; neither did He say, “After an extended period of unconscious stupor, you will regain sentience and be with me in paradise.” According to the promise of Jesus, the repentant thief would join his Savior in paradise that very day.

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6–8, ESV).

Here, the apostle Paul did not say that to be away from the body is to cease consciousness until the resurrection. And he did not say that to be out of the body was to be at home in purgatory.

In Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus, the beggar died, and “the angels carried him to Abraham’s side” (Luke 16:22). This seems to have been an immediate event, with no lapse of time between Lazarus’ death and his being picked up by the angels. In John’s vision of heaven, he sees “under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained” (Revelation 6:9). As these believers in heaven await vengeance and the resurrection of their bodies, they converse with the Lord. It seems that, as soon as they were martyred, they were in heaven.

At the death of a believer, his or her disembodied spirit immediately enters the joyful presence of our Lord Jesus. At the rapture, the saint’s spirit joins his or her resurrected body—a glorified body impervious to the ravages of aging, illness, disease, suffering, and death (1 Corinthians 15:42–53). At the close of Jesus’ millennial reign, heaven as it is passes away, and God unveils the New Jerusalem, our

**eternal home (Revelation 21:1–4). Our present mortal bodies are not fit for eternity, but our new bodies will never become ill, grow old, or die. We shall live gloriously with Him in perfect bodies throughout the endless ages of eternity.**

**With this end in mind, the apostle Paul broke out in joyous apostrophe: “‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55–57, ESV).**

## How can I know for sure that I will go to heaven when I die?

Do you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die? God wants you to be sure! The Bible says, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Suppose you were standing before God right now and He asked you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” What would you say? What you need to know is that God loves you and has provided a way that you can know for sure where you will spend eternity. The Bible states it this way: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “Whoever believes” includes you.

The problem that is keeping us from heaven is this: our sinful nature keeps us from having a relationship with God. We are sinners by nature and by choice. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We cannot save ourselves. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). We deserve death and hell. “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

God is holy and just and must punish sin, yet He loves us and has provided forgiveness for our sin. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus died for us on the cross: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus was resurrected from the dead: “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

How can you know for sure that you will go to heaven when you die? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). “To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). You can receive eternal life as a free gift. “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). You can live a full and meaningful life right now. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). You can spend eternity with Jesus in heaven, for He promised, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3).

If you want to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and receive forgiveness from God, we can suggest a prayer to pray. Saying this prayer or any other prayer will not save you. It is only trusting in Jesus Christ that can provide forgiveness of sins. This prayer is simply a way to express to God your faith in Him: “God, I know that I have sinned against You, and I deserve punishment. But I believe Jesus Christ took the punishment that I deserve so that through faith in Him I could be forgiven. I place my trust in His death and resurrection for salvation. Thank You for Your wonderful grace and forgiveness! Amen!”

## What are the new heavens and the new earth?

In Revelation 21:1, John sees something spectacular: “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” This new earth and new heavens are sometimes referred to as the “eternal state.” As seen in Revelation chapters 21—22, the new earth will be the eternal dwelling place of believers in Jesus Christ. Scripture gives us a few details of the new heavens and new earth.

The current heavens and earth have long been subject to God’s curse because of mankind’s sin. All creation “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth” (Romans 8:22) as it awaits the fulfillment of God’s plan and “the children of God to be revealed” (verse 19). Heaven and earth will pass away (Mark 13:31), and they will be replaced by the new heavens and the new earth. At that time, the Lord, seated on His throne, says, “I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:5). In the new creation, sin will be totally eradicated, and “there shall be no more curse” (Revelation 22:3, NKJV).

The new heaven and new earth are also mentioned in Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, and 2 Peter 3:13. Peter says that the new heaven and new earth will be “where righteousness dwells.” Isaiah says that “the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” Things will be completely new, and the old order of things, with the accompanying sorrow and tragedy, will be gone.

The new earth will be free from sin, evil, sickness, suffering, and death. It will be earth as God originally intended it to be, prior to the curse of sin. It will be Eden restored.

A major feature of the new earth will be the New Jerusalem. John calls it “the Holy City . . . coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). This

glorious city, with its streets of gold and pearly gates, is situated on a new, glorious earth. The tree of life will be there (Revelation 22:2). This city represents the final state of redeemed mankind, forever in fellowship with God: “God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. . . . His servants will serve him. They will see his face” (Revelation 21:3; 22:3–4).

In the new heavens and new earth, Scripture says, there are seven things notable for their absence—seven things that are “no more”:

- no more sea (Revelation 21:1)
- no more death (Revelation 21:4)
- no more mourning (Revelation 21:4)
- no more weeping (Revelation 21:4)
- no more pain (Revelation 21:4)
- no more curse (Revelation 22:3)
- no more night (Revelation 22:5)

The creation of the new heavens and new earth brings the promise that God “will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). This event comes after the tribulation, after the Lord’s second coming, after the millennial kingdom, after the final rebellion, after the final judgment of Satan, and after the great white throne judgment. The brief description of the new heavens and new earth is the last glimpse into eternity that the Bible gives.

## What is the New Jerusalem?

The New Jerusalem, which is also called the tabernacle of God, the Holy City, the city of God, the celestial city, the city foursquare, and Heavenly Jerusalem, is literally heaven on earth. It is referred to in the Bible in several places (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22–24; and 13:14), but it is most fully described in Revelation 21.

In Revelation 21, the recorded history of man is at its end. All the ages have come and gone. Christ has gathered His church in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). The tribulation has passed (Revelation 6–18). The battle of Armageddon has been fought and won by our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:17–21). Satan has been chained for the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1–3). A new, glorious temple has been established in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40—48). The final rebellion against God has been quashed, and Satan has received his just punishment, an eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7–10.) The great white throne judgment has taken place, and mankind has been judged (Revelation 20:11–15).

In Revelation 21:1 God does a complete make-over of heaven and earth (cf. Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:12–13). The new heaven and new earth are what some call the “eternal state” and will be “where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). After the re-creation, God reveals the New Jerusalem. John sees a glimpse of it in his vision: “The Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). This is the city that Abraham looked for in faith (Hebrews 11:10). It is the place where God will dwell with His people forever (Revelation 21:3). Inhabitants of this celestial city will have all tears wiped away (Revelation 21:4).

The New Jerusalem will be fantastically huge. John records that the city is nearly 1,400 miles long, and it is as wide and as high as it is

long—the New Jerusalem being in equal in length, width, and depth (Revelation 21:15–17). The city will be dazzling in every way. It is lighted by the glory of God (verse 23). Its twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve apostles, are “decorated with every kind of precious stone” (verse 19). It has twelve gates, each made of a single pearl, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (verses 12 and 21). The street will be made of pure gold (verse 21).

The New Jerusalem will be a place of unimagined blessing. The curse of the old earth will be gone (Revelation 22:3). In the city are the tree of life “for the healing of the nations” and the river of life (verses 1–2). It is the place that Paul spoke of: “In the coming ages [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate fulfillment of all God’s promises. The New Jerusalem is God’s goodness made fully manifest.

Who are the residents of the New Jerusalem? The Father and the Lamb are there (Revelation 21:22). Angels are at the gates (verse 12). But the city will be filled with God’s redeemed children. The New Jerusalem is the righteous counter to the evil Babylon (Revelation 17), destroyed by God’s judgment (Revelation 18). The wicked had their city, and God has His.

To which city do you belong? Babylon the Great or the New Jerusalem? If you believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died and rose again and have asked God to save you by His grace, then you are a citizen of the New Jerusalem. “God raised [you] up with Christ and seated [you] with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). You have “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (1 Peter 1:4). If you have not yet trusted Christ as your Savior, then we urge you to receive Him. The invitation is extended: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

## Will we be able to see all three members of the Trinity in heaven?

Before considering if we will actually be able to see God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we need to establish that they are three Persons. Without delving too deeply into the doctrine of the Trinity, we should understand that the Father is not the same Person as the Son, the Son is not the same Person as the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the same Person as the Father. Also, they are not three Gods. They are three distinct Persons, yet they are all the one God. Each has a will, can speak, can love, etc., and these are demonstrations of personhood. They are in absolute, perfect harmony and are of one substance. They are coeternal, coequal and co-powerful. If any one of the three were removed, there would be no God.

So, in heaven, there are three Persons of the Godhead. But will we be able to see all three Persons? Revelation 4:3–6 gives us a description of heaven and the throne that is occupied by God and by the Lamb: “The one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. . . . Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.” Since God dwells in “unapproachable light” and is one “whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:16), God is described in terms of the reflected brilliance of precious stones. First Corinthians 2:9 says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (NLT). Because of God’s holiness, it may be that we will never be able to look upon His face, but this is speculation.

Revelation 5:6 tells us that, in heaven, the Lamb stands in the center of the throne, and there are descriptions of Him clothed in brilliant white. Since the Lamb represents Christ Jesus, and we know that human eyes have beheld Him after His resurrection, it seems

reasonable to conclude that, in heaven, we will be able to look upon Him.

The Holy Spirit, by the very nature of His being, is able to take various forms at will. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:13–17). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a loud rushing noise and was seen as tongues of fire (Acts 2:1–4). It may not be possible to see the Holy Spirit in heaven unless He chooses to manifest Himself in some form, but, again, that is speculation.

Mere mortals do not have the ability to grasp the wonders of heaven—it is entirely beyond our comprehension. Whatever heaven is like, it will far exceed our wildest imaginings! What we know is that we will be worshiping our great God as our hearts are filled with wonder that He died to save sinners.

## Is Heaven real?

Heaven is indeed a real place. The Bible tells us that heaven is God's throne (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:48–49; Matthew 5:34–35). After Jesus' resurrection and appearance on earth to His disciples, He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God (Acts 1:9–11). "Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Hebrews 9:24). Jesus not only went before us, entering heaven on our behalf, but He has a present ministry in heaven, serving as our high priest in the true tabernacle made by God (Hebrews 6:19–20; 8:1–2).

Jesus Himself said that there are many rooms in God's house and that He has gone before us to prepare a place for us. We have the assurance of His promise that He will one day come back to earth and take us to where He is in heaven (John 14:1–4). Our belief in an eternal home in heaven is based on an explicit promise of Jesus. Heaven is most definitely a real place.

