



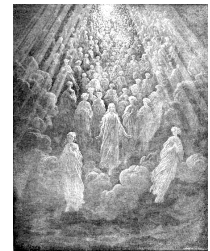
40 Questions About Heaven



Mainstream Christianity teaches that immediately after death, saved individuals find themselves in Heaven. A similar teaching is also found in all major ancient and modern religions. Some say that one goes on to their reward in Heaven, or that Heaven is the reward of the saved. The Roman Catholic Church teaches an intermediate state of Purgatory, from which one might attain to either Heaven or Hell. A very common teaching is that every individual has an immortal soul, and that God must determine where that soul will spend eternity.

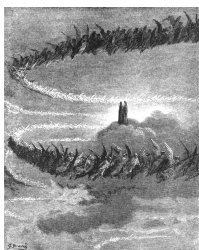
Heaven is often described in a manner suggestive of the description of the New Jerusalem city found in Revelation Chapter 21. But other common teachings suggest that the saved will find themselves surrounded with clouds, having wings with which to fly, playing harps, halos over their heads, and looking into the face of the Master. Some teach that allegorical stories such as found in Luke 16:19-31, and visions such as found in Matt 17:1-9, should be taken as literal fact, leading them to particular conclusions about the afterlife.

In the year 1321, shortly before he died, Dante Alighieri completed his highly influential epic poem *Divina Commedia* (Divine Comedy), consisting of three parts: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise or Heaven). Some consider his writings as accurate regarding the various states of the afterlife. His writings have been illustrated in captivating sketches and paintings by various artists, and these images have been used as tools to encourage conversion.



When considering either mainstream teachings or Dante Alighieri's writings, the following questions arise when comparing them to Biblical texts, and reflecting on the will and nature of God. The reader is challenged to consider these questions, and seek the Biblical truth about the disposition of the saved.

- 1) Exactly where is Heaven located, namely the "third heaven" referred to in scripture (that Paul and John saw in vision), which is not to be confused with either the atmosphere just above us (the "first heaven") or the expanse of the stars that we call the galaxy (the "second heaven")? (Gen 7:11-12, Job 35:11, Isa 13:10, Isa 14:13, Deut 26:15, 2 Cor 12:2, John 3:13, 1 Tim 3:13-16, Rev 4)
- 2) If we knew exactly where Heaven was located, could we see at least a pinpoint of light from it through a telescope, or is it invisible to us at this time?



- 3) Was Dante Alighieri inspired by God to accurately portray the states of the afterlife, or was the Divine Comedy simply a work of fiction representing Dante's own personal concepts or imagination? (Matt 12:36-37, Matt 10:26)
- 4) Is it not an amazing coincidence that historical pagan religions, as well as modern day Christian, Jewish, Islam, Hindu, and Buddhist religions all believe in a heaven, or something very similar, as a destination after death?

