

# Heaven's Gate (religious group)

**Heaven's Gate** was an American UFO religious millenarian cult based near San Diego, California. It was founded in 1974 and led by Marshall Applewhite (1931–1997) and Bonnie Nettles (1927–1985).<sup>[1]</sup> On March 26, 1997, members of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department discovered the bodies of 39 members of the group in a house in the San Diego suburb of Rancho Santa Fe. They had participated in a mass suicide; specifically, a coordinated series of ritual suicides, in order to reach what they believed was an extraterrestrial spacecraft following Comet Hale–Bopp.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Just before the mass suicide, the group's website was updated with the message: "Hale–Bopp brings closure to Heaven's Gate ... Our 22 years of classroom here on planet Earth is finally coming to conclusion – 'graduation' from the Human Evolutionary Level. We are happily prepared to leave 'this world' and go with Ti's crew."<sup>[4]</sup>

## Contents

### History

- Contemporary media coverage
- Mass suicide
- Aftermath

### Belief system

- Techniques to enter the next level

### Structure

### In popular culture

### See also

### References

### Further reading

### External links

## History

The son of a Presbyterian minister and a former soldier, Marshall Applewhite began his foray into biblical prophecy in the early 1970s. After being fired from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas over an alleged relationship with one of his male students, he met Bonnie Nettles, a 44-year-old married nurse with an interest in theosophy and biblical prophecy, in March 1972.<sup>[5]</sup> According to Applewhite's writings, the two met in a hospital where she worked while he was visiting a sick friend there. It has been rumored that it was a psychiatric hospital, but Nettles was substituting for another nurse working with premature

### Heaven's Gate



<b>Type</b>	New religious movement
<b>Classification</b>	UFO religious based, New religious movement
<b>Orientation</b>	Gnostic inspired Sci-fi Millenarianism
<b>Structure</b>	Public meetings
<b>Moderator</b>	Marshall Applewhite (1974–1997)
<b>Region</b>	United States
<b>Headquarters</b>	San Diego, California
<b>Founder</b>	Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles
<b>Origin</b>	1974
<b>Defunct</b>	March 19–20, 1997 (Religious Movement)
<b>Members</b>	41 (Pre-1997), 2 (Post-1997)
<b>Official website</b>	heavensgate.com (http://heavensgate.com)

babies in the nursery.<sup>[6]</sup> Applewhite later recalled that he felt like he had known Nettles for a long time and concluded that they had met in a past life.<sup>[7]</sup> She told him their meeting had been foretold to her by extraterrestrials, persuading him that he had a divine assignment.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

Applewhite and Nettles pondered the life of St. Francis of Assisi and read works by authors including Helena Blavatsky, R. D. Laing, and Richard Bach.<sup>[10][11]</sup> They kept a King James Bible with them and studied several passages from the New Testament, focusing on teachings about Christology, asceticism, and eschatology.<sup>[12]</sup> Applewhite also read science fiction, including works by Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke.<sup>[13]</sup> By June 1974, Applewhite and Nettles's beliefs had solidified into a basic outline.<sup>[14]</sup> They concluded that they had been chosen to fulfill biblical prophecies, and that they had been given higher-level minds than other people.<sup>[15]</sup> They wrote a pamphlet that described Jesus' reincarnation as a Texan, a thinly veiled reference to Applewhite.<sup>[16]</sup> Furthermore, they concluded that they were the two witnesses described in the Book of Revelation<sup>[17]</sup> and occasionally visited churches or other spiritual groups to speak of their identities,<sup>[18]</sup> often referring to themselves as "The Two", or "The UFO Two".<sup>[11][19]</sup> They believed that they would be killed and then restored to life and, in view of others, transported onto a spaceship. This event, which they referred to as "the Demonstration", was to prove their claims.<sup>[16]</sup> To their dismay, these ideas were poorly received by existing religious communities.<sup>[20]</sup>