When people deny the existence of heaven, they deny not only the written Word of God, but they also deny the innermost longings of their own hearts. Paul addressed this in his letter to the Corinthians, encouraging them to cling to the hope of heaven so that they would not lose heart. Although we "groan and sigh" in our earthly state (2 Corinthians 5:4, NLT), we have the hope of heaven always before us and are eager to get there. Paul urged the Corinthians to look forward to their eternal home in heaven, a perspective that would enable them to endure hardships and disappointments. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17–18).

Just as God has put in men's hearts the knowledge that He exists (Romans 1:19–20), so are we “programmed” to desire heaven. Heaven is the theme of countless books, songs, and works of art. Unfortunately, our sin has barred the way to heaven. Since heaven is the abode of a holy and perfect God, sin has no place there. Fortunately, God has provided for us the key to open the doors of heaven—salvation in Jesus Christ (John 14:6). All who believe in Him and seek forgiveness for sin will find the doors of heaven swung wide open for them.

May the future glory of our eternal home motivate us all to serve God faithfully and wholeheartedly: “My dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

## Where is heaven?

Heaven is most certainly a real place. The Bible speaks of heaven's existence—and access to heaven through faith in Jesus Christ—but there are no verses that give us a geographical (or astronomical) location. The short answer to the question of “where is heaven?” is “heaven is where God is.”

The place people call “heaven” is also referred to as “the third heaven” and “paradise” in 2 Corinthians 12:1–4. In that passage, 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. In Genesis 11:7, God says, “Come, let us go down” to see the tower of Babel. When the chariot of fire came to get Elijah, it took him “up to heaven” (2 Kings 2:11). 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. When Jesus prayed a prayer of thanksgiving, He did so “looking up to heaven” (Mark 6:41). In Acts 1:9–11 Jesus is taken “up” into heaven, and when God takes John to heaven in Revelation 4:1, He says, “Come up here.” Such passages lead to the conclusion that heaven is “up” from our perspective; it is above us in an exalted position.

However, as J. I. Packer points out, “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. 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. That God in heaven is always near to his children on earth is something which the Bible takes for granted” (Growing in Christ, Crossway, 2022, pt. 3, ch. 4).

Examples of God being near to us, even though He is in heaven, include the psalmist’s assurance that “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted” (Psalm 34:18) and Paul’s teaching that “he is not far from any one of us” (Acts 17:27). Moses asked the children of Israel, “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7). Heaven is only a prayer away.

The New Testament mentions heaven with considerable frequency, yet, even then, details of its location are missing. We will never find heaven with telescopes, star charts, or deep space probes. We will only find heaven through faith in Jesus Christ.

More important than knowing where heaven is, is knowing the God of heaven, for the same reason that it’s better to know your neighbor than the details of his house. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples, “You know the way to the place where I am going” (John 14:4). Thomas immediately raised an objection: “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (verse 5). And Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (verse 6). We may not know the exact location of heaven, but we know the Way, for He is Jesus.

## Will heaven be on earth?

People may speak of spending eternity with God in heaven, and they may also speak of eternal punishment in hell. There has been a recent wave of theologians who deny that punishment for sin is eternal, and a number of others have written books countering that wave with titles such as *Whatever Became of Hell* and *Erasing Hell*. Technically speaking, heaven and hell are not places of eternal blessing or eternal torment. Heaven and hell refer to the places of the dead at this moment.

The word hell is often used to translate a number of terms (sheol in the Old Testament, and gehenna, hades and tartarus in the New Testament.) These terms usually refer to a “holding place” for the dead. Gehenna certainly adds the concept of torment. In Revelation 20:14 we see that death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. Technically, the lake of fire, not hell, is the place of eternal torment, but in modern usage most people think of it as hell. The concept of eternal punishment and separation from God is probably more important than whether the name attached to it is technically correct.

Likewise, “heaven” is not the final destination for believers in Christ. In the Old Testament, heaven usually refers to “the heavens,” that is, the sky or maybe what we would call space—some place “up there.” This came to be associated with where God is. In Revelation, we see worship of God taking place in heaven (chapters 4–5), but the word heaven can also refer to “the sky.” When Jesus ascended, He ascended “into heaven” (Acts 1:11), but this may simply mean that He went up, without specifying that He went to a place called heaven. Likewise, when He returns, he will descend from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16). In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul relates the experience of being caught up into the “third heaven,” which is the very abode of God. Likewise, Hebrews speaks of Jesus’ ministry in heaven (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 9:24–25). Since 2 Corinthians 5:8 says that if

believers are “away from the body,” that is, dead, they are “at home with the Lord,” then it is accurate to say that a Christian who dies “goes to heaven.”

However, heaven is not the eternal home of the Christian. Second Corinthians 5 also points out that while in heaven, away from the body, we look forward to our resurrection body. Too often, eternity with God is pictured as sitting on clouds and playing harps. Human beings were created with physical bodies, and those who have become children of God by faith in Christ are waiting for new physical, material bodies. We also know that the current heavens and earth (as referred to in Genesis 1:1) will be destroyed and replaced with new heavens and a new earth “where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:12–13).

The new heavens and earth are the eternal home for the believer. The imagery in Revelation 21—22 seems to point to Eden-like conditions. Once again God will dwell among His people. Adam and Eve were given the job of tending the garden and subduing the earth before the fall, and there is every reason to believe that the people of God who inhabit the new earth in resurrection bodies will continue the work of Adam and Eve before the fall, enjoying the work they do and the unhindered fellowship with God. On the new earth, we will continue to work, learn, grow, develop, and accomplish things. Since there were animals in Eden, there may very well be animals on the new earth as well.

An old song says, “This world is not my home; I’m just a-passing through,” and a few lines later, “If heaven’s not my home, then, Lord, what will I do?” It is true that this world is not our home. But it would be technically correct to say that heaven is not our home, either. When we die and go to heaven, it, too, will be a place that we are just “passing through” as we await our new bodies made to live, work, worship, and fellowship on the new earth. In this sense, what we think

of as heaven—a place of full enjoyment of the presence of God—will not be in heaven but on earth—the recreated new earth.

Revelation 21:1–5 records this scene: “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”

It is important to note that “heaven comes to earth” only through God’s miraculous intervention and re-creation. No amount of human effort, as noble is it may be in some cases, will ever be able to create “heaven on earth.” We cannot manufacture utopia. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christians have access to God and experience freedom from many of the effects of sin, but we still only have a glimpse of what is yet to come.

## Is heaven eternal?

Is heaven eternal? The answer seems obvious at first glance. We sing about spending eternity in heaven, and we say to the bereaved in consolation, “He is with God now.” Many Christians believe that heaven and hell are the final destination for all humans, and that’s correct if we use broad, generic definitions of the terms heaven and hell. Scripture provides more nuance. The “heaven” we preach about as the spiritual destination for believers is not our eternal abode. Instead, it serves as a place where deceased saints await the final unveiling of God’s plan. So, although it is accurate to say that all who die in Christ currently reside in heaven, that is not the end of the journey.

In Scripture, the word heaven can describe the sky, outer space, and the dwelling place of God (Genesis 1:14–18; John 14:2; Ephesians 4:8). In the last usage, heaven has no physical description, but it is where all believers will go after death. Paul refers to it as the “third heaven” and describes “a man” being caught up there, likely recounting his own supernatural experience (2 Corinthians 12:1–9). The third heaven is also known as paradise.

Our eternal abode, however, is the new earth, which will come with a new heaven and is sometimes called the “eternal state.” The old heaven and earth will be destroyed, as Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:10–13:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in

keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

The eternal state is the final piece in God's plan, where the earth will be restored to its original design, accompanied by the new heaven. It will be more than a mere consolation for the troubles in this fallen world; it will be a renewal, complete with the restoration of Eden (Revelation 22:1–4). Believers will receive new bodies and have access to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, and the tree of life (1 Corinthians 15:42–44; Philippians 3:20–21; Revelation 21:1–2, 27; 22:2). The new earth can be envisioned as "Eden 2.0," the utopia humans have long desired, written about, and even depicted in movies. Our instinctual yearning for something more in life is right because we are made for eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The current order of existence is temporary and subject to God's curse because of mankind's sin (Genesis 3:17–18; Romans 8:20–22).

The prospect of a new heaven and a new earth means that God has a reason for the current brokenness. Just as we cannot experience the beauty of healing without the pain of sickness, so perhaps can we not fully appreciate the joy of the new earth without experiencing this old one. As we await the return of Jesus, our blessed hope, we are confident "that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

While it is accurate to say that believers will go to heaven after death, our final destination is a new, recreated earth. Far from playing harps on clouds for eternity, we will work without the strains of the curse, live without the struggles of sin and suffering, and have direct fellowship with God (Revelation 21:3). The new earth is reserved only for redeemed humanity, as nothing evil can enter (Revelation 21:8, 27). As sinful humans, our only passage to this new world is through Christ.

## What is heaven like?

Heaven is a real place described in the Bible. The word heaven is found 276 times in the New Testament alone. Scripture refers to three heavens. The apostle Paul was “caught up to the third heaven,” but he was prohibited from revealing what he experienced there (2 Corinthians 12:1–9).

Since a third heaven exists, there must also be two other heavens. The first is most frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the “sky” or the “firmament.” This is the heaven where weather happens, clouds float, winds whirl, and birds fly. The second heaven is what we call outer space, the region of the stars, planets, and other celestial objects (Genesis 1:14–18).

The third heaven, the location of which is not revealed, is the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised to prepare a place for His followers in heaven (John 14:2). Heaven is also the destination of Old Testament saints who died trusting God’s promise of the Redeemer (Ephesians 4:8). Whoever believes in Christ shall never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The apostle John was privileged to see and report on the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10–27). John witnessed that the new earth will possess the “glory of God” (Revelation 21:11), and the very presence of God will be among men. In the eternal state, there will be no night, and the Lord Himself will be the light of the city. The sun and moon will no longer be needed (Revelation 22:5).

The New Jerusalem will be filled with the brilliance of costly stones and crystal clear jasper. The city has twelve gates (Revelation 21:12) and twelve foundations (Revelation 21:14). Paradise is restored: the river of the water of life flows freely, and the tree of life is available once again, yielding fruit monthly with leaves that “heal the nations”

(Revelation 22:1–2). The Bible gives us a glimpse of heaven, but the reality of that place is beyond the ability of finite man to imagine (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

Heaven is a place of “no mores.” There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more separation, because death will be conquered (Revelation 20:6). The best thing about heaven will be the presence of our Lord and Savior (1 John 3:2). We will be face to face with the Lamb of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Because of His sacrifice, we can enjoy His presence for eternity.

