

## **Barbara Walters Interviews About Heaven**

Television journalist Barbara Walters admits she had no religious training and doesn't practice any religion. But after a year spent working on the ABC News special on heaven, Walters found herself fascinated by the afterlife. **"I've done years and years of specials, but I care more about this one than anything I've ever done."**

**"And while Hollywood creators may take poetic license with the theology of Heaven their stories draw us in because they touch emotions deep in the human heart...that we are part of something bigger than ourselves; that life is an interlude between two great mysteries: why we are here and where we are going."**

**Had you thought much about heaven in your personal life before doing this show?**

I think everybody wonders, is there life after death? Recently, when I've been at dinners, I've gone around the table and said, "How many of you believe in life after death?" It's so interesting to see your friends' answers, because sometimes it's very surprising. Sometimes you'll find that husbands and wives disagree.

What I feel more and more is how important it is to live your life in a better way, and not to worry about it. What happens will happen.

**That's similar to what the actor Richard Gere tells you on the program.**

Yes. He has been a Tibetan Buddhist since he was in his 20s. He tries to live his life to be helpful, which is why the Buddhist philosophy is very appealing to people. It is a philosophy that teaches compassion. We took a little trip after [interviewing the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala] around India for a couple of days. For about three days, I was a wonderful person. Then on the fourth day, I began to yell at my producer. "Why didn't we get that? We should have taken this picture!" But I was great for three days.

**If there is a heaven, do you expect to go there?**

I have no idea.

**Were you taught anything about the afterlife when you were growing up?**

No, it's not something that was discussed. I didn't have a very religious family. So this was an education for me.

**Returning to the failed suicide bomber you interviewed--what was it like to talk to him?**

The Israeli government allowed us to enter a high-security Israeli prison and interview a suicide bomber who didn't make it. To go into that prison, when we finally got permission, and to sit across the desk from him, and to speak to him, and hearing him tell me that as a non-Muslim, I

would not go to heaven and that I would go to hell, was a very moving and very frightening and very sad experience.

**A similar thing happened with Ted Haggard, an evangelical pastor, who said because you were not a born-again Christian, he couldn't say for certain if you were going to go to heaven. How did it make you feel to be told that you weren't guaranteed a place in heaven?**

Well, since I never thought that I was, it didn't depress me too much. And I really do believe that the most important thing is the way you live your life on earth. But I think it's enormously comforting to believe that you're going to see your loved ones.

Although I myself don't go to church or synagogue, I do, whether it's superstition or whatever, pray every time I get on a plane. I just automatically do it. I say the same thing every time. I say, "Dear God, thank you for all my blessings. Thank you for everything that I have in my life. Take care of my family and make this a safe trip."

Because I feel if I don't, I'm in danger.

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### **One Eternal Life but in Three Modes by Dr. Louis A. Brighton**

Dr. Louis A. Brighton is Professor Emeritus of New Testament Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO.

There is one eternal life that is a gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. But the Scriptures testify that we experience this life everlasting in three different modes.<sup>6</sup> That is, we experience eternal life in three different stages or periods of time and reality.

**The first mode** of possessing the gift of eternal life is in this present mortal life here on earth, but we experience it only by faith.

**The second mode** or manner that the same gift of eternal life is experienced is from our death until the end of the world as our souls are in heaven before God while our bodies lie in the graves.

**The third mode** will commence at the resurrection of our bodies when in body and soul we will live forever with God in the new heaven and earth.

However, there are not three different eternal lives, for it is the same life that is received and experienced in three ways, three modes.

At death the soul or spirit of the Christian is taken to God in heaven while the body is placed into the grave. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 the statement is made that when the dust, that is, the material or substance of the body, returns to the ground (the grave), the spirit returns to God. Similarly in Psalm 146:4 it says that when the body returns to the ground the spirit (or soul) departs. This suggests that at death the soul does depart from the body, and that the soul goes to God in heaven while the body is placed in the ground.

That the soul does go to God in heaven and is consciously aware of being present in His heavenly presence is attested to in several places in the New Testament. Well do we remember the words of Jesus spoken to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 paradise is equated with heaven, the very presence of God. The thief on the cross, at the moment of his death, would be in the very presence of God in heaven (Luke 23:43).

In Revelation there are graphic pictures of the souls of God's saints in heaven in His holy presence. In Revelation 6:9-11 the souls ( ψυχας ) of those who had been martyred are pictured before the incense altar which is in heaven before God. They are dressed in white garments, and they are at peace while they wait for their fellow believers still here on earth in suffering.

In Revelation 7:9-17, which is the most beautiful picture in the entire Bible of the saints in heaven, the followers of Christ stand before the heavenly throne of God. They are dressed in garments that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and thus made white. This time the saints in heaven are worshiping God the Father and the Lamb, and they are at peace never again to be touched by suffering. For they are led by the Lamb, Jesus Christ their shepherd, and God has wiped all tears from their eyes.