

A PLACE CALLED HEAVEN

Answering 10 Questions About Your Eternal Home

HAVE SOME PEOPLE ALREADY VISITED HEAVEN?

Hebrews 9:27

DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS | SEPTEMBER 25, 2016

INTRODUCTION: Many of today's best-selling Christian books are accounts of people who died, visited heaven, and returned to life to recount all they had seen in the next world. Do such experiences provide reliable information about that "place called heaven?" If not, are those who claim such experiences dishonest, demonic, or deluded? Today we are going to look at what the Bible says about those who claim to have already visited that "place called heaven."

I. What Are "Near-Death Experiences?"

Definition: The International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) defines the experience as a "profound psychological event that may occur to a person close to death, or if not near death, in a situation of physical or emotional crises." It includes transcendental and mystical elements.

II. Why Are Stories About Near-Death Experiences So Popular?

A. Our Natural **Curiosity** About the Unknown

B. Our **Longing** for Heaven

Ecclesiastes 3:11b "...He [God] has also set eternity in [our] hearts..."

1 John 4:1 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Acts 17:11b "...for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

- III. Are Near-Death Experiences Biblical?

- IV. Seven Principles For Evaluating Near-Death Experiences
 - A. Remember: “Near-Death” is not **Death**

Hebrews 9:27 “Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment.”
(New Living Translation)

- B. The Bible is **Sufficient**

Thessalonians 4:13-18 “¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

- C. Adding To or Taking Away from the Bible is **Condemned** by God

Revelations 22:18-19 “¹⁸ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

- D. Question the **Identity** of Any “Being of Light”

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.”

1 Timothy 4:1 “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”

2 Corinthians 11:14 “...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

E. Beware of the **Occult**

F. Jesus’ **Death** and **Resurrection** Are Central to Any Revelation from God

Acts 9:3-6 “³ And it came about that as he [Saul] journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ ⁵ And he said, ‘Who art Thou Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, ⁶ but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.’”

G. The Bible Doesn’t **Record** Near-Death Experiences

- Elijah and the widow of Zarephath’s son (1 Kings 17:17-24)
- Elisha and the Shunammite woman’s son (2 Kings 4:18-37)
- Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14)
- Jesus and Jairus’ daughter (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56)
- Jesus and the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11-15)
- Peter and Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43)
- Paul and Euthychus (Acts 20:6-12)
- Unnamed saints (Hebrews 11:35)

1. Example of Lazarus (John 11:17, 39, 43-44)
2. Example of Jesus
3. Example of Stephen

Acts 7:54-56 “⁵⁴ Now when they [the Jewish officials, the Sanhedrin] heard this [Stephen’s speech condemning them], they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”

Acts 7:59-60 “⁵⁹ They went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ ⁶⁰ And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, he fell asleep.”

4. Example of Paul

2 Corinthians 12:2 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a man was caught up to the third heaven.”

Conclusion