- 5) Why are the attributes of the New Jerusalem city, which the Father brings to the New Earth after the Millennium, used as a description of Heaven? (Rev 21, Rev 4)
- 6) If Peter is the gatekeeper of a Heaven configured like the New Jerusalem, which of the 12 gates will he guard, or is there no need to guard any of the gates? (Rev 21:21, Rev 21:25-27)
- 7) Why do folks often remark that various individuals "would be turning over in their graves" if they only knew certain things, if in fact they are all living in one of Dante's states of the afterlife?
- 8) Do you have saved departed relatives in Heaven that are spying on you, and if so, do you know if they look away when you are indisposed or engaged in a private activity?
- 9) If Billy Graham was correct in his remarks about the 9-11 World Trade Center disaster ("*And many of those people who died this past week are in heaven right now. And they wouldn't want to come back. It's so glorious and so wonderful.*"), why don't all saved folks just kill themselves in order to get to that wonderful place (apparently so wonderful as to not want to come back for those grieving for them)?
- 10) Had the folks that came out of graves when Christ was resurrected been sent back from Heaven on assignment to stage a resurrection scene, and if so did they get to go right back, or did they have to live a few more years and die again? (Matt 27:50-54)
- 11) Will saved parents that did not try to properly instruct their children feel guilty about their unsaved children, or does God's plan provide a way to reach those children? (Deut 11:18-21, 2 Pet 3:9)
- 12) If the afterlife for the saved in Heaven consists of any or all of the following activities, wouldn't these get just a little bit boring after a few million years (or less)?
- a) Staring into the Master's face
 - b) Playing harps in the clouds
 - c) Strolling on streets of gold
 - d) Eating manna with milk and honey on it
- 13) If the saved in Heaven stare into the Master's face, wouldn't that keep the Lord from doing other things, and might He get tired of staring back?
- 14) If you become very accomplished at playing a harp after a few hundred years (or less) in Heaven, would you be allowed to learn another instrument?
- 15) Could the saved in Heaven have anything to eat besides manna, milk, and honey, and is there any reason to believe that spirit beings can eat? (Rev 2:7, Rev 2:17, Rev 22:2, Luke 24:33-43, Gen 18:1-8)
- 16) While both cherubim and seraphim are described as having wings, and the Lord is likened figuratively to having wings of help and protection, since Jesus is elsewhere described without wings, as are other angels, why should saved humans be expected to have wings other than in a figurative sense? (Ezek 10:20-21, Isa 6:2, Ex 19:4, Psa 91:4, Rev 1:12-16, Heb 13:2, Isa 40:31, John 3:8)
- 17) Given that Christ says to store up treasure in Heaven, is that treasure in the form of gold since, after all, the New Jerusalem city is made from a lot of gold, or is it some other type of treasure? (Rev 21:18, Rev 21:21, Matt 19:21, Matt 6:19-21, James 5:1-3, Eph 1:3)
- 18) If the saved have little to do in Heaven, wouldn't that make Heaven simply a type of "country club hell" where the suffering is from boredom instead of flames that never quite burn one up?

- 19) For the saved in Heaven, wouldn't their spirits be dampened just knowing, let alone seeing, that lost loved ones are being continually tortured in Hell, or will God cause them to forget and ignore the suffering of their lost loved ones?
- 20) Will the saved in Heaven be satisfied serving a god that tortures sinners forever in Hell, and if not, might they ask to be sent to Purgatory as the next best option? (Matt 10:28, Mal 4:1-3)
- 21) Is all the suffering we might endure as Christians in this life really worth it to achieve an eternal life of flying around in clouds, walking on streets of gold, visiting a few old friends, and otherwise not doing much of anything in Heaven? (1 Cor 2:9-10, Rom 8:29-32, Isa 9:6-7, Rev 21:7)
- 22) Will hundreds of millions of individuals from China, India, and other places that have never heard the name of Christ, miss out on Heaven, and is this a mistake in God's plan? (Acts 4:12, Rev 20:5)
- 23) Why doesn't a loving god send angels to make all human beings utter the words, "I accept Jesus as my personal savior", if that is all it takes to be saved, so that He can save them all and they can go to Heaven instead of elsewhere?
- 24) Have the patriarchs and prophets that lived before Christ's time gone to Heaven? (Heb 11:13, 39)
- 25) If Elijah was taken up into anything other than the first heaven (the atmosphere above the Earth), how could Elijah have sent a letter to the next king to reign, unless he was set back down on the earth somewhere to continue living out his life? (2 Kings 2:11, 2 Chron 21:12-15)
- 26) Do all humans have immortal souls, or does scripture tell us that souls can die? (1 Cor 15:53-55, Ezek 18:4, Ezek 18:20, Matt 10:28)
- 27) Why do so many folks say that Heaven is the reward of the saved when the Bible clearly states that salvation is a gift that comes by grace? (Rom 5:17, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:8-10, Acts 15:11)
- 28) If you have a reward in addition to eternal life by grace, and Jesus speaks of your reward being in Heaven, why does He not give it out until He returns to the Earth? (Matt 5:12, Matt 16:27, Rev 22:12)
- 29) If the saved go to Heaven and others go to Hell or Purgatory upon death, for what purpose would Jesus and a host of angels bother to return to the Earth? (Matt 24:27-31, Rev 19:11-16)
- 30) If the saved go to Heaven, but Christ and many angels come to the Earth for the Millennium, followed by the Father with the New Jerusalem city and remaining angels after the Millennium, won't any folks remaining in Heaven feel "left behind"? (Rev 11:15, Rev 19:11-16, Rev 4, Rev 21:1-3)
- 31) If the saved are supposedly headed for a blissful state in Heaven, why do the scriptures seem to indicate that the saved will be given work assignments on the Earth? (Rev 5:10, Matt 25:14-29)
- 32) If one doesn't change from mortal to immortal until Christ's return, how could anyone that has died be consciously alive anywhere? (1 Cor 15:53-55, Rev 20:5)
- 33) Since David is prophesied to be a king again in the Millennium, and Peter preached that David is dead and not ascended to Heaven, doesn't this tell us that David had no immortal soul and must be resurrected at Christ's return? (Jer 30:9, Ezek 37:21-24, Hos 3:5, Acts 2:29-34, 1 Thes 4:16)

