

# Is Heaven The Reward That Christians Receive?

**For the majority of Christians the one word “heaven” summarises their goal, giving meaning to the purpose of life and hope of life after death.**

**Is heaven what millions of Christians think it is? –**

You need to know the truth.

**Even if you do know the truth already, you need to know how to prove it to be true.**

No doctrinal question strikes closer to the heart of Christian belief than the truth of Biblical teaching on the doctrine of heaven.

**The basic doctrine –**

Heaven is the celestial headquarters of government of all seen and unseen things.

**Not a place because the Creator God is not confined to space and time, being omnipresence, present everywhere at same time.**

**Psalms 139:7-12** [NIV] *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”*

**God’s spirit is referring to the Holy Spirit who is one persona of the One Triune God.**

**Any description of heaven is presented in terms of space for human benefit who think in terms of space and time, while the Triune God is outside of time and space both linked to the physical creation not the spiritual realm in which God exists.**

Many are surprised to find that the Word of God, the Christian Bible, speaks of not just one but three heavens.

**The first heaven –**

Is our blanket of life-sustaining gases that encircles our globe, the heaven where birds fly [**Genesis 1:20**] and from where the dew and rain fall, [**Deuteronomy 33:28**].

**The second heaven –**

This represents the expanse of the great universe, the outer space where we find the sun, moon, stars, comets and planets. This is the heaven that God spoke of in **Genesis 1:15-17**.

**The third heaven –**

Represents God’s holy throne and the seat of the ruling authority of all physical and spiritual reality.

This does have some of the qualities that traditional Christianity assigns to it.

**2 Corinthians 12:2-4** [NIV] *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was **caught up to the third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows, **was caught up to paradise**. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”*

Paul briefly described this third heaven as “*paradise*.”

**Matthew 5:34** [NIV] *“But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;”*

**Referred to by Jesus Christ as God’s throne.**

God further draws back the curtain and reveals in a physical form for our benefit, more about His throne in **Revelation chapter 4**, where, in a few verses the apostle John tantalises us with panoramic glimpses of the celestial, breathtaking pageantry and power of the heavenly throne.

**Of the specific layout and furnishing of God’s throne we know but little.** However, in addition to the items listed in **Revelation chapter 4**, we are told the physical counterparts of the earthly tabernacle, built by Moses to God’s specifications, was merely a physical counterpart of heavenly things, [**Hebrews 9:1-5, 23**], although an exact explanation of what this means is not given.

But we need **not** guess about whether heaven is the reward of the saved.

We are directly told in **no** uncertain or ambiguous terms that it is **not**.

**John 3:13** [NIV] *“No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.”*

**This clearly states that no human being, not Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah have gone to heaven.**

There are **no** “souls” of the saved in heaven, it cannot therefore be the reward of the saved.

**Even King David, a man after God’s own heart, [Acts 13:22] and one who found favour with God [Acts 7:45-46] is not in heaven even after the death of Jesus Christ, [Acts 2:29].**

**What then is the hope and goal of Christians? –**

**Matthew 5:5** [NIV] *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”*

Meekness is one of the attributes of a Holy Spirit filled Christian, whose reward is to inherit rulership of the earth under Jesus Christ at His return, as part of the created family of God, [**Revelation 5:10; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:27**].

**Even with these plain scriptures, showing that heaven is not the abode of the righteous dead nor the promised reward of the saved some point to other scripture, that in their minds, seem to say that heaven is the reward of the saved.**

**Scriptures that seem to point to heaven being reward of saved –**

**John 14:1-4** [NIV] *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

**The “Father’s house” is referring, not to heaven but to the physical temple on earth [John 2:16] which had many chambers or rooms each used for a specific job or function, by the priests when on duty.**

The Greek word translated “house” is “*ōikōs*” meaning dwelling place and often used to mean the family in the dwelling place, [Acts 2:36; Luke 19:9; Mark 3:25; Luke 1:27, 33; Luke 2:4].

**The disciples correctly understood Jesus to be saying that in His Kingdom, a family grown big, were many responsible positions and that He was going to prepare a job for them, and that He would bring details of that job when He comes again, [Revelation 22:12; Revelation 5:9-10; 1 Peter 2:9-12].**

**Philippians 1:23-24** [NIV] *“I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”*

Paul does **not** say in these verses **where or when he will meet Jesus Christ.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** [NIV] *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.”*

**This is when and where that meeting will be, add to this Zechariah 14:4 and Acts 1:11 we know the exact spot where Paul and all other saved Christians will end up.**

**Also consider this, if the saved “souls” of millions are now in heaven, why must there be a resurrection of the dead as described in 1 Corinthians 15?**

**Obviously because the dead are still in their graves, not heaven.**

**Matthew 5:12** [NIV] *“Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

To clarify this you need to read **Matthew 5:5.**

Also compare with **1 Peter 1:3-4; Revelation 22:12.**

**Luke 23:43** [NIV] *“Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’”*

There are **no** punctuation points in Hebrew and Greek so the translator has to put them in where he considers they should be according to his knowledge.

**If we consider other scriptures that we have studied in this article all we have to do is move the punctuation mark and it will harmonise with them.**

*“Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise’.”*

Referring to the future “paradise” of **Revelation 2:7.**

Aside from a knowledge of the often misunderstood verses that we have just studied, the whole subject of heaven can be grasped by remembering relatively few scriptures.

Heaven is God’s throne, [Matthew 5:34].

God’s throne described, [Revelation 4].

No human has ascended to heaven, [John 3:13].

King David not in heaven still in his grave, [Acts 2:29-35].

God’s Kingdom will be on earth, [Matthew 5:5; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:27; Revelation 5:10].

**How wonderful is our Creator God to reveal through His Word, the Christian Bible, and the Holy Spirit, [John 17:17; John 16:13] the truth about the Christians future reward if we remain faithful to the end of our lives.**