## How big is heaven?

The word for “heaven” in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word shameh or shamayim, which refers to the sky, the lofty arch above the world where clouds move, and beyond that the place where the planets and stars exist. In the New Testament, the word heaven is a translation of the Greek ouranos, which means “the sky” and “the abode of God” and, by extension, “an eternal realm of happiness and glory.” The sky in its vastness is a metaphor for the vastness and loftiness of God. It is the best earthly representation of the place where God lives.

How big is heaven—how big is the place where God lives? We know that God Himself is infinite. Heaven and earth cannot contain Him. In terms of time, there is no beginning or end to His years (Psalm 102:27); in terms of His kingdom, His reign will have no end (Luke 1:33); in terms of His character, He is unchanging (Hebrews 1:12; James 1:17). God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Of God’s creation of the stars, Isaiah says, “Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing” (Isaiah 40:26).

Scientists have not even been able to chart the size of the known physical universe. There is a photo called the XDF (eXtreme Deep Field) that was put together from images taken by the Hubble Space Telescope over the course of ten years. That images shows a vast number of galaxies, each comprising billions of stars like our sun. Our sun is 93 million miles away from the earth. And the galaxies are very, very far apart—Andromeda, the closest galaxy to our own, is 2.2 million light years away. To give an idea of how far that is, a shuttle traveling at 18,000 miles per hour would need 37,200 years to travel

one light year. The universe is absolutely huge—and God created it all.

So, how big is heaven? We don't know exactly. The Bible doesn't give any linear measurements. When John had his vision of heaven, he wrote, "There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). Heaven is at least big enough for the innumerable multitude—and we can assume that there will be no crowding in heaven.

## Are there pearly gates in heaven?

The idea of there being “pearly gates” in heaven is based on a reference in the book of Revelation describing the twelve gates of New Jerusalem. The passage describes an immense and lovely city with a wall built of jasper (a kind of precious stone that can be red, yellow, brown, or green) and twelve foundations of different gemstones. Then it describes the gates themselves: “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21).

In popular imagination, the “pearly gates” are often considered as the entrance into heaven, but Revelation shows the gates as belonging to the city of New Jerusalem. The city and heaven are not exactly synonymous; the city comes “down out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2) and is part of the new earth (Revelation 21:1). Also, contrary to the popular idea that the pearly gates bar heaven’s entrance, the Bible says the gates of pearl will always be open: they “will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there” (Revelation 21:22–25). The gates, made of a single pearl, will be entered by the redeemed in the eternal state: “Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:26–27).

The promise of entry to the New Jerusalem is both beautiful and daunting. The idea of such a city is wonderful to think about—a place where nothing false or unclean or harmful will ever be able to enter. And the pearly gates will be a dazzling sight. However, we have all done bad things and told lies. Does this mean that we will not be able to enter the New Jerusalem? The answer is “it depends.” We are all sinners, but those whose sin is forgiven by the blood of Christ are named in the Lamb’s book of life. “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” (Psalm 32:1).

**Those who are in Christ are the children of God (John 1:12) and will receive an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4).**

## Will there literally be streets of gold in heaven?

Heaven's streets of gold are often referenced in song and poetry, but they're harder to find in the Bible. In fact, there is only one passage of Scripture that mentions streets of gold, and that refers to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem: "The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass" (Revelation 21:21). Earlier, John had described the whole city as being "of pure gold, as pure as glass" (verse 18). Do these verses tell us that the streets (and the city) will be literally made of gold in heaven? If so, what is the significance of having literal streets of gold?

The Greek word translated "gold" in Revelation 21:21 is *chrusion*, which can mean "gold, gold jewelry, or overlay." To translate it as "gold" makes perfect sense. Interpretative difficulties arise when attempting to determine which parts of the Bible to take literally and which parts to take figuratively. A good rule of thumb when studying the Bible is to take everything literally, unless it doesn't make sense to do so. In this passage there's no reason the gold must be figurative. John isn't just throwing out random descriptive terms; his mention of a "gold" street seems meant to be taken literally.

Earlier in Revelation 21, John is given a rod to measure out the city (verse 15), and he records precise measurements. Then he says, "The wall was made of jasper" (verse 18) and describes the city as composed of pure gold (verse 18). The foundations of the city walls are garnished with many specific precious stones and jewels (verses 19–20). The gates are made of pearl, and the main street is made of gold (verse 21). Everything in the description is specific as to composition, and there are no similes used—the street is not said to be "like gold," but "of gold."

So, if heaven's streets are made of gold, what is the point? Why is this an important detail? First, the gold is valuable. The streets of gold in

the New Jerusalem indicate the worth of that place. In this world, we walk on gravel or pavement or asphalt. There, we will tread gold as if it were a commonplace building material. Everything in the New Jerusalem will be proportionately finer, richer, and more precious than anything we can imagine here.

Second, the gold is beautiful. The streets of gold and the whole city will gleam with an unmatched luster. Twice, John compares the purity of the gold in heaven to glass: the street is “as pure as transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21), and the city is “as pure as glass” (Revelation 21:18). Commentator Albert Barnes takes this to mean “that the golden city would be so bright and burnished that it would seem to be glass reflecting the sunbeams. . . . It is certain that, as nothing could be more magnificent, so nothing could more beautifully combine the two ideas referred to here—that of ‘gold and glass’” (Notes on the Bible, 1834).

Third, the gold is transparent. According to Revelation 21:21, the gold comprising the streets in heaven is “clear as crystal” (CEV) or “like transparent glass” (NET). This quality would set heavenly gold apart from earthly gold, to be sure. In our understanding, transparent cannot be a descriptor of gold. But heaven (the new earth) will be a place beyond our understanding. “Excellencies will be combined in the heavenly city which now seem incompatible” (Jamieson, R.; Fausset, A. R.; and Brown, D.; A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, 1882).

Fourth, the gold is pure. Everything about the new earth is pure, as God is pure. “The words of the Lord are flawless, . . . like gold refined seven times” (Psalm 12:6). The streets of gold in heaven reflect the pure light of God’s blazing glory. And God’s ability to purify is not confined to gold; God has purified all who will enter heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all

unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Not only is God's holy city pure by His design, but so are the citizens of that city.

Fifth, the gold will last. The streets of gold in heaven denote the solidity and eternality of the new earth. The new earth will be a place of freedom from all sin and corruption (see Isaiah 35:8 and Revelation 21:27). Nothing will tarnish, rust, or grow dim. Everything and everyone will be forever flawless and absolutely impeccable.

Of course, there are some good teachers and scholars who do not hold to the idea of literal golden streets in heaven. It is a detail open to debate. However, taking the text at face value within the context of the whole chapter, there seems to be no reason to doubt the gold is literal.

Our focus in the New Jerusalem will not be the streets of gold. Perspectives will change, and what we treasure here will be trod underfoot in heaven. We may amass gold on earth, but one day we will see it as nothing more than paving material. Heaven will be a beautiful place, but nothing will ever be more beautiful or of greater value than the God who loves us and died to save us.

## Do we receive mansions in heaven?

The night before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples that He would be leaving them and that they could not go with Him (John 13:33). Peter asked where He was going and why they couldn't go with Him, and Jesus assured them that they would follow Him eventually (John 13:36–37). Jesus said, “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:2–3).

This saying of Jesus has confused many because of the King James Version’s use of the word mansions. In the KJV, John 14:2 says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” The picture conjured by many who read this is based on common ideas of “mansions” in this world. Poems are written and songs are sung about our “mansion just over the hilltop.” But does heaven consist of large, imposing, estates dominated by opulent residences? Do each of us really get our own Monticello, Montpelier, or even greater manse? Such an idea is unwarranted, based on John 14:2.

Jesus was not describing physical characteristics of heaven. He was assuring His disciples that they would have a place—a permanent place—in God’s abode. The Greek word translated “house” means “an abode,” literally or figuratively, and, by implication, “a family.” The word translated “mansions” (KJV) or “rooms” (NIV) means literally “abiding (not transitory) dwelling-places for individuals.” So, putting the Greek words together, Jesus is saying that in God’s home (heaven) there will be many people in the family of God all abiding together. In God’s heavenly household, believers will live in the presence of the Lord as a welcome part of His family. This is quite different from the vision of row upon splendid row of ornate mansions with manicured lawns.

The Lord assures us that He is preparing a place in heaven for His own, those who have come to Him in faith. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit prepares the redeemed on earth for their place in heaven. One day, all those bought with the blood of the Lamb will be part of a “great multitude in heaven that no one could count,” all standing before the throne (Revelation 7:9). Here, again, the imagery is of multitudes of people together, not individuals living separately in personalized mansions.

# What are the five heavenly crowns that believers can receive in heaven?

There are five heavenly crowns mentioned in the New Testament that will be awarded to believers. They are the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life. The Greek word translated “crown” is *stephanos* (the source for the name Stephen the martyr) and means “a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally.” Used during the ancient Greek games, it referred to a wreath or garland of leaves placed on a victor’s head as a reward for winning an athletic contest. As such, this word is used figuratively in the New Testament of the rewards of heaven God promises those who are faithful. Paul’s passage in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 best defines for us how these crowns are awarded.

**1) The Imperishable Crown** – (1 Corinthians 9:24-25) “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [disciplined] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (NKJV). All things on this earth are subject to decay and will perish. Jesus urges us to not store our treasures on earth “where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19). This is analogous to what Paul was saying about that wreath of leaves that was soon to turn brittle and fall apart. But not so the heavenly crown; faithful endurance wins a heavenly reward which is “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).