Eventually, Applewhite and Nettles resolved to contact extraterrestrials, and they sought like-minded followers. They published advertisements for meetings, where they recruited disciples, whom they called "the crew".<sup>[21]</sup> At the events, they purported to represent beings from another planet, the Next Level, who sought participants for an experiment. They stated that those who agreed to take part in the experiment would be brought to a higher evolutionary level.<sup>[22]</sup> In 1975, during a group meeting with eighty people in Joan Culpepper's Studio City home, they shared their "simultaneous" revelation that they had been told they were the two witnesses written into the Bible's story of the end time.<sup>[23]</sup>

Later in 1975, the crew assembled at a hotel in Waldport, Oregon. After selling all "worldly" possessions and saying farewell to loved ones, the group vanished from the hotel and from the public eye.<sup>[5]</sup> That night on the CBS Evening News, Walter Cronkite reported that the group had disappeared, in one of the very first national reports on the developing religious group: "A score of persons... have disappeared. It's a mystery whether they've been taken on a so-called trip to eternity – or simply been taken."<sup>[23]</sup> In reality, Applewhite and Nettles had arranged for the group to go underground. From that point, "Do and Ti" (pronounced "doe and tee"), as the two now called themselves, led the nearly one-hundred-member crew across the country, sleeping in tents and sleeping bags and begging in the streets. Evading detection by the authorities and media enabled the group to focus on Do and Ti's doctrine of helping members of the crew achieve a "higher evolutionary level" above human, to which they claimed to have already reached.<sup>[23]</sup>

Applewhite and Nettles used a variety of aliases over the years, notably "Bo and Peep" and "Do and Ti". The group also had a variety of names – prior to the adoption of the name Heaven's Gate (and at the time Vallée studied the group), it was known as Human Individual Metamorphosis (HIM). The group re-invented and renamed itself several times and had a variety of recruitment methods.<sup>[24][25]</sup> Applewhite believed that he was directly related to Jesus, meaning he was an "Evolutionary Kingdom Level Above Human".

Indeed, Applewhite's writings, which combined aspects of Millennialism, Gnosticism, and science fiction, suggest he believed himself to be Jesus' successor and the "Present Representative" of Christ on Earth.<sup>[23]</sup> Do and Ti taught during the religious movement's early beginnings that Do's bodily "vehicle" was inhabited by the same alien spirit which belonged to Jesus; likewise, Ti (Nettles) was presented as God the Father.<sup>[23]</sup>

The crew used numerous methods of recruitment as they toured the United States in destitution, proclaiming the gospel of higher level metamorphosis, the deceit of humans by false-god spirits, envelopment with sunlight for meditative healing, and the divinity of the "UFO Two".<sup>[23]</sup> Throughout the late 70s and early 80s, as their belief system developed around the cult of personalities, membership grew. Some sociologists agree that the popular movement of alternative religious experience and individualism found in collective spiritual experiences during that period helped contribute to the growth of the new religious movement.

"Sheilaism", as it became known, was a way for people to merge their diverse religious backgrounds and coalesce around a shared, generalized faith, which followers of new religious sects like Applewhite's crew found a very appetizing alternative to traditional dogmas in Judaism, Catholicism and evangelical Christianity. Many of Applewhite and Nettle's crew hailed from these very diverse backgrounds; most of them are described by researchers as having been "longtime truth-seekers", or spiritual hippies who had long since believed in attempting to "find themselves" through spiritual means, combining faiths in a sort of cultural milieu well into the mid-80s.<sup>[26]</sup> However, remarkably, many of those same researchers note that not all of Applewhite's crew were hippies recruited from far-left alternative religious backgrounds – in fact, one such recruit early on was John Craig, a respected Republican running for the Colorado House of Representatives at the time of joining in 1975.<sup>[27]</sup> As recruit numbers grew in its pre-Internet days, the clan of "UFO followers" all seemed to have in common a need for communal belonging in an alternative path to higher existence without the constraints of institutionalized faith.

