



# **Imagine There's A Heaven**

**By**

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# Imagine

Soon after John Lennon left The Beatles in 1969 he wrote this song:

*Imagine there's no heaven*

*It's easy if you try*

*No hell below us*

*Above us, only sky*

**JOHN LENNON, IMAGINE, 1971, APPLE RECORDS**

Lennon wrote *Imagine* in early 1971. That was during the same time I was investigating the truth claims of Christianity. Lennon recorded the song on May 27, 1971. I left atheism and became a follower of Jesus Christ two weeks earlier on May 10, 1971. Apple Records released *Imagine* in the United States in October 1971 after a successful debut in England a month earlier. I heard the song on radio and immediately knew it would be a big hit for Lennon. As it

turned out *Imagine* was Lennon's best-selling single of his post-Beatles career.

I also knew, both as a journalist and a former atheist, that the song would become an anthem for atheists, agnostics, and others who did not believe in God. The idea of no heaven and no hell was certainly appealing, but the next part of the song explained the real reason behind it.

*Imagine all the people*

*Livin' for today*

*Ah*

Living life the way you want to live it is a strong reason to rule out the existence of God. If there is no God, you're free to do whatever you want. That's one of the things that attracted me to atheism. I was raised in a "rules" environment. Whether it was family, church, or school I was always surrounded by rules. Atheism removed rules from my life. I could live my life any way I wanted to live it. I only had to answer to one person – me. That was very attractive.

I immediately recognized what Lennon was saying in his song.

Lennon once said that he was more agnostic than atheist. He and other members of The Beatles were interviewed for Playboy magazine in 1965. Paul McCartney said, “We probably seem antireligious because of the fact that none of us believe in God.” Lennon responded to that by saying, “If you say you don’t believe in God, everybody assumes you’re antireligious, and you probably think that’s what we mean by that. We’re not quite sure ‘what’ we are, but I know that we’re more agnostic than atheistic.” Paul agreed with that and said, “We all feel roughly the same. We’re all agnostics.” Lennon responded with, “Most people are, anyway.” (Playboy, February 1965)

Lennon's wife, Yoko Ono, also influenced the writing of *Imagine*. She was raised by a Buddhist mother and Christian father, but her own religious view was and is centered on herself. She posted this on Twitter in 2017 —

*Organized religion is not necessarily a representative of God. They never have been. You are the true representative of peace and love.*

Notice the importance of the word “you” in her tweet. YOU are the true representative of peace and love — not God.

Lennon said that poems from Ono's 1964 book, *Grapefruit*, inspired some of the lyrics for *Imagine*. You can see the *universalist* view in these words from the song:

*You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one*

*Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man*

*Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world*

By “universalist” I mean that Lennon was looking for something that everyone in the world would join. “I hope someday you’ll join us.” What would happen says the dreamer? “And the world will be one.” One world, with no one person or country having possessions would lead to “a brotherhood of man” where there would be “No need for greed or hunger.” Lennon’s perfect world was “all the people Sharing all the world.” That sounds good on paper, but it can’t work because of one simple reason. People, all people, are sinners by nature. They, we, are selfish and greedy. We want what we want when we want it. We can write and sing songs all day about how we want a perfect world where everyone is part of “A brotherhood of man,” but

that's not real. That's not what people really want – deep down inside where we all know what's really real.



# Dueling Anthems

John Lennon wrote an anthem for the “new world” that he and millions of others hoped for in the 1960s and 70s. Many people today still refer to the song as an anthem for the *new world* they see coming. The only problem is that everything Lennon “imagined” is not true.

What was true (and still is) was a song Judy Collins recorded a year before Lennon’s *Imagine* was released. Here are the beginning lyrics of what Collins sang:

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now I’m found  
Was blind but now I see*

Collins included *Amazing Grace* on her “Whales & Nightingales” album. She saw how powerfully the song impacted protestors during civil rights demonstrations in 1964 and chose to use it as part of an anti-war and peace position for her album. The song’s history really dates back to 1772 when John Newton wrote the words after God transformed his life from slave ship captain to Christian.

Collins’ rendition of *Amazing Grace* was very popular on radio stations when I became a Christian. I remember singing the song loudly as I heard it played while driving to and from work. Tears flowed down my face as I thought of how precious my Savior was to me. I once was lost but Jesus sought me, found me, and saved me. I was spiritually blind but He opened my eyes to see His amazing grace. *Amazing Grace* became an anthem for me as a new Christian and is still my favorite song. It is also the anthem for millions of God’s people who love and thank Him for His amazing grace.

I heard Judy Collins' *Amazing Grace* several months before I heard John Lennon's *Imagine*. The songs were more than just different — they were at odds with each other. They were a societal example of the **great duel** facing our world. One song claimed that God was alive and had sent His Son to set us free from sin and death, and give us eternal life with Him in Heaven. The other song claimed there was no heaven, no hell, no God. Both of those claims cannot be true. One of them must be false.

# The Truth

I already knew the truth before Lennon's *Imagine* hit the airwaves. His words did not shake my faith in God. Lennon's admission to being a "dreamer" did not impress me then and it does not impress me now. I would much rather be a "believer" based on factual evidence than a dreamer with no evidential foundation. Dreaming that things will be better for the world some day is not as important as knowing how that will happen.

I do believe the world will be better one day, but it's not because we "imagine" there's no heaven or hell. It's not because we "imagine" no possessions, no need for greed or hunger. It's not because we "imagine" a "brotherhood of man." It's not because we "imagine" all the people sharing all the world. *Imagining* does not make any of these things happen. That's not how reality works.

Reality is what's real, what's true. Here's an interesting definition of "reality," especially in light of Lennon's song —

*the state of things as they are, rather than as they are imagined to be – Cambridge Dictionary*

Think about that for a moment. Reality is "the state of things as they are, rather than as they are imagined to be." John Lennon's *Imagine* is not about reality. It's not about what true. It's something he made up in his head. He came up with words to a song, wrote it, recorded it, sold it. That's commerce, not reality.

What's "real" is God's existence, His creation of this world, His sending His one and only Son from Heaven to earth to die so that we might live. Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended back to Heaven where He reigns over the universe He created. Jesus Christ will return to the earth one day to right wrongs and establish justice. Jesus will judge righteously and establish an everlasting Kingdom. That's when dreams become real. That's when God will dwell with people and call them "His people." God will wipe

away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain, “for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

That's the truth.

You can imagine something that is not true or you can celebrate what is true. That is a choice God has given you. If you would like to learn more, I invite you to do what I did. Investigate the truth claims of the Bible. Compare them with your beliefs. Do your beliefs stand up under scrutiny? My beliefs as an atheist could not stand the test. Christianity withstood every test. Why? Because **Jesus Christ is real. The Bible is true. God exists.**

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was*

*buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8*

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