**2) The Crown of Rejoicing** – (1 Thessalonians 2:19) “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:4 to “rejoice always in the Lord” for all the

bountiful blessings our gracious God has showered upon us. As Christians we have more in this life to rejoice about than anyone else. Luke tells us there is rejoicing even now in heaven (Luke 15:7). The crown of rejoicing will be our reward where “God will wipe away every tear . . . there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

**3) The Crown of Righteousness** – (2 Timothy 4:8) “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” We inherit this crown through the righteousness of Christ which is what gives us a right to it, and without which it cannot be obtained. Because it is obtained and possessed in a righteous way, and not by force and deceit as earthly crowns sometimes are, it is an everlasting crown, promised to all who love the Lord and eagerly wait for His return. Through our enduring discouragements, persecutions, sufferings, or even death, we know assuredly our reward is with Christ in eternity (Philippians 3:20). This crown is not for those who depend upon their own sense of righteousness or of their own works. Such an attitude breeds only arrogance and pride, not a longing, a fervent desire to be with the Lord.

**4) The Crown of Glory** – (1 Peter 5:4) “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Though Peter is addressing the elders, we must also remember that the crown will be awarded to all those who long for or love His appearing. This word “glory” is an interesting word referring to the very nature of God and His actions. It entails His great splendor and brightness. Recall Stephen who, while being stoned to death, was able to look into the heavens and see the glory of God (Acts 7:55-56). This word also means that the praise and honor we bestow to God alone is due Him because of who He is (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11; Galatians

1:5). It also recognizes that believers are incredibly blessed to enter into the kingdom, into the very likeness of Christ Himself. For as Paul so eloquently put it, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18 NKJV).

**5) The Crown of Life – (Revelation 2:10)** “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” This crown is for all believers, but is especially dear to those who endure sufferings, who bravely confront persecution for Jesus, even to the point of death. In Scripture the word “life” is often used to show a relationship that is right with God. It was Jesus who said, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Just as things such as air, food, and water are vital for our physical lives, Jesus provides us what is required for our spiritual lives. He is the One who provides “living water.” He is the “bread of life” (John 4:10, 6:35). We know that our earthly lives will end. But we have the amazing promise that comes only to those who come to God through Jesus: “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

James tells us that this crown of life is for all those who love God (James 1:12). The question then is how do we demonstrate our love for God? The apostle John answers this for us: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). As His children we must keep His commandments, obeying Him, always remaining faithful. So, as we endure the inevitable trials, pains, heartaches, and tribulations—as long as we live—may we ever move forward, always “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2) and receive the crown of life that awaits us.

## How does the Bible describe the glorified bodies we will possess in heaven?

While the Bible doesn't describe in detail the glorified bodies we will receive in heaven, we know that they will be like that of Jesus' resurrected body. Our mortal human bodies are described in 1 Corinthians 15:42–53 as perishable, dishonorable, and weak, all due to sin. Our immortal glorified bodies will be imperishable, honorable, and powerful. Our new bodies will no longer be "natural" bodies, subject to decay and death; we will live in "victory over sin and death," won by Christ on our behalf (1 Corinthians 15:57, NLT).

Being imperishable, our glorified bodies will no longer suffer from sickness and death, nor will they ever be subject to heat and cold or hunger and thirst. Our new bodies will be honorable in that they will not be shamed or shameful because of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, the first thing they felt was shame because of their nakedness (Genesis 3:6–7). The Bible doesn't portray glorified bodies as being naked, but rather clothed in white garments (Revelation 3:4–5, 18). They will be pure and undefiled, with no taint of sin. Our earthly bodies are "weak" in many ways. Not only are we subject to the natural laws of gravity and time/space, but we are weakened by sin and its temptations. Our glorified bodies will be empowered by the Spirit who owns us, and weakness will be no more.

Just as our earthly bodies are perfectly suited to life on earth, our resurrected bodies will be suited for life in eternity. We will not be disembodied spirits but will have form and solidity (Luke 24:39–40). We will likely be able to enjoy food but will not be driven to it by necessity or fleshly desire (Luke 24:41–43). And like Moses and Elijah, we will bask in the glory of our Maker in the fellowship of His dear Son (Matthew 17:2–3; Philippians 3:10). Our resurrected, glorified bodies will be more like what God originally intended, rather than what we now abide in. Gone will be the infirmity and weakness of our

**sinful flesh; in their place will be eternal health and perpetual vitality. We will be glorified with Christ, and that glory will extend to the bodies we will inhabit.**

## What age will everyone be in heaven?

The Bible does not specifically answer this question. Will babies and children who die still be babies and children in heaven? What about elderly people who die—do they remain elderly in heaven? Some have guessed that, at the resurrection, babies are given a body that is “fast-forwarded” to the “ideal age,” and those who die at an old age will have a body that is “re-wound” to the prime of life. If this is what happens, then no one in heaven will appear as a child awaiting development, and no one will appear as a centenarian.

If everyone in heaven appears to be the same age, and that age is “ideal,” then what is that ideal age? Again, the answer is not in the Bible. Some assume it to be around 30 years old. Some guess 33 since that is approximately the age Jesus was when He died. But those guesses are based on life as we currently know it. What about Moses who, at 120 years old, was still full of vim and vigor: “His eyes were not weak nor his strength gone” (Deuteronomy 34:7)? What about Methusaleh, who lived 969 years? Maybe in heaven he will look like he did when he was 500 years old, and none the worse for wear.

We all imagine that heaven will be a place where we will be forever young. What that “youth” will look like is anyone’s guess. It’s probably pointless to assign a numerical value to our apparent “age” in heaven. It’s enough to know that God has a plan to transform us: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Whatever age we appear to be in heaven, we will be made perfect. We will be sinless, and our bodies will be remade flawless. Does that mean we will have no wrinkles in the skin? No age spots? No gray hair? We’ll have to wait and see. We know that all traces of human

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## Will it be possible for us to sin in heaven?

The Bible describes “heaven” or, more properly, the eternal state in Revelation chapters 21—22. Nowhere in those chapters is the possibility of sin mentioned. In fact, we have the promise that, in the eternal state, we will never experience death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4)—the absence of those things is proof positive that sin is also absent, since all those things are the product of sin (see Romans 6:23).

The sinful will not be in heaven but in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Nothing impure will ever enter heaven (Revelation 21:27). Outside of heaven are the unrepentant sinners (Revelation 22:15). An Old Testament prophecy also assures us that the kingdom of God will exclude sinfulness:

“A highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it. . . .  
But only the redeemed will walk there” (Isaiah 35:8–9).

So, the answer is, no, it will not be possible for us to sin in heaven.

God wills our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3); that is, He wants to make us holy and free of sin. Our sanctification has three phases: positional sanctification, which saves us from the penalty of sin at the moment of faith in Christ; progressive sanctification, which saves us from the power of sin as we grow in Christ; and complete sanctification, which saves us from the presence of sin as we enter the presence of Christ. “When Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). In other words, the process by

which God sanctifies us involves justification, maturation, and glorification.

The glorification that God promises His children (Romans 8:30) necessarily includes sinlessness, because sinful beings cannot be glorious. Heaven, the place of God's glory, is sinless. Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely" (ESV), and he links the glorious appearing of Christ to our personal glorification: "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). This glorified state will be our ultimate separation from sin, a total sanctification in every regard. It will not be possible for us to sin in heaven.

James 1:14 provides another assurance that we will not sin in heaven: "Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed." In this sinful world, we face temptation daily, and James identifies two forces that prompt us to sin: our own evil desire (our sin nature) and enticement (the devil's schemes). Neither of those forces will be in heaven. Our sin nature will have been eradicated in our glorification, and the tempter will have been consigned to the lake of fire where he can do us no harm (Revelation 20:10).

The Bible's teaching is that heaven or the eternal state is completely holy. There will be no possibility of sin, we will be clothed with righteousness (Revelation 19:8), and we will be eternally confirmed in our state of bliss. The work that God promised to complete in us will have been finished (Philippians 1:6). Our deliverance will be complete, as the elect are redeemed—body, soul, and mind—to the glory of the Lamb (Revelation 5:6–10).

## Will there be marriage in heaven?

Jesus said, “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). This statement clearly answers the question of whether there will be marriage in heaven. The answer is “no.”

The Sadducees had approached Jesus with a hypothetical situation: suppose a woman had been married multiple times (seven times, in fact). “At the resurrection,” they posed, “whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?” (Matthew 22:28). It was a “gotcha” question, because the Sadducees did not even believe in the resurrection (verse 23). Jesus rebuked them for their lack of knowledge of the Scriptures and their discounting of the power of God (verse 29). And He plainly said there will be no marriage in heaven (verse 30). In that regard, people in heaven will be like the angels, who likewise do not marry.

The fact that there will be no marriage in heaven does not mean that a husband and wife will no longer know each other in heaven. It also does not mean that a husband and wife could not still have a close relationship in heaven. What it does seem to indicate, though, is that a husband and wife will no longer be married in heaven. Marriage is an earthly bond, and it is broken by physical death (see Romans 7:2 and 1 Timothy 5:14).

Most likely, there will be no marriage in heaven simply because there will be no need for it. For one thing, marriage on earth is a representation of Christ’s relationship to the church (Ephesians 5:25–33; 2 Corinthians 11:2). In heaven, the representation will become reality (Revelation 19:6–8; 21:2). The image will no longer be needed as the shadow gives way to the substance (cp. Colossians 2:17).

Undoubtedly, marriage is not intended to be only an image; it has significant and practical purpose on earth. God established marriage in the garden of Eden before the entrance of sin. So, marriage is part of God's good design for humanity on earth. After He made the man, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). The solution to the man being alone was the creation of the woman, and, specifically in this instance, the bond of marriage between Adam and Eve.

Marriage is the foundational building block of society. Within marriage God commanded procreation and the filling of the earth with human beings (Genesis 1:28). The man and woman together were needed to image God (Genesis 1:27) and fulfill His mandate (Genesis 1:28). In heaven, however, there will be no need for procreation. Heaven will be filled by those redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ; the command to "be fruitful and multiply" will be lifted, and no babies will be born in heaven. The need for procreation will end in heaven, and the need for marriage will end at the same time.

But marriage is not solely about procreation. When God made the woman, "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:23–24). Marriage is a unique partnership of two distinct, and yet like, humans. The woman was the perfect complement to the man to fulfill a God-given design (Genesis 2:18). Before sin entered the world, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). Taking all this together, we see that marriage is designed for union, intimacy, and fruitfulness. In heaven, there will be no shame. And we will be in perfect union with God and with others (John 17:21–24; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Revelation 22:3–5). The intimacy many currently experience in marriage will be complete in a far greater way.