However, it was not until the death of Nettles in 1985 and Applewhite's subsequent revision of the group's doctrines that the crew gained an eventual reputation as a "cyberculture" form of religious thought reform;<sup>[28]</sup> by the mid-90s, the group had become reclusive, identifying themselves using the business name "Higher Source", and using their website to proselytize and recruit followers. Rumors began spreading throughout the group in the following years that the upcoming Comet Hale–Bopp housed the secret to their ultimate salvation and ascendance into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Contemporary media coverage

Heaven's Gate received coverage in Jacques Vallée's book *Messengers of Deception* (1979), in which Vallée described an unusual public meeting organized by the group. Vallée frequently expressed concerns within the book about contactee groups' authoritarian political and religious outlooks, and Heaven's Gate did not escape criticism.<sup>[30]</sup> Known to the mainstream media (though largely ignored through the 1980s and 1990s), Heaven's Gate was better known in UFO circles, as well as through a series of academic studies by sociologist Robert Balch.

In January 1994, the LA Weekly ran an article on the group, then known as "The Total Overcomers".<sup>[31]</sup> Richard Ford, who would later play a key role in the 1997 group suicide, discovered Heaven's Gate through this article and eventually joined them, renaming himself Rio DiAngelo.<sup>[32]</sup>

Coast to Coast AM host Art Bell featured the theory of the "companion object" in the shadow of Hale-Bopp on several programs, as early as November 1996; speculation has been raised as to whether his programs on the subject may have contributed to Heaven's Gate's group suicide months later.<sup>[33]</sup>

Louis Theroux contacted the Heaven's Gate group while making a program for his BBC Two documentary series, Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends, in early March 1997. In response to his e-mail, Theroux was told that Heaven's Gate could not take part in the documentary because "at the present time a project like this would be an interference with what we must focus on."<sup>[34]</sup>

## Mass suicide

In October 1996,<sup>[35]</sup> members of Do's clan began renting a large home which they called "The Monastery", a 9,200 square feet (850 m<sup>2</sup>) mansion located near 18341 Colina Norte (later changed to Paseo Victoria) in a gated community of upscale homes in Rancho Santa Fe, California. They paid \$7,000 per month, in cash.<sup>[36]</sup> In the same month, the group purchased alien abduction insurance that would cover up to 50 members and would pay out \$1 million per person (the policy covered abduction, impregnation, or death by aliens).<sup>[37]</sup>

On March 19–20, 1997, Marshall Applewhite taped himself in *Do's Final Exit*, speaking of mass suicide and asserted "it was the only way to evacuate this Earth". After asserting that a spacecraft was trailing Comet Hale–Bopp and that this event would represent the "Closure to Heaven's Gate", Applewhite persuaded 38 followers in The Monastery to prepare for ritual suicide so

that their souls could board the supposed craft. Applewhite believed that after their deaths, an unidentified flying object (UFO) would take their souls to another "level of existence above human", which he described as being both physical and spiritual. Their preparations included each member videotaping a "farewell message" for themselves.

To commit suicide, members took phenobarbital mixed with apple sauce or pudding and washed it down with vodka. Additionally, they secured plastic bags around their heads after ingesting the mix to induce asphyxiation. All 39 were dressed in identical black shirts and sweat pants, brand new black-and-white Nike Decades athletic shoes, and armband patches reading "Heaven's Gate Away Team" (one of many instances of the group's use of the Star Trek fictional universe's nomenclature). Each member had on their person a five-dollar bill and three quarters in their pockets: the five dollar bill was to cover vagrancy fines while members were out on jobs, while the quarters were to make phone calls. Once dead, a living member would arrange the body by removing the plastic bag from the person's head. They then posed the body so that it lay neatly in their own bed, with faces and torsos covered by a square purple cloth.

