

IF YOU'VE WONDERED...

“What is Heaven like?”

It is natural to imagine what happens after death, but it can be difficult to know. You might picture a “better place” for those who have died. You might have heard that heaven is where people go after death, and imagining such a place can be both inspiring and confusing. You might have heard people say that heaven is not real. It is difficult to believe in something that has not been seen. If you’ve heard that God is in heaven, you may find comfort thinking of the dead living with God in another realm. You may even be wondering about your own deaths or those of others. Perhaps you or someone you know is seeking reassurance that a terrible place is not awaiting you after you die.

.....➤ What the Bible says:

The word “heaven” literally means “sky.” The Bible starts by saying that God created the heavens and the earth. The Bible often refers to “heavens” (plural), indicating that there is more than one. We can see this, too, since the skies (heavens) can be sunny, cloudy, dark with stars, or colorful with sunrises and sunsets. The heavens can also appear close or far, filled with moons, planets, and stars or the sun and clouds. The Bible says that all of creation in the heavens praises God and does exactly what God wants.

God is present in the heavens, and the Bible says that God’s throne is there. But God is also present on earth and everywhere else, including with the dead. There is no place outside of God’s presence; so we don’t need to go to heaven to be with God. The Bible doesn’t say the dead go to heaven; it uses the idea of “sleep” to describe death. The Bible shows that God can reach those who have died, as God’s voice has spoken from the heavens to both the living and the dead.

While many stories in the Bible describe people who died and were brought back to life, only one person—Jesus—was resurrected, meaning He will never die again. Jesus’ resurrection gives us insight into what happens after death. He ascended to heaven to rule from God’s throne, and there are glimpses in the Bible of humans, both living and dead, being invited into God’s heavenly presence. The Bible promises a future resurrection, where the dead will rise, and God will live with them in a new heaven and a new earth. God’s throne will come down from heaven to the new earth, and humans will live with God forever. This new life with God will be beautiful and is described in Revelation 21-22.

➤ What you could explore:

Different writings about life after death: There are many different theories about what happens after death. The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, including everything that we can see and everything we can't see. God is everywhere and with everyone, whether alive or dead. God's throne is described as being in heaven, but God is also present on earth. That means that God is with a person who died and able to take care of that person. Some parts of the Bible, such as Revelation, tell us more about what that will be like in the future, when God will live with us after creating a new heaven and a new earth, where we will have resurrected bodies that can't die anymore. What happens to the dead before that and how heaven interacts is debated with lots of perspectives. Humans may never agree on what the role of heaven is, but in the meantime, we can know that God cares for us and the dead in better ways than we can imagine or imagine.

➤ What you could do:

Enjoy the Heavens: The Bible speaks of the glory of God filling the heavens. Explore the wonders of the sky—use a telescope or a phone app to find constellations, planets, or galaxies. Enjoy watching clouds, sunrises, or sunsets. Talk about your favorite heaven or imagine those who have passed away enjoying that heaven with you.

Imagine God's Throne: Picture you and loved ones who have passed being invited into God's throne room. What would you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch there? What would you say to the heavenly council or those who have died? Create art or poetry together to depict these scenes.

Look to Resurrection: Imagine resurrection day. Think about where you and those who have died will be when it happens. What will you do or say to those who have died? Create a picture of your ideal home in the new earth and what the new heaven will look like.



Where you could look for more information:

- ✘ **God creating the heavens:** Genesis 1:1-2:4 • Exodus 20:11 • 2 Kings 19:15 • 1 Chronicles 16 • Job 9:8 • Psalms 33, 96, 102, 115, 121, 124, 134, 136, 146 • Proverbs 3 and 8 • Isaiah 37, 40, 42, 45 • Jeremiah 10, 32, 51 • Zechariah 12:1 • Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24 • Colossians 1:16 • Hebrews 1:10 • 2 Peter 3 • Revelation 10:6, 11:12, 14:7
- ✘ **Attempting to reach the heavens:** Genesis 11 • Isaiah 14:13 • Jeremiah 51:53 • Amos 9:2-6 • Matthew 11 • Romans 10:6 • 2 Corinthians 12:2 • Revelation 12
- ✘ **God and God's throne residing in the heavens:** Deuteronomy 3:24, 4:39, 26:15 • 1 Kings 8 • 2 Chronicles 20:6 and 18:18 • Job 22:12 • Psalm 2:4, 11:4, 14:2, 103:19, 115:3, 123:1, 139:8 • Isaiah 66:1 • Matthew 5-7 • Acts 7 • Ephesians 6:9 • Hebrews 9 • Revelation 4
- ✘ **What comes down from the heavens:** Genesis 7:11, 19:24, 27:28 • Exodus 16:4 • Deuteronomy 28:12-62 • Judges 5 • 2 Kings 1 • 2 Chronicles 7 • Job 1:16 and 38:29 • Psalm 78 and 105 • Isaiah 14, 45, 55 • Mark 8:11 • Luke 10:18, 17:29, 21:11 • John 3 and 6 • Acts 9:3 and 10:11 • 1 Thessalonians 4:16 • James 5:18 • 1 Peter 3:22 • 2 Peter 1:18 • Revelation 3:12, 8:10, 9:1, 16:21, 19:11-14, 19:14, 20:9
- ✘ **What goes into the heavens:** Exodus 9:10 • Deuteronomy 1:28 and 32:40 • Judges 13:20 and 20:40 • 1 Samuel 5:12 • 2 Kings 2 • Job 35:5 • Proverbs 30:19 • Isaiah 13 • Daniel 8:8 • Matthew 22:30 • Mark 16:19 • Luke 2:15, 10:20, 17:24, 24:51 • Acts 1 • 2 Corinthians 5 • Hebrews 4:14
- ✘ **Heavens declaring God's glory:** Psalm 19, 50, 69, 89, 97, 148 • Isaiah 44 • Habakkuk 3:3
- ✘ **God calling to humans out of a heaven:** Genesis 21:17 and 22:11-17 • Exodus 20 • Deuteronomy 4:26 • 2 Samuel 22 • Psalm 76:8 • Matthew 3:16 and 17:5 • Mark 1:11 • Luke 3:22 • John 1:32 and 12:28 • Revelation 10:4 and 14:2
- ✘ **Heavens cannot contain God but belong to God:** 1 Kings 8:27 • 1 Chronicles 29 • 2 Chronicles 2 and 6 • Nehemiah 1 and 9 • Psalm 8, 57, 108, 113 • Ephesians 4:10
- ✘ **Visions and dreams of God's heavenly court:** Genesis 28:12 • Exodus 24:10 • 1 Kings 22:19 • Ezekiel 1 • Revelation 4
- ✘ **The heavens coming to an end and God making a new heaven:** Job 14:12 • Psalm 68:8 • Isaiah 34:4, 51:6, 65:17, 66:22 • Jeremiah 23:24 • Matthew 5 and 24 • Mark 13 • Luke 21:33 • 2 Peter 3:12 • Revelation 6, 12, 20-22