

## **A Look at the Reward for the Believers: Is Heaven the Ultimate Reward for Us?**

### **Is Heaven the Only Reward for the Believers, or Are There Other Promising Rewards Awaiting Us?**

Heaven-or Jannah-is the name of the place that God has designated as a reward for the believers and righteous servants of God in the Hereafter. But is Heaven the only reward awaiting the believers? In the Noble Quran and Islamic narrations, Heaven is described as a real and actual place. It is comprised of gardens with lush, green trees, flowing rivers, delightful fruits, splendid palaces and castles-along with eternal peace and security. It is a place where there is no suffering, no illness, no aging, no fatigue, and no death. For example, the Quran states: "And race towards forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the righteous [1]." This verse highlights the vastness of Heaven, presenting it as a place whose expanse equals that of the heavens and the earth. In fact, Heaven is the result and the fruit of attaining a sound heart in this world, and a healthy birth into the hereafter.

However, there are also narrations that suggest that Heaven is a reward for our physical bodies. At first glance, this might seem to disrupt your perception of Heaven and its role as a reward for the believers. If we accept that Heaven is only a reward for our bodies, then why do Islamic teachings and the sayings of the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them) so frequently emphasize striving to attain Heaven? Why are the blessings of Heaven so often described in religious sources? Is Heaven truly only a reward for our physical bodies? Does all its value lie solely in

these outward, tangible blessings? What about our souls and spirits, which are far more valuable and exalted than our bodies? Will they remain without reward? Alongside these material and physical blessings of Heaven, shouldn't we consider a higher, more precious reward for the believers?

In this article, we aim to explore the concept of Heaven more deeply-to understand whether heaven is merely a reward for our bodies, or if the true reward lies beyond the tangible blessings, hidden in divine satisfaction and meeting with God. To examine this apparent contradiction, we first need to review the nature of the body and the spirit, and why Heaven is often described as a reward for the body.

### **Why Is Heaven Only a Reward for Our Bodies?**

As explained in the article "The Soul or the Spirit", the spirit is the true, immaterial essence of our existence that becomes connected to the body at birth. The body is merely a temporary carrier and companion for the spirit in this worldly journey. It is distinct from the spirit and serves only as a tool for its presence and activity in the material realm. Our true identity is defined by the spirit, while the body is simply an element limited to the stage of worldly life.

Likewise, in the article "The Animal Self", we explored the existential dimensions that human beings share with animals. Traits such as starting families, a sense of responsibility, striving and laboring for survival, establishing social life, hierarchical order, loyalty, kindness, and service to others and fellow creatures-these are all attributes common to both humans and animals. But the essential point is that if a

human being, throughout life, confines themselves solely to cultivating and strengthening these shared traits, they will remain at an animal level and will not rise to the lofty rank of true humanity.

Now, with these foundational points established, it becomes much easier to understand why Heaven is considered a reward for the body.

Heaven, in all its magnificence and vastness, is in fact a blessing that corresponds to the physical and animal dimension of our existence. Those human beings who, in this world, exhibit positive traits such as loyalty, kindness, altruism, and commitment to family-and in other words, who become "good animals"-attain this heavenly reward. As Imam Kazim (Peace be upon him) stated: "Nothing can become an adequate price for your bodies other than paradise. Do not sell it for any thing other than paradise [2]." Thus, attaining Heaven signifies remaining confined to the level of animalistic qualities and not rising to the exalted rank of true humanity. Human beings reach Heaven only when they have become, in essence, "good animals" in this life. Therefore, Heaven is the reward of the body-granted in return for a well-lived life at the level of refined animal nature. Heaven is an initial station and a preliminary reward; our ultimate perfection and final reward for the believers lie beyond Heaven itself.