The 39 adherents, 21 women and 18 men between the ages of 26 and 72, are believed to have died in three groups over three successive days, with remaining participants cleaning up after each prior group's deaths.<sup>[38]</sup> The suicides occurred in groups of fifteen, fifteen, and nine, between approximately March 22 and March 26.<sup>[38][39][40][41][42][43][44]</sup> Among the dead was Thomas Nichols, brother of the actress Nichelle Nichols, who is best known for her role as Uhura in the original Star Trek television series.<sup>[45]</sup> Leader Applewhite was the third to last member to die; two people remained after him and were the only ones who would be found with bags over their heads and not having purple cloths covering their top halves. Before the last of the suicides, similar sets of FedEx packages were sent to numerous Heaven's Gate affiliated (or formerly affiliated) individuals,<sup>[38]</sup> and at least one media outlet, the BBC department responsible for *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends*, for which Heaven's Gate had earlier declined participation.

Among those in the list of recipients was Rio DiAngelo. The package DiAngelo received on the evening of March 25,<sup>[46]</sup> as other packages sent had,<sup>[38]</sup> contained two VHS videotapes, one with *Do's Final Exit*, and the other with the "farewell messages" of group followers.<sup>[46]</sup> It also contained a letter, stating that among other things, "we have exited our vehicles, just as we entered them."<sup>[47]</sup> Upon informing his boss of the contents of the packages, DiAngelo received a ride from him from Los Angeles to the Heaven's Gate home in Rancho Santa Fe so he could verify the letter. DiAngelo found a back door purposely left unlocked to allow access,<sup>[47]</sup> and used a video camera to record what he found. After leaving the house, DiAngelo's boss, who had waited outside, encouraged him to make calls to authorities alerting them to his discovery.<sup>[46]</sup>

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department received an anonymous tip through the 911 system at 3:15 p.m. on March 26,<sup>[35]</sup> suggesting they "check on the welfare of the residents".<sup>[48]</sup> Days after the suicides, this caller was revealed to be DiAngelo.<sup>[46][47]</sup>

Caller: Yes, I need to report an anonymous tip, who do I talk to?

Sherriff's Department: Okay, this is regarding what?

Caller: This is regarding a mass suicide, and I can give you the address...

— San Diego County 911 call, March 26, 1997, 3:15 p.m. PST<sup>[47]</sup>

A deputy who responded to the call by wearing a surgical mask and entering the home through a side door,<sup>[48]</sup> found 10 bodies, and was nearly overcome by a "pungent odor";<sup>[35]</sup> in the heat of the California spring, many of the bodies had begun to decompose by the time they were discovered.<sup>[35]</sup> The single deputy called for backup. After a cursory search of the home by two deputies found no one alive, both retreated until a search warrant could be procured.<sup>[48]</sup> The 39 bodies were ultimately cremated.

## Aftermath

The Heaven's Gate event was widely publicized in the media as an example of mass suicide.<sup>[49]</sup> When news broke of the suicides and their relation to Comet Hale–Bopp, the co-discoverer of the comet, Alan Hale, was drawn into the story. Hale's phone "never stopped ringing the entire day." He did not respond until the next day, when he spoke on the subject at a press conference, but only after researching the details of the incident.<sup>[50]</sup> Speaking at the Second World Skeptics Congress in Heidelberg, Germany on July 24, 1998:<sup>[51]</sup>

Dr. Hale discussed the scientific significance and popular lore of comets and gave a personal account of his discovery. He then lambasted the combination of scientific illiteracy, willful delusions, a radio talk-show's deception about an imaginary spacecraft following the comet, and a cult's bizarre yearnings for ascending to another level of existence that led to the Heaven's Gate mass suicides.<sup>[52]</sup>

Hale said that well before Heaven's Gate, he had told a colleague:

'We are probably going to have some suicides as a result of this comet.' The sad part is that I was really not surprised. Comets are lovely objects, but they don't have apocalyptic significance. We must use our minds, our reason.<sup>[52]</sup>