Marriage is a good gift, albeit a temporal one. It is the biblical norm and God's plan for the majority of people. On earth, marriage brings an opportunity for deep companionship and expression of self-sacrificial love, which are instructive about God's relationship with His people. It provides for practical needs like procreation. In a fallen world, a loving marriage can be a place of refuge and strength. A marriage with God at the center can be a place of edification as well as a multiplier for effective kingdom work. But, in heaven, marriage will not be needed. In many ways, the single among us can serve to remind us of this heavenly reality. Marriage has a good earthly purpose, and it should be defended and cherished. But marriage is not intended for eternity; therefore, marriage will not continue into heaven.

Some worry that they will miss the intimacy, companionship, and pleasures of marriage in heaven. But that is to misunderstand the fullness of the Lord. We will be fully satisfied in heaven. Whatever we know as the best, most intense joys in this world, the joys of the next world will be greater still. In this world, we enjoy the sun, but the heavenly city "does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Revelation 21:23; cf. Isaiah 60:19). Just as the glory of God is infinitely greater than the physical sun, relationships in heaven will be infinitely more fulfilling than marriage in this world.

John Piper put it this way: "The pleasures of this world are foretastes and pointers to the inconceivably superior pleasures of the age to come. . . . Marriage ends because all its pleasures are preludes and pointers to something so much better that the human heart cannot imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9). . . . With every taste or every dream, remember: this is only foretaste—only prelude" ("Matrimony No More," 10/9/17, [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org), accessed 10/30/24).

## Will there be tears in heaven?

The Bible never specifically mentions tears in heaven. Jesus speaks of the rejoicing that takes place in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10). The Bible says that, even now, those who believe in Jesus Christ “are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8)—if our earthly lives are so characterized by joy, what must heaven be like? Surely, heaven will be a much more joyful place. By contrast, Jesus described hell as a place of weeping and “gnashing of teeth” (Luke 13:28). So, after a cursory look at Scripture, it seems that tears will be a part of hell’s domain, and heaven will be tear-free.

The promise of God has always been to take away the sorrow of His people and replace it with joy. “Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). And “those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy” (Psalm 126:5). As in all else, Jesus is our model in this. Our Lord is “the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus’ weeping gave way to awaiting joy.

There is coming a time when God will remove all tears from His redeemed ones. “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 25:8). The apostle John quotes Isaiah’s prophecy as he records his vision of heaven in Revelation 7:17. At the very end of time, God fulfills His promise: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). What’s interesting is the timing of this event: it happens after the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11–15) and after the creation of the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21:1).

Consider this: if God wipes away every tear after the new creation, that means that tears could still be possible up to that point. It is conceivable, though by no means sure, that there are tears in heaven leading up to the new creation. Tears in heaven would seem out of place, but here are a few times when tears might fall, even in heaven:

- 1) At the judgment seat of Christ. Believers will face a time when “the quality of each person’s work” will be tested (1 Corinthians 3:13). He whose works are found to be “wood, hay, or straw . . . will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames” (verses 12 and 15). Suffering the loss of a reward will certainly be a sad time—could it be a time of tears in heaven, as we realize how much more we could have honored the Lord? Perhaps.
- 2) During the tribulation. After the fifth seal is broken, the persecution of believers during the tribulation intensifies. Many are slain by the beast or Antichrist. These martyrs are pictured in Revelation 6 as being under the altar in heaven, waiting for the Lord to enact vengeance: “They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (verse 10). These souls are in heaven, but they still remember the occasion of their death, and they seek justice. Could these individuals be shedding tears as they keep vigil? Perhaps.
- 3) At the eternal doom of loved ones. Assuming that people in heaven have some knowledge of what happens on earth, it might be possible that we will know when a loved one rejects Christ and passes into a godless eternity. This would be a distressing knowledge, naturally. During the great white throne judgment, will those in heaven be able to see the proceedings, and, if so, will they shed tears over those who are damned? Perhaps.

We have been speculating. There is no biblical mention of tears in heaven. Heaven will be a place of comfort, rest, fellowship, glory,

praise, and joy. If there are tears, for the reasons listed above, they will all be wiped away in the eternal state. “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (Isaiah 40:1). And “he who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” (Revelation 21:5).

## Will we be naked in heaven?

The idea that we will be naked in heaven is based on a comparison between the original creation in Genesis and the new creation in Revelation. Some believe, based on these two sections of Scripture, that people will be naked in heaven.

Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden before the fall (Genesis 2:25). It was only after they sinned that they felt a need to cover their bodies (Genesis 3:7), and God provided clothing for them after He pronounced curses (Genesis 3:21). From then on in Scripture, nakedness is almost always associated with sexual sin and/or shame. But, when God creates the new heavens and new earth, He will abolish the curse (Revelation 22:3). Since clothing came with the curse, some speculate that the removal of the curse will allow for the removal of clothing. So, in eternity, they conclude, we will be naked.

Of course, there is nothing inherently sinful about the human body. And there would be nothing wrong with glorified believers in heaven being naked. There will be no lust in heaven, and no shame—no sin of any kind. But biblical descriptions of heavenly beings often include a mention of some type of clothing. It does not seem to be the case that believers will spend eternity naked.

Angelic beings are described in the Bible as wearing some kind of garments. In Daniel's vision, the messenger (either an angelic being or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ) was "dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist" (Daniel 10:5, NLT). Similarly, the angel guarding Jesus' tomb was wearing garments: "His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow" (Matthew 28:3).

The redeemed in heaven are also described as clothed. In Revelation 4:4, the twenty-four elders around the throne of God wear white clothing and have golden crowns. Revelation 3:5 says that those who belong to Christ will be “dressed in white” in heaven. The Bible never hints that anyone in heaven is unclothed.

In our opinion, we will not be naked in heaven. Yes, Adam and Eve were naked before they sinned, but their nakedness was indicative of innocence and sinlessness. Unlike Adam and Eve, we have never been in a state of innocence, so, when we get to heaven, we are pictured as being covered by the “clothing” provided by the sacrifice of Christ (see Revelation 3:18).

## Will we eat food in heaven?

Many people ask whether we will eat food in heaven because eating is not only necessary but also so very enjoyable! Many people conclude that what is enjoyable on earth (sex, family relationships, etc.) will naturally be present in heaven. While we will definitely have the fulfillment of all enjoyment in heaven, it will be because we are in the presence of the Lord. Whatever we enjoy in heaven won't be there because we enjoyed it on earth but because it finds its fulfillment in God. The Bible does not give us a detailed answer to the question of eating food in heaven, but a few observations from the Scriptures are in order.

When the Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples shortly before His crucifixion, He referred to eating and drinking in the kingdom: “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25). The earthly millennial kingdom is certainly in view here, and in that kingdom many will have already received their resurrection bodies. It would appear from this statement that we, in our glorified bodies, will eat and drink in the millennial kingdom. Jesus ate food post-resurrection (Luke 24:42), so it stands to reason that we will, too. But what about eating food in the heavenly kingdom?

When John had his vision of the New Jerusalem, he saw “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse” (Revelation 22:1–3, NKJV). This text does not say whether we will actually eat the fruit of the tree of life.

**Eating from the tree of life is mentioned in Jesus' message to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:7. The Lord makes this promise: "To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." If we are to take this literally, the tree of life will grow in the heavenly kingdom, it will bear fruit, and we will eat of that fruit.**

**So, we might eat food in heaven, but we cannot know for sure what the menu may contain. It has been suggested that our diet will be like that of Adam and Eve in paradise before the fall: "God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food'" (Genesis 1:29).**

**In the end, we don't really know if, or what, we will eat in heaven. Believers only "know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9). The joy of being forever with the Bread of Life is beyond our ability to comprehend, for "what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).**

## Will we experience time in heaven?

Benjamin Franklin reminded us that time is “the Stuff Life is made of” (Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1746). Our earthly existence is marked by time. We “waste” it and “spend” it and “save” it; we have “time on our hands,” or we “make up for lost time”; we speak of those who have “all the time in the world,” while others are “running out of time”; and, then, “when our time is up,” we exit this world. What about in heaven? Will we still experience time as we do now? The short answer is we really don’t know.

First, let’s be clear that, when we say “heaven,” we are referring to the dwelling place of God. Revelation 21:3–4 says, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” The chapter goes on to describe the New Jerusalem, where believers will dwell for eternity.

Some argue that we will not experience time in heaven because “the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Revelation 21:23; see also Revelation 22:5). If the cycle of day and night is done away with, perhaps that signals the end of time—or at least our measurement of time. Also, we know that God exists apart from time (2 Peter 3:8), so perhaps those dwelling with Him will also be outside of time.

Others point to what seem to be clear references to experiencing time in heaven. For instance, Revelation 8:1 says, “There was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” Was the “half an hour” simply John’s measurement of the period of silence from an earth-bound perspective, or did the residents of heaven also realize the passage of time?

Those in heaven appear to be aware of the passage of time on earth, and they may even describe it as “long.” Revelation 6:9–10 says, “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” Without a doubt, how long is a time-related phrase. These examples occur prior to the eternal state, but they may support the idea that time factors into our existence in the dwelling place of God.

Revelation 22:1–5, speaks of the New Jerusalem: “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. . . . There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” The mention of “every month” and “for ever and ever” indicates the passage of time. One might suggest that John was only able to explain his vision in time-bound terms and that his words do not exactly represent the reality of the vision. However, month is still a time-related word.

When God created the world, He created time—there was a “beginning” (Genesis 1:1). He called the creation, including the reality of time, “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It seems, then, that time is something good and well-suited for God’s creation. As part of God’s creation, we are subject to time. Will that change in eternity? We cannot be sure.

Heaven is beyond our understanding. But we can rest in the fact that our God is good and what He has prepared for us is good. “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he

said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children’” (Revelation 21:5–7).

## Will we have physical bodies in heaven?

Although the Bible tells us little about what it will be like in heaven, it seems that we will most likely have a physical body, although not in the same sense of "physical" that we have now. First Corinthians 15:52 says that "the dead will be raised incorruptible" and that those who are alive at the time of Christ's return for His saints "shall be changed." Jesus Christ is "the first fruits" of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). This means that He set the example and leads the way. First Corinthians 15:42 says that our "body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." In a precursor to the believers' resurrection, some were raised at the time of Christ's resurrection in Matthew 27:52 where it says that their "bodies...were raised." Thomas, in John 20:27, physically touched the body of Christ following His resurrection, so He obviously had a body that was solid.