- 34) Why did Solomon write that there is no knowledge or wisdom in the grave, and that the dead know not anything? (Eccl 9:5, Eccl 9:10)
- 35) Why did Christ say "No man has ascended to Heaven except the Son of Man"? (John 3:13 - note that the words "which is in Heaven" were spuriously added - not in reliable manuscripts)
- 36) Why did Paul write that Christ dwells in the glorious light of Heaven that no man has seen or can see? (1 Tim 3:13-16)
- 37) If folks go right to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory when they die, why did Christ say that the time is coming when all that are in the grave will hear His voice and awake, some to everlasting life, and some to judgment (some translations incorrectly read damnation or condemnation)? (John 5:28-29)
- 38) If God is truly a God of love and mercy, loves all human beings, and is not willing that any should be lost, will He not do anything He can to reach those that haven't heard or had a full opportunity for salvation, even giving them another physical life if need be? (2 Pet 3:9, Rev 20:5)
- 39) If everyone goes off to existence somewhere else when they die, who are the "the rest of the dead" in Revelation Chapter 20 who don't live again until the 1000 years (of the Millennium) are ended, and how can there be a "second death" unless one is given a second physical life? (Rev 20:4-6)
- 40) Does the Bible teach that to receive eternal life requires resurrection from death; that this will not occur before Christ returns; and that those first resurrected will reign with Christ on the earth, and be joined by the Father and the New Jerusalem city that descend from Heaven to the "New Earth" after the Millennium? (1 Cor 15:20-26, 1 Cor 15:50-53, 1 Thes 4:13-18, Rev 20:4-6, Rev 21:1-8)

Be assured that God is a loving and merciful God that will provide every person an opportunity to have their name added to the Book of Life, either in this age or in a future resurrection to physical life. Upon death, one's spirit is unconscious, as in a deep sleep, and returns to the safekeeping of God, awaiting a new body in which it can again be conscious (Rev 20:4-6, Eccl 12:7, 1 Cor 15:53-54). The saved do not go to Heaven (John 3:13, 1 Tim 3:13-16). They are resurrected on the Earth. Jesus, and later His Father come from Heaven to dwell forever with the saved on the Earth, which is replaced by the New Earth (Rev 11:15; 20:4; 21:1-7, 2 Pet 3:9-14).

Eternal life will not be spent flying around in the clouds with an added set of wings, or engaged in sanctimonious activities or selfish leisure. For those that achieve salvation prior to Jesus' return, they will assist as kings and priests (administrators and teachers) during the Millennium, and then later during the Great White Throne Judgment when all that have ever lived and not known the truth will be given another physical life during which to learn, practice, and come to love God's ways and be saved (Rev 20:11-15, Isa 65:17-20). The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5, John 1:12, Acts 4:12, John 14:6).

Those that reject God after learning the truth and having a full and fair opportunity for salvation will be mercifully burnt up in the Lake of Fire, which will destroy them, body and soul, as the Lord warned (Matt 10:28, Mal 4:1-3). Eternity holds out the prospect of more and deeper relationships and mutual projects. Of the increase of God's Kingdom, there will be no end (Isa 9:7)! Even eternal life will get better and better! So follow the path to eternal life!