At least three former members of the Heaven's Gate ultimately committed suicide themselves in the months after the mass suicide event. On May 6, 1997, Wayne Cooke and Charlie Humphreys attempted suicide in a hotel in a manner similar to those in the group had. Cooke died and Humphreys survived this attempt.<sup>[53]</sup> Another former member, James Pirkey Jr., committed suicide by self-inflicted gunshot wound on May 11. Humphreys, who had survived his first suicide attempt, ultimately killed himself in Arizona in February 1998.<sup>[53][54]</sup> The original 39 deaths also motivated the April 1997 suicide of a 58-year-old California man, who left a note saying he hoped to join the dead Heaven's Gate members.<sup>[55]</sup>

Travis Jeppesen's first novel, *Victims* (2003), was inspired in part by the Heaven's Gate group.

Two surviving members still maintain the group's website, although it has not been altered since the suicide event. The two do not identify themselves in interviews.<sup>[56]</sup>

In July 2018, American rapper Lil Uzi Vert posted the cover art for his upcoming studio album *Eternal Atake* to his Instagram. The artwork incorporated a reworking of the Heaven's Gate "keyhole" logo. The group's two survivors threatened Lil Uzi Vert, who at the time used a picture of Marshall Applewhite as his Instagram avatar, with copyright infringement litigation.<sup>[57]</sup>

## Belief system

---

Heaven's Gate members believed the planet Earth would be "recycled"<sup>[58]</sup> ("wiped clean, renewed, refurbished, and rejuvenated") before 2027<sup>[59]</sup> and the only chance for their consciousness (defined sometimes as soul or mind) to survive was to leave their human bodies at an appointed time. Initially the group had been told that they would be transported with their bodies on board a spacecraft that would come to Earth and take the crew to heaven, referred to as the "next level". When Bonnie Lou Nettles (Ti) died of cancer in 1985, it confounded Applewhite's doctrine because Nettles was allegedly chosen by the next level to be a messenger on Earth, yet her body died instead of leaving physically to outer space. The belief system was then refined to include the leaving of consciousness from the body as equivalent to leaving the Earth in a spacecraft.

While the group was against suicide, they defined "suicide" in their own context to mean "to turn against the Next Level when it is being offered" and believed their "human" bodies were only vessels meant to help them on their journey. Suicide, therefore, would be *not* allowing their consciousness to leave their human bodies to join the next level; remaining alive instead of participating in the group suicide was considered suicide of their consciousness. In conversation, when referring to a person or a person's body, they routinely used the word "vehicle".<sup>[60]</sup>

The members of the group added -ody to the first names they adopted in lieu of their original given names, which defines "children of the Next Level". This is mentioned in Applewhite's final video, *Do's Final Exit*, filmed March 19–20, 1997, just days prior to the suicides.

They believed that, "to be eligible for membership in the Next Level, humans would have to shed every attachment to the planet". This meant all members had to give up all human-like characteristics, such as their family, friends, sexuality, individuality, jobs, money, and possessions.<sup>[61]</sup>

"The Evolutionary Level Above Human" (TELAH) was as a "physical, corporeal place",<sup>[62]</sup> another world in our universe,<sup>[63]</sup> where residents live in pure bliss and nourish themselves by absorbing pure sunlight.<sup>[64]</sup> At the next level, beings do not engage in sexual intercourse, eating or dying, the things that make us "mammalian" here.<sup>[65]</sup> Heaven's Gate believed that what the Bible calls God is actually a highly developed Extraterrestrial.<sup>[66]</sup>

Members of Heaven's Gate believed that evil space aliens – called Luciferians – falsely represented themselves to Earthlings as "God" and conspired to keep humans from developing.<sup>[67]</sup> Technically advanced humanoids, these aliens have spacecraft, space-time travel, telepathy, and increased longevity.<sup>[67]</sup> They use holograms to fake miracles.<sup>[65]</sup> Carnal beings with gender, they stopped training to achieve the Kingdom of God thousands of years ago.<sup>[67]</sup> Heaven's Gate believed that all existing religions on Earth had been corrupted by these malevolent aliens.<sup>[68]</sup>