We can expect that all believers' resurrection will be like that of Christ's. What a wonderful truth! The Bible is not specific, but it seems that we will be able to eat. John, in Revelation 22:2, writes of his vision of the eternal state where he saw that "in the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month." This seems to be a reversal of the Genesis 3 punishment where Adam and Eve, and hence all of mankind, were banned from eating from this tree. As for hunger, it appears that there won't be any. Isaiah 49:10 says that there will be no hunger or thirst in the millennial kingdom. This is speaking of mortal men during that period, not of translated saints, but by extension it can be said that if mortals on earth during Christ's Kingdom do not hunger, then surely there will be no hunger in heaven (see also Revelation 7:14-16).

Finally, Job wrote that he knew for sure that even after he dies and his skin is long gone, that "in my FLESH I shall SEE God" (Job 19:26 - all caps added for emphasis). So that means our bodies will consist of

**some kind of glorified flesh. Whatever form we have, we know that it will be perfect, sinless and flawless.**

## Will we sleep in heaven?

Sleep is a physical necessity for our earthly bodies. Without sleep, our brains stop working correctly, and our bodies refuse to cooperate. The sleep-wake cycle is just another of the many cycles God has put into place on the earth—others include the cycle of the changing seasons, day and night, and the water cycle. These cycles are part of life on this planet. However, after death, we will be in a different realm. Upon death, those who are “in Christ” will be immediately with Him (2 Corinthians 5:8) but will not yet have their completely restored bodies. We must wait for the resurrection to receive those (1 Corinthians 15:40; 2 Corinthians 4:14; John 5:28–29). Most likely, in the interim, after death and before the resurrection, our souls will not need sleep; rather, we will enjoy unbroken worship and joy in the presence of the Lord.

“Sleeping” in heaven—the spiritual realm where we await the resurrection—may not even be possible or necessary. Jesus described the temporary resting place for the righteous as being near Abraham (Luke 16:23). We will have some type of body, and we will recognize each other (Luke 16:22–24). We might have some knowledge of the affairs on earth (Luke 16:27–28; Revelation 6:9–10). But we should take careful note of the reactions of human beings who saw God in His glory as did Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1–5), Moses (Exodus 33:20–23), and John (Revelation 1:17). Living in the manifest presence of the Lord God Almighty will change everything. The things of earth, including sleep, will no longer have the same value to us.

However, God created human beings to inhabit a physical realm. He intends to restore all things (Acts 3:21). At the resurrection our spirits, which have been with Christ, will be reunited with our restored bodies. We will then inhabit the new, completely restored earth with Jesus (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1–2). Eternity will be spent living in perfect bodies on a perfect earth with Jesus as our undisputed King.

**In the eternal state, sleep may again be part of our experience, as could eating and drinking (Luke 14:15; Revelation 19:9). But sleep will not be necessary due to exhaustion or weakness because our bodies will be perfect like Jesus' body after His resurrection (Luke 24:41–42).**

**The fact is that we don't know enough from Scripture to state definitively whether we will sleep in heaven, in the millennium, or in the eternal state. That's one of the thousands of questions we will have answered in heaven. One thing is for sure: when we first see Jesus, sleep will be the last thing on our minds.**

## Can people in heaven look down and see us?

Some see in Hebrews 12:1 the idea that people in heaven might be able to look down and see us: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. . . .” The “witnesses” are the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, and the fact that we are “surrounded” by them leads some commentators to understand that those heroes (and possibly other people) are looking down on us from heaven.

The idea that people are looking down from heaven to see what we’re doing is common in popular culture. But, as much as we might like the notion that we’re being watched by our departed loved ones, that’s not what Hebrews 12:1 is teaching. Building on Hebrews 11, the author begins drawing up some practical lessons (that’s why chapter 12 begins with “Therefore”). The “witnesses” are the people whom God commands for their faith in chapter 11, and there is a large crowd of them in heaven. The question is, in what way are they “witnesses”?

The proper interpretation of Hebrews 12:1 is that the men and women forming the “great cloud,” or crowd, bear witness to the value of living life by faith. Their Old Testament stories give testimony to the blessings of choosing faith over fear. To paraphrase the start of Hebrews 12:1, “Since we have so many tried-and-true examples of proven faith. . . .” So, it’s not that people are in heaven watching us (as if our lives on earth are so interesting or they have nothing better to do!) but that those who have gone before us have set a lasting example for us. The record of their lives bears witness to faith and God and truth.

Hebrews 12:1 continues, “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Because of the faith and endurance of believers who went before us, we are inspired to stay the course in

our own race of faith. We follow the examples of Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, and others.

Some people point to the rich man's mention of his brothers in Luke 16:28 as proof that departed souls (in Hades, at least) can see events on earth. However, the passage never says the rich man could see his brothers or knew of their activities; rather, he remembered he had brothers, and he knew they were unbelievers. Also, some people use Revelation 6:10 as a proof text: the tribulation martyrs call for God to avenge their deaths. Again, this passage says nothing about the martyrs seeing people on earth; it simply says they remembered the injustice they had suffered and desired the Lord to take action.

The Bible doesn't specifically say that people in heaven cannot look down on us, so we can't be dogmatic. However, it is unlikely that they can. People in heaven are likely occupied with other things such as worshiping God and enjoying the glories of heaven.

Whether or not people in heaven can look down and see us, we are not running our race for them. We are not hoping for their approval or listening for their applause. Hebrews 12:2 keeps our focus where it belongs: "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." Jesus is our blessed hope, no other (Titus 2:13).

## Will we be able to see and know our friends and family members in heaven?

Many people say that the first thing they want to do when they arrive in heaven is see all their friends and loved ones who have passed on before them. That will indeed be a blessed time as believers reunite to fellowship, worship God, and enjoy the glorious wonders of heaven. One of the blessings is that we will know our friends and family members in heaven, and we will be known.

Our ability to recognize people in the afterlife is suggested in several passages of Scripture. At the transfiguration of Christ, Moses and Elijah made an appearance, and they were recognizable (Matthew 17:3–4). Though they had departed this world centuries prior, both Moses and Elijah remained distinct persons who had not lost their identity. In Luke 16:19–31, Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man are all recognizable after death. King Saul recognized Samuel's description given by the witch of Endor when she summoned Samuel from the realm of the dead (1 Samuel 28:8–17). And, when David's young son died, David declared, “I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). David's words imply that he believed he would recognize his son in heaven. In all these examples, the Bible seems to indicate that, after death, we will still be recognizable to each other.

The Bible declares that, when we arrive in heaven, we will “be like him [Jesus]; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Just as our earthly bodies were of the first man, Adam, so will our resurrection bodies be like Christ's glorious body (1 Corinthians 15:47; Philippians 3:21). “And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:49, 53). Jesus was recognizable after His resurrection (John 20:16, 20; 21:12; 1 Corinthians 15:4–7), so it stands to reason that we also will be recognizable in our glorified bodies.

**Being able to see our loved ones is a glorious aspect of heaven. What a pleasure it will be to reunite with our loved ones and worship God with them in His presence for all eternity!**

## Will we remember our earthly lives when we are in heaven?

Isaiah 65:17 says, “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” Some interpret Isaiah 65:17 as saying that we will have no memory of our earthly lives in heaven. However, one verse earlier, in Isaiah 65:16, the Bible says, “For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.” It is likely only our “past troubles” will be forgotten, not all of our memories. Our memories will eventually be cleansed, redeemed, healed, and restored, not erased. There is no reason why we could not possess many memories from our earthly lives. The memories that will be cleansed are the ones that involve sin, pain, and sadness. Revelation 21:4 declares, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The fact that the former things will not come to mind does not mean that our memories will be wiped clean. The prophecy could be suggesting the wondrous quality of our new environment. The new earth will be so spectacular, so mind-blowing, that everyone will quite forget the drudgery and sin of the current earth. A child who is scared of the shadows in his room at night completely forgets his nocturnal fear the next day on the playground. It’s not that the memories have been wiped out, only that, in the sunshine, they don’t come to mind.

Also, it’s important to make a distinction between the eternal state and the current heaven. When a believer dies, he or she goes to heaven, but that is not our final destination. The Bible speaks of “a new heaven and a new earth” as our eternal, permanent home. Both Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1 refer to the eternal state, not the current heaven. The promise of wiping away every tear does not come until after the tribulation, after the final judgment, and after the re-creation of the universe.

In his apocalyptic vision, John sees sorrow in heaven: “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Revelation 6:9–10). John is obviously in heaven (Revelation 4:1–2), and he sees and hears those who obviously remember the injustice done to them. Their loud calls for vengeance indicate that, in the current heaven, we will remember our lives on earth, including the bad things. The current heaven of Revelation 6 is temporary, though, giving way to the eternal state in Revelation 21.

The story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–31) is further proof that the dead remember their earthly lives. The rich man in Hades asks Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn the rich man’s brothers of the fate awaiting the unrighteous (verses 27–28). The rich man obviously remembers his relatives. He also remembers his own life of self-serving and sinful comfort (verse 25). The memories of the rich man in Sheol become part of his misery. The story does not mention Lazarus’ memories, but Abraham has definite knowledge of goings-on on earth (verse 25). It’s not until we reach the eternal state that the righteous will leave all sorrow behind.

## Is hell real? Is hell eternal?

It is interesting that a much higher percentage of people believe in the existence of heaven than believe in the existence of hell. According to the Bible, though, hell is just as real as heaven. The Bible explicitly teaches that hell is a real place to which the wicked/unbelieving are sent after death. We have all sinned against God (Romans 3:23). The just punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Since all our sin is ultimately against God (Psalm 51:4), and since God is infinitely glorious, the punishment for sin must also be infinite. Eternal hell—the second death—is the punishment we have earned because of our sin.

The reality of hell was taught by Jesus. His warnings about hell are unambiguous in passages such as Matthew 5:22, Mark 9:47–48, and Luke 12:5. Pastor Alistair Begg draws this conclusion: “If Jesus Christ is Lord, then I have to believe exactly what he taught. If we start from that premise, then we can’t simply excise the hard parts out of it. We’ve got to take him at his word. The most loving person who has ever lived spoke so straightforwardly about the awfulness of hell” (<https://youtu.be/ycrg9Q8x8dc>, accessed 11/7/24).