### **What Is the True Reward for the Human Being?**

Having established that Heaven is a reward for the body and that "being a good animal" is a form of partial perfection achieved through cultivating traits shared between humans and animals-we are faced with a deeper question: What, then, is the reward for the believers as such? If a person exerts effort and struggles to

transcend the animalistic level and to actualize their lofty human potentials, what reward awaits them? Will their reward also be confined to the blessings of Heaven, or will they attain a rank that is higher and boundless? Before answering these questions, it must be made clear: while it is true that Heaven is the reward of the body, this does not mean that Heaven is devoid of value. Rather, it means that for those who have attained their true human status, there exist superior and more exalted rewards-rewards that cannot be measured against the perceptible blessings of Heaven.

Religious teachings offer a clear and hopeful answer to this question: for those who awaken the human dimension of their being and set out on the path of acquiring true human perfections-those who strive to resemble God and the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them)-a reward for the believers has been promised that is far greater and more sublime than the physical pleasures of Heaven. This reward is not limited to bodily enjoyments or sensory delights; rather, it is the encounter with God, nearness to Him, and companionship with His chosen ones-especially the radiant lights of the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them). This station is referred to as the Heaven of Divine Pleasure or Ridwan.

*Jannat al-Ridwan* is an exalted and superior rank within Heaven, reserved for the most elect of God's servants and saints. It is, in fact, the *Ridwan*, the Divine Pleasure, that surpasses every other blessing, and with which no other bounty can compare. As Allah says in the Noble Quran: "Allah has promised the believing men and believing women Gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, and pure dwellings in Gardens of perpetual bliss. But the greatest of all is Allah's good pleasure-that is the supreme success [3]." In this verse, Allah promises

Heaven, but then emphasizes that His *Ridwan*, His good pleasure and nearness to Him, is the loftiest and most supreme reward for the believers that transcends every material blessing.

The pleasure and joy that arise from such a reward cannot be compared to any physical or worldly delight. No matter how glorious and captivating the blessings of Heaven may be, to the one who has reached the status of nearness to God and companionship with the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them), they are insignificant. The reward for the believers or true humans is union with the True Beloved, immersion in the boundless ocean of His mercy and beauty. It is that sacred destination sought by the Infallible Imams, the friends of God, and the saints, for which they expended all their effort and struggle.

In this article, we explored the concept of Heaven and its position within Islamic teachings. We discovered that, despite its vastness and endless blessings, Heaven is a reward granted to those who have nurtured qualities such as kindness, virtuous character, and avoidance of sin-traits that embody the best of animal qualities. Heaven reflects the pleasures of this world, yet in their purest and most perfected form. However, the ultimate purpose of human creation is far beyond this.

A human can truly achieve perfection when they activate the higher dimension of their being-transcending physical and sensory pleasures to attain nearness to God, divine pleasure, and the meeting with the Creator. Reaching this supreme reward demands relentless effort in self-knowledge, knowledge of God, and spiritual refinement. Therefore, although Heaven is a reward for the body, the ultimate purpose of human creation is to reach a higher state beyond this worldly and even heavenly reward. Human beings were not created merely for eating, drinking, and

comfort; their noble spirit longs for something greater-union with the Beloved and nearness to the Absolute Truth, a state beyond all description and words.

Heaven is for the body, but divine pleasure (*Ridwan*) is for the soul. Those who transcend their animalistic nature and know their true human potential are on the path to divine satisfaction. The way to this great reward passes through self-knowledge, spiritual purification, struggle against low desires, and love for God and His friends.

So, let us consider Heaven not as the final destination, but as the beginning of a journey that leads to the "great success"-a destination that is "God's pleasure," the greatest reward mentioned in the Quran, which belongs only to the "human" and not merely to the "human body."

#### References

[1]. The Quran, 3:133

[2]. Al - Kulaynī, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb. *Al - Kāfī*, Book 1, “*The Book of Intelligence and Ignorance*,” ḥadīth 12; accessed via [Thaqalayn.net](http://Thaqalayn.net).

[3]. The Quran 9:72