Although these basic beliefs of the group stayed generally consistent over the years, "the details of their ideology were flexible enough to undergo modification over time."<sup>[69]</sup> There are examples of the group's adding to or slightly changing their beliefs, such as: modifying the way one can enter the Next Level, changing the way they described themselves, placing more importance on the idea of Satan, and adding several other New Age concepts. One of these concepts was the belief of extraterrestrial walk-ins; when the group began, "Applewhite and Nettles taught their followers that they were extraterrestrial beings. However, after the notion of walk-ins became popular within the New Age subculture, the Two changed their tune and began describing themselves as extraterrestrial walk-ins."<sup>[69]</sup> The idea of walk-ins is very similar to the concept of being possessed by spirits. A walk-in can be defined as "an entity who occupies a body that has been vacated by its original soul". Heaven's Gate came to believe an extraterrestrial walk-in is "a walk-in that is supposedly from another planet."<sup>[70]</sup>

The concept of walk-ins aided Applewhite and Nettles in personally starting from what they considered to be clean slates. In this so-called clean slate, they were no longer considered by members of this Heaven's Gate group to be the people they had been prior to the start of the group, but had taken on a new life; this concept gave them a way to "erase their human personal histories as the histories of souls who formerly occupied the bodies of Applewhite and Nettles."<sup>[70]</sup> Over time Applewhite also refined his identity in the group to encourage the belief that the "walk in" that was inhabiting his body was the same that had done so to Jesus 2,000 years ago. Similar to Nestorianism this belief stated that the personage of Jesus and the spirit of Jesus were separable. This meant that Jesus was simply the name of the body of an ordinary man that held no sacred properties that was taken over by an incorporeal sacred entity to deliver "next level" information.

Another New Age belief Applewhite and Nettles adopted was the ancient astronaut hypothesis. The term "ancient astronauts" is used to refer to various forms of the concept that extraterrestrials visited Earth in the distant past.<sup>[69]</sup> Applewhite and Nettles took part of this concept and taught it as the belief that "aliens planted the seeds of current humanity millions of years ago, and have to come to reap the harvest of their work in the form of spiritually evolved individuals who will join the ranks of flying saucer crews. Only a select few members of humanity will be chosen to advance to this transhuman state. The rest will be left to wallow in the spiritually poisoned atmosphere of a corrupt world."<sup>[71]</sup> Only the individuals who chose to join Heaven's Gate, follow Applewhite and Nettle's belief system, and make the sacrifices required by membership would be allowed to escape human suffering.

## Techniques to enter the next level

According to Heaven's Gate, once the individual has perfected himself through the "process", there were four methods to enter or "graduate" to the next level.<sup>[72]</sup>

1. Physical pickup onto a TELAH spacecraft and transfer to a next level body aboard that craft. In this version, what Professor Zeller calls a "UFO" version of the "Rapture", an alien spacecraft would descend to Earth, collect Applewhite, Nettles, and their followers, and their human bodies would be transformed through biological and chemical processes to perfected beings.<sup>[73]</sup> This and other UFO-related beliefs held by the group have led some observers to characterize the group as a type of UFO religion.
2. Natural death, accidental death, or death from random violence. Here, the "graduating soul" leaves the human container for a perfected next-level body.<sup>[74]</sup>
3. Outside persecution that leads to death. After the deaths of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and the events involving Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Applewhite was afraid that the American government would murder the members of Heaven's Gate.<sup>[75]</sup>
4. Willful exit from the body in a dignified manner. Near the end, Applewhite had a revelation that they might have to abandon their human bodies and achieve the next level as Jesus had done.<sup>[74]</sup> This occurred on March 22 and 23 when 39 members committed suicide and "graduated".<sup>[76]</sup>