The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described in Scripture as “eternal fire” (Matthew 25:41), “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12), “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2), a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48), a place of “torment” and “fire” (Luke 16:23–24), “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), a place “burning sulfur” where “the smoke of . . . torment rises forever and ever” (Revelation 14:10–11), and a “lake of burning sulfur” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

The punishment of the wicked in hell is as never-ending as the bliss of the righteous in heaven. Jesus Himself indicates that punishment

in hell is just as everlasting as life in heaven (Matthew 25:46). The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. Those in hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ, the Savior they rejected (Psalm 76:10; Philippians 2:10–11).

Yes, hell is real. Yes, hell is a place of torment and punishment that lasts forever and ever, with no end. Praise God that, through Jesus, we can escape this eternal fate (John 3:16, 18, 36).

## Who will go to hell?

Hell has become a controversial subject in recent years, even among Christians. However, the controversy is entirely man-made. The rejection of the reality of hell stems from a human inability to reconcile the love of God with eternal punishment or from an outright rejection of God's Word. Even some professing Christians have come to unbiblical conclusions. Some have tried to redefine hell, create an intermediate state not found in Scripture, or deny hell altogether. In doing so, they are ignoring Jesus' warning in Revelation 22:19, "If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll."

Hell is mentioned 167 times in the Bible, sometimes called Gehenna, Hades, the pit, the Abyss, or everlasting punishment (Proverbs 7:27; Luke 8:31; 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Jesus spoke of heaven and hell as real places (Matthew 13:41–42; 23:33; Mark 9:43–47; Luke 12:5). The story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus was an actual event that demonstrated the reality of the two eternal destinations (Luke 16:19–31). Heaven is the dwelling place of God (2 Chronicles 30:27) where Jesus has gone to "prepare a place" for those who love Him (John 14:2). Hell was created for "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). But because every human being is a sinner, every person past the age of accountability has already been condemned to hell (Romans 3:10; 5:12; John 3:18). We all deserve hell as the just punishment for our rebellion against God (Romans 6:23).

Jesus was clear that "no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3). He was also clear that hell is an eternal punishment for those who do not obey Him (Matthew 25:46). Second Thessalonians 1:8–9 says that in the end God "will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the

presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” John the Baptist said about Jesus, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

John 3:18 explains in the simplest terms who will go to heaven and who will go to hell: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” So, those who go to hell are specifically those who do not believe in Jesus’ name. To “believe” goes beyond a mental recognition of the truth. To believe in Christ for salvation requires a transfer of allegiance. We stop worshiping ourselves, we forsake our sin, and we begin to worship God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:36–37; Mark 12:30).

God desires that every person spend eternity with Him (Matthew 18:14; 2 Peter 3:9), but He honors our decision to accept or reject Him (John 4:14). Anyone who so desires can go to heaven (John 1:12). Jesus already paid the price for our salvation, but we must accept that gift and transfer ownership of our lives to Him (Luke 9:23). Heaven is perfect, and God cannot take anyone there who insists on holding on to his or her sin. We must allow Him to cleanse us of our sin and make us righteous in His sight (2 Corinthians 5:21). John 1:10–12 shows us the problem and the solution: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

We can choose to trust in Jesus’ payment for our sin, or we can choose to pay for our sins ourselves—but we must remember that the payment for our sin is eternity in hell. C. S. Lewis said it this way: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God,

**‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”**

## Why does God send people to hell?

The Bible says that God created hell for Satan and the wicked angels who rebelled in heaven, but there are people in hell also (Matthew 25:41). Both angelic beings and human beings are in hell for the same reason: sin (Romans 6:23).

Because God is completely righteous and morally perfect (Psalm 18:30), He always does what is right—there is no “darkness” in God, not the smallest speck of imperfection (1 John 1:5). God Himself is the standard for what is right, good, and moral. If it were not for God being the standard of moral perfection, created beings would have nothing to measure themselves against. The Bible teaches that anything falling short of God’s perfection is sinful, and every human being who has ever lived, since Adam’s fall, has committed sin (Romans 3:23). Because Adam sinned, the entire human race now has a sinful nature (Romans 5:12). But people do not go to hell because of Adam’s sin; they go to hell because of their own sin, which they freely choose (James 1:13–16).

God is infinitely glorious and worthy of obedience, and all sins are fundamentally against God. For this reason, the only just punishment for sin—a violation of infinite glory—must also be infinite (see Matthew 25:46).

All who commit sin deserve to go to hell because they have failed to meet God’s righteous standard; they have broken His law of moral perfection. If God did not send people to hell for breaking His laws, He would not be just (Psalm 7:11). An analogy is what happens in a court of law between a judge and a lawbreaker. A just judge will sentence the guilty according to the law. A judge who ignores the law, overlooks the crime, and releases the guilty would not be a just judge (Deuteronomy 32:4). Corrupt or incompetent judges contribute to a disordered society: “Justice is driven back, and righteousness stands

at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter" (Isaiah 59:14). If God failed to execute justice, we would have an anarchic universe.

As the Son of Man, Jesus has the authority to judge the world (John 5:27). Jesus Himself is the standard of holiness and the only one worthy of executing judgment. He spoke of the necessity of heeding His message: "All who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken" (John 12:48, NLT).

The good news is that God has mercy on the sinner. He made a way for us to avoid the punishment of hell. Salvation is God's gift to those who trust in the atoning work of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9). Believers are forgiven, and the penalty of their sin has been placed upon Christ on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). The sacrifice of Christ maintains God's justice—the sin is punished—and at the same time extends His mercy and grace to all who believe.

## How is eternity in hell a fair punishment for sin?

Many people are uncomfortable, to say the least, with the idea of an eternal hell. This discomfort, though, is often the result of an incomplete understanding of three things: the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin. Hell will never be an easy topic, but its fairness can be understood.

As fallen, sinful human beings, we have difficulty grasping the nature of God. We tend to see God as a kind, merciful being whose love for us overrides and overshadows all His other attributes. Of course, God is loving, kind, and merciful, but He is also holy and righteous and just. His attributes exist together and cannot be separated from one another. In His holiness, He cannot tolerate sin (Proverbs 6:16–19). In His righteousness, He is angry with the wicked and disobedient (Isaiah 5:25; Hosea 8:5; Zechariah 10:3). In His justice, He must punish sin. If He failed to punish wrongdoing, God would be unjust.

All sin is ultimately against God (Psalm 51:4). It is a transgression of His law (1 John 3:4). God is infinite in His nature, infinite in glory, and infinite in worthiness. This makes Him infinitely worthy of obedience, and crimes committed against Him warrant an infinite penalty—eternity in hell.

Even under our human laws, the severity of a crime depends, in part, on the value of the target of the offense. If a man enters a junkyard at night and smashes the headlights of a derelict car, he will probably pay a small fine. But if that same man enters the showroom of a Porche dealer and whales away at the 911s, he will pay a much larger fine and probably serve some jail time. The difference is the value of the crime's target. Punishment is proportionate to the worth of the thing damaged. God's glory is the most valuable thing in existence—it is of infinite worth. If punishment is proportional, then crimes committed against God deserve an infinite penalty—eternity in hell.

In Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man goes to hell after he dies while Lazarus goes to paradise (Luke 16). The rich man in hell is "in torment" (verse 23), but he never asks, "How did I end up here?" Neither does he say, "I don't deserve this" or "This is unfair." He only asks that someone go to his brothers who are still alive and warn them against his fate. The man in hell seemed to accept that his punishment was deserved and that his brothers deserved similar deserts.

Like the rich man in Jesus' story, every sinner in hell has a full realization that he deserves to be there. Each sinner has a fully informed, acutely aware conscience that, in hell, becomes a torment. The undeniable guilt will produce everlasting shame, misery, regret, and self-hatred. There will be no relief from the despair.

The reality of eternal damnation is frightening. We are right to fear such a fate and be troubled by thoughts of it. But there is good news. God loves us to the extent that He sent His Son, Jesus, to provide the payment for our sin (John 3:16). When Jesus died on the cross, He took our punishment and satisfied God's righteous demand for justice. Because of His intrinsic, infinite worth, Jesus was able to cover the infinite debt we owed. All that remains is for us to confess our sin and place our faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Forgiveness of sin and salvation from eternal hell can be ours by grace, through faith.

## Where is hell?

Various theories on the location of hell have been put forward. A traditional view is that hell is in the center of the earth. Others propose that hell is located in outer space in a black hole. In the Old Testament, the word translated “hell” is Sheol; in the New Testament, it’s Hades (meaning “unseen”) and Gehenna (“the Valley of Hinnom”). Sheol is also translated as “pit” and “grave.” Both Sheol and Hades refer to a temporary abode of the dead before judgment (Psalm 9:17; Revelation 1:18). Gehenna refers to an eternal state of punishment for the wicked dead (Mark 9:43).

The idea that hell is below us, perhaps in the center of the earth, comes from passages such as Luke 10:15: “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell” (KJV). Also, in 1 Samuel 28:13-15, the medium of Endor sees the spirit of Samuel “coming up out of the earth.” We should note, however, that neither of these passages is concerned with the geographic location of hell. Capernaum’s being thrust “down” is probably a reference to their being condemned rather than a physical direction. And the medium’s vision of Samuel was just that: a vision.

In the King James Version, Ephesians 4:9 says that before Jesus ascended into heaven, “he also descended . . . into the lower parts of the earth.” Some Christians take “the lower parts of the earth” as a reference to hell, where they say Jesus spent the time between His death and resurrection. However, the New International Version gives a better translation: “He also descended to the lower, earthly regions.” This verse simply says that Jesus came to earth. It’s a reference to His incarnation, not to His location after death.

The notion that hell is somewhere in outer space, possibly in a black hole, is based on the knowledge that black holes are places of great heat and pressure from which nothing, not even light, can escape.

