

## Heaven -

**Heaven**, or **the heavens**, is a common [religious](#), [cosmological](#), or [transcendent](#) place where beings such as [gods](#), [angels](#), [spirits](#), [saints](#), or [venerated ancestors](#) are said to originate, be [enthroned](#), or live.

According to the beliefs of some religions, heavenly beings can descend to earth or [incarnate](#), and earthly beings can ascend to heaven in the [afterlife](#), or in exceptional cases [enter heaven alive](#).

Heaven is often described as a "higher place", the [holiest](#) place, a [Paradise](#), in contrast to [hell](#) or the [Underworld](#) or the "low places", and [universally](#) or conditionally accessible by earthly beings according to various standards of [divinity](#), [goodness](#), [piety](#), [faith](#), or other [virtues](#) or [right beliefs](#) or simply the [will of God](#). Some believe in the possibility of a heaven on Earth in a [World to Come](#).

Another belief is in an [axis mundi](#) or [world tree](#) which connects the heavens, the terrestrial world, and the [underworld](#). In [Indian religions](#), heaven is considered as [Svarqa loka](#), and the soul is again subjected to [rebirth](#) in different living forms according to its [karma](#).

This cycle can be broken after a soul achieves [Moksha](#) or [Nirvana](#). Any place of existence, either of humans, souls or deities, outside the tangible world (heaven, hell, or other) is referred to as [otherworld](#)

## New Testament and early Christianity:

Main article: [Heaven \(Christianity\)](#)



The [Assumption of the Virgin](#) by [Francesco Botticini](#) at the National Gallery London, shows three hierarchies and nine orders of angels, each with different characteristics.

Descriptions of heaven in the [New Testament](#) are more fully developed than those in the Old Testament, but are still generally vague.<sup>[35]</sup> As in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, God is described as the ruler of heaven and earth, but his power over the earth is challenged by [Satan](#)

Sayings of [Jesus](#) recorded in the [Gospels of Mark](#) and [Luke](#) speak of the "[Kingdom of God](#)" ([Greek](#): βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; *basileía tou theou*), while the [Gospel of Matthew](#) more commonly uses the term "[Kingdom of Heaven](#)" ([Greek](#): βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν; *basileía tōn ouranōn*).

Both phrases have exactly the same meaning, but the author of the Gospel of Matthew changed the name "Kingdom of God" to "Kingdom of Heaven" in most instances because it was the more acceptable phrase in his own cultural and religious context in the late first century.

Modern scholars agree that the Kingdom of God was an essential part of the teachings of the [historical Jesus](#).<sup>[41][42]</sup> In spite of this, none of the gospels ever record Jesus as having explained exactly what the phrase "Kingdom of God" means.

The most likely explanation for this apparent omission is that the Kingdom of God was a commonly understood concept that required no explanation. Jews in [Judea](#) during the early first century believed that God reigns eternally in Heaven, but many also believed that God would eventually establish his kingdom on earth as well.

This belief is referenced in the first petition of the [Lord's Prayer](#), taught by Jesus to his disciples and recorded in both [Matthew 6:10](#) and [Luke 11:2](#): "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Because God's Kingdom was believed to be superior to any human kingdom, this meant that God would necessarily drive out the Romans, who ruled Judea, and establish his own direct rule over the Jewish people.

In the teachings of the historical Jesus, people are expected to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God by living moral lives. Jesus's commands for his followers to adopt lifestyles of [moral perfectionism](#) are found in many passages throughout the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in the Mount in [Matthew 5-7](#). Jesus also taught that, in the Kingdom of Heaven, there would be a reversal of roles in which "the last will be first and the first will be last" ([Mark 10:31](#), [Matthew 19:30](#), [Matthew 20:16](#), and [Luke 13:30](#)).

This teaching recurs throughout the recorded teachings of Jesus, including in the admonition to be like a child in [Mark 10:13-16](#), [Matthew 19:30](#), and [Luke 18:15-17](#), the [Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus](#) in [Luke 16:19-31](#), the [Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard](#) in [Matthew 20:1-16](#), the [Parable of the Great Banquet](#) in [Matthew 22:1-10](#), and the [Parable of the Prodigal Son](#) in [Luke 15:11-32](#).

Traditionally, [Christianity](#) has taught that heaven is the location of the [throne of God](#) as well as the holy [angels](#), although this is in varying degrees considered [metaphorical](#).

In traditional Christianity, it is considered a state or condition of existence (rather than a particular place somewhere in the [cosmos](#)) of the supreme fulfillment of [theosis](#) in the [beatific vision](#) of the [Godhead](#). In most [forms of Christianity](#), heaven is also understood as the abode for the redeemed dead in the [afterlife](#), usually a temporary stage before the [resurrection of the dead](#) and the [saints'](#) return to [the New Earth](#).

The [resurrected Jesus](#) is said to have [ascended to heaven](#) where [he now sits](#) at the [Right Hand of God](#) and will return to earth in the [Second Coming](#). Various people have been said to have [entered heaven while still alive](#), including [Enoch](#), [Elijah](#) and [Jesus](#) himself, after his resurrection.

According to [Roman Catholic teaching](#), [Mary, mother of Jesus](#), is also said to have been [assumed into heaven](#) and is titled the [Queen of Heaven](#).

In the 2nd century AD, [Irenaeus](#) of Lyons recorded a belief that, in accordance with [John 14:2](#), those who in the [afterlife](#) see the [Saviour](#) are in different mansions, some dwelling in the heavens, others in [paradise](#) and others in "[the city](#)".

While the word used in all these writings, in particular the New Testament Greek word [οὐρανός](#) (*ouranos*), applies primarily to the [sky](#), it is also used metaphorically of the dwelling place of God and the [blessed](#).

Similarly, though the English word "heaven" still keeps its original physical meaning when used, for instance, in allusions to the stars as "lights shining through from heaven", and in phrases such as [heavenly body](#) to mean an astronomical object, the heaven or happiness that Christianity looks forward to is, according to Pope John Paul II, "neither an abstraction nor a physical place

in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the [Holy Trinity](#). It is our meeting with the [Father](#) which takes place in the risen [Christ](#) through the communion of the [Holy Spirit](#).