**Surprisingly, this concept of hell is presented in the 1979 Walt Disney film *The Black Hole*. Near the movie's end, all the characters pass through a black hole. On the other side, the villain finds himself in a fiery place of torment, while the other characters enjoy disembodied bliss. It's interesting that a Disney movie would include a depiction of hell, but it's best not to base our theology on movies!**

**Another speculation is that the earth itself will be the “lake of fire” spoken of in Revelation 20:10-15. When the earth is destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1), the theory goes, God will use that burning sphere as the everlasting place of torment for the ungodly. Again, this is speculation.**

**To sum up, Scripture does not tell us the geological (or cosmological) location of hell. Hell is a literal place of real torment, but we do not know where it is. Hell may have a physical location in this universe, or it may be in an entirely different “dimension.” Whatever the case, the location of hell is far less important than the need to avoid going there.**

## Is hell literally a place of fire and brimstone?

By raining down fire and brimstone upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God not only demonstrated how He felt about overt sin, but He also launched an enduring metaphor. After the events of Genesis 19:24, the mere mention of fire, brimstone, or Sodom and Gomorrah conjures up images of God's judgment. A "fire and brimstone preacher," also called a "hellfire preacher," is one who emphasizes God's fiery judgment, often with lurid descriptions and over-the-top presentations.

Fire and brimstone is an emotionally potent symbol, however, and has trouble escaping its own gravity. This fiery metaphor can impede, rather than advance, its purpose. A symbol should show a similarity between two dissimilar entities. Fire and brimstone describes some of what hell is like—but not all of what hell is.

The word the Bible uses to describe a burning hell—Gehenna—comes from an actual place, the valley of Gehenna adjacent to Jerusalem on the south. Gehenna is an English transliteration of the Greek form of an Aramaic word, which is derived from the Hebrew phrase "the Valley of (the son[s] of) Hinnom." In one of their greatest apostasies, the Jews (especially under kings Ahaz and Manasseh) burned their children in sacrifice to the god Molech in that very valley (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 32:35). Later, King Josiah desecrated the pagan altar there to prevent it from ever being used again for abominable sacrifices (2 Kings 23:10). So, in Jesus' day Gehenna had a history of uncleanness, demonic activity, and grotesque rituals—a fitting metaphor for hell.

In Mark 9:43 Jesus used another powerful image to illustrate the seriousness of hell: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire" (NASB). For most readers, this

image does escape its own gravity—in spite of the goriness! Few believe that Jesus wants us to literally cut off our own hands. He would rather that we do whatever is necessary to avoid going to hell, and that is the purpose of such language—to polarize, to set up an either/or dynamic, to compare. Since the first part of the verse (about amputation) uses hyperbolic imagery, it could be that the second part (about fire) does also. In any case, we should probably not take Mark 9:43 as an encyclopedic description of hell.

In addition to a place of fire, the New Testament describes hell as a bottomless pit or abyss (Revelation 20:3), a lake (Revelation 20:14), darkness (Matthew 25:30), death (Revelation 2:11), destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9), everlasting torment (Revelation 20:10), a place of wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30), and a place of gradated punishment (Matthew 11:20–24; Luke 12:47–48; Revelation 20:12–13). The very variety of hell's descriptors argues against applying a literal interpretation to any particular one. The variety and symbolic nature of descriptors do not lessen hell, however—just the opposite. Their combined effect is to present a hell that is worse than death, darker than darkness, and deeper than any abyss. Hell is a place with more wailing and gnashing of teeth than any single descriptor could portray. Its symbolic descriptors bring us to a place beyond the limits of our language—to a place far worse than we could ever imagine.

## What are the gates of hell?

The phrase the “gates of hell” is translated in some versions as the “gates of Hades.” “Gates of hell” or “gates of Hades” is found only once in the entire Scriptures, in Matthew 16:18. In this passage, Jesus is referring to the building of His church: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

At that time Jesus had not yet established His church. In fact, this is the first instance of the word church in the New Testament. The word church, as used by Jesus, is derived from the Greek ekklasia, which means the “called out” or “assembly.” In other words, the church that Jesus is referencing as His church is the assembly of people who have been called out of the world by the gospel of Christ.

Bible scholars debate the actual meaning of the phrase “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” One of the better interpretations to the meaning of this phrase is as follows. In ancient times, the cities were surrounded by walls with gates, and in battles the gates of these cities would usually be the first place their enemies assaulted. This was because the protection of the city was determined by the strength or power of its gates.

As such, the “gates of hell” or “gates of Hades” means the power of Hades. The name “Hades” was originally the name of the god who presided over the realm of the dead and was often referred to as the “house of Hades.” It designated the place to which everyone who departs this life descends, regardless of their moral character. In the New Testament, Hades is the realm of the dead, and in this verse Hades or hell is represented as a mighty city with its gates representing its power.

Jesus refers here to His impending death. Though He would be crucified and buried, He would rise from the dead and build His church. Jesus is emphasizing the fact that the powers of death could not hold Him in. Not only would the church be established in spite of the powers of Hades or hell, but the church would thrive in spite of these powers. The church will never fail, though generation after generation succumbs to the power of physical death, yet other generations will arise to perpetuate the church. And it will continue until it has fulfilled its mission on earth as Jesus has commanded:

**“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).**

It is clear that Jesus was declaring that death has no power to hold God’s people captive. Its gates are not strong enough to overpower and keep imprisoned the church of God. The Lord has conquered death (Romans 8:2; Acts 2:24). And because “death no longer is master over Him” (Romans 6:9), it is no longer master over those who belong to Him.

Satan has the power of death, and he will always use that power to try to destroy the church of Christ. But we have this promise from Jesus that His church, the “called out,” will prevail: “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).

## What is the outer darkness in Matthew 22:13?

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, Jesus tells of a “wedding crasher” of sorts: a man in the wedding hall was discovered to have entered the feast without authorization. Jesus says that the king, the master of the feast, issued a dire command concerning the interloper: “Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness” (ESV).

Jesus uses the term “outer darkness” in the parable to describe a condition of great sorrow, loss and woe. It stands in vivid contrast to the brightly lit and joyous celebration attended by those who accepted the king’s invitation. Interpreting the wedding feast as heaven, the “outer darkness” must be the place of eternal punishment. Most Bible scholars agree that the phrase “outer darkness” refers to hell or, more properly, the lake of fire (Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; and 25:30,41).

The outer darkness of Jesus’ parable is called “blackest darkness” in Jude 1:13. Again, a place of judgment is the obvious meaning, since it is reserved for “godless men” (verse 4).

Perhaps the place of judgment is pictured as “dark” because of the absence of God’s cheering presence. “When you hide your face, they are terrified” (Psalm 104:29). God is called “light” in 1 John 1:5, and if He withdraws His blessing, only darkness is left. Throughout the Scriptures light symbolizes God’s purity, holiness, and glory. Darkness is used as a symbol of moral depravity (Psalm 82:5; Proverbs 2:13; Romans 3:12). Darkness can also refer to trouble and affliction (Job 5:12; Proverbs 20:20; Isaiah 9:2) and to death and nothingness (1 Samuel 2:9; Ecclesiastes 11:8; Job 3:4-6).

The outer darkness of judgment is accompanied by “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The “weeping” describes an inner pain of the heart, mind, and soul. The word in the original denotes a bewailing or

**lamentation by beating the breast in an expression of immense sorrow. The “gnashing of teeth” describes an outward pain of the body. Taken together, the weeping and gnashing of teeth says hell is a place of indescribable spiritual agony and unending physical pain (see Luke 16:23-28). The outer darkness is a place of anguish, heartache, grief, and unspeakable suffering. Such will be the lot of all who reject Christ (John 3:18, 36).**

**Christ is the Light of the World (John 8:12). When one rejects the Light, he will be cast into eternal darkness. Just like the man in the parable, the one who rejects Christ will lose his chance for joy, blessing and fellowship and will be left with nothing but darkness and eternal regret.**

## What was Jesus' teaching on hell?

Regarding hell, C. S. Lewis once wrote, “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord’s own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason. If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it” (*The Problem of Pain*, HarperCollins, 1940, pp. 119–120). Jesus taught frequently about hell—in fact, we learn far more about hell from Jesus’ words than from any other part of Scripture.

Jesus used the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem as an illustration of hell (Mark 9:47–48). This valley, also called Gehenna, had been desecrated by human sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10), and Jeremiah linked it to God’s judgment, prophesying that one day it would be called the Valley of Slaughter (Jeremiah 7:31–32). Isaiah associated the same valley with divine fire: “Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze” (Isaiah 30:33). Jesus mentioned fire in relation to hell at least twenty times (e.g., Matthew 5:22; 18:9). He also spoke of hell as “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12).

Jesus consistently contrasted hell with the kingdom of God. Hell is the only alternative to an eternity spent in God’s kingdom. It is the opposite of perfect fellowship with God forever.

We will summarize Jesus’ teaching related to hell with five words: reality, rebellion, regret, relentlessness, and reconciliation:

- **Reality:** Jesus taught that hell is a real place where some beings will spend eternity (Matthew 23:33, 25:41; Mark 9:43). In Jesus’ teaching, hell is not figurative or symbolic; it is a real place in which real experiences take place. Jesus portrayed hell with vivid imagery concerning fire and darkness (Matthew 5:22; 8:8–12).

- **Rebellion:** According to Jesus, hell is a place for those who reject God, who rebel against His kingship and refuse His grace. Jesus' parables consistently portray people rejecting God's invitation to fellowship, and the only alternative to fellowship with God is an eternity in hell (Matthew 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24). All sin is some form of rebellion against God, and hell is the just punishment for sin (Matthew 5:22). The devil and his minions are the original rebels against God, and they will suffer eternally in hell, a place specially prepared for them (Matthew 25:41).
- **Regret:** Jesus does not portray hell as a pleasant place or even a neutral state. To the contrary, it is a place of torment (Mark 9:48). As the dark place outside of God's kingdom of light, hell is full of pain and regret "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42; see also Matthew 22:13; 24:51; Luke 13:28).
- **Relentlessness:** Based on Jesus' teaching, hell is not temporary, but eternal. Those who suffer in hell will suffer forever. "The fire never goes out," Jesus said (Mark 9:48, NLT; cf. Matthew 25:46). There is no exit from hell, and no respite from it or comfort in it (see Luke 16:19–31).
- **Reconciliation:** Thankfully, there is one way to escape hell before entering. God offers us reconciliation with Him, so that we never have to experience hell. That reconciliation was made possible through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the One who warned us about hell so often, is the One who saves us from hell. Through faith in Christ, anyone can be reconciled to God, apart from personal merit or virtue. Jesus gives the promise, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:16–18).**