## Structure

---

Open only to adults over the age of 18,<sup>[77]</sup> group members gave up their possessions and lived a highly ascetic life that was devoid of many indulgences. The group was tightly knit and everything was communally shared. In public, each member of the group always carried only a five-dollar bill and one roll of quarters.<sup>[78]</sup> Eight of the male members of the group, including Applewhite, voluntarily underwent castration in Mexico as an extreme means of maintaining its ascetic lifestyle.<sup>[79]</sup>

The group earned revenues by offering professional website development for paying clients under the business name *Higher Source*.<sup>[80]</sup>

The cultural theorist Paul Virilio has described the group as a cybersect, due to its heavy reliance on computer mediated communication as a mode of communication prior to its collective suicide.<sup>[81]</sup>

## In popular culture

---

The sect is briefly and indirectly mentioned in the 1997 movie *Contact*,<sup>[82]</sup> directed by Robert Zemeckis and starring Jodie Foster, when after the receiving of a message from outer space located in the star Vega, CNN's journalist Natalie Allen (playing herself in a cameo) talks about its religious implications by "recent cult deaths near San Diego". The April 11, 1999 *Family Guy* episode "Chitty Chitty Death Bang",<sup>[83]</sup> Meg Griffin is recruited into a cult similar to Heaven's Gate where the members wore matching tracksuits and shoes, lived together in a large house, and planned to commit mass suicide.

## See also

---

- Peoples Temple

## References

---

1. Hexham, Irving; Poewe, Karla (7 May 1997). "UFO Religion – Making Sense of the Heaven's Gate Suicides" (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/papers/irving/HGCC.html>). *Christian Century*. pp. 439–40. Retrieved 2007-10-06.
2. "Mass suicide involved sedatives, vodka and careful planning" (<http://www.cnn.com/US/9703/27/suicide/index.html>). *CNN*. Retrieved 2010-05-04.

3. Ayres, B. Drummond, Jr. (March 29, 1997). "Families Learning of 39 Cultists Who Died Willingly" (<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/29/us/families-learning-of-39-cultists-who-died-willingly.html>). *New York Times*. Retrieved 2008-11-09. "According to material the group posted on its Internet site, the timing of the suicides were probably related to the arrival of the Hale–Bopp comet, which members seemed to regard as a cosmic emissary beckoning them to another world."
4. "Heaven's Gate" (<http://www.heavensgate.com/>). Retrieved 2018-07-31.
5. Goldwag 2009, p. 77.
6. Lewis 2003, p. 111.
7. Lalich 2004, pp. 44, 48.
8. Balch & Taylor 2002, p. 210.
9. Lalich 2004, p. 43.
10. Zeller 2006, p. 78; Bearak 1997.
11. Zeller, *Prophets and Protons* 2010, p. 123.
12. Zeller, "Extraterrestrial Biblical Hermeneutics" 2010, pp. 42–43.
13. Lifton 2000, p. 306.
14. Zeller, "Extraterrestrial Biblical Hermeneutics" 2010, p. 40.
15. Chryssides 2005, p. 355.
16. Balch & Taylor 2002, p. 211.
17. Zeller 2014b, p. 108.
18. Chryssides 2005, p. 356; Zeller, "Extraterrestrial Biblical Hermeneutics" 2010, p. 40.
19. Urban 2000, p. 276.
20. Bearak 1997.
21. Chryssides 2005, p. 356.
22. Goerman 2011, p. 60; Chryssides 2005, p. 357.
23. "Heaven's Gate: The Sequel" (<http://www.laweekly.com/news/heavens-gate-the-sequel-2147951>). *LA Weekly*. 21 March 2007. Retrieved 2016-12-01.
24. Ryan J. Cook, Heaven's Gate (<http://www.anthroufo.info/un-hgate.html>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090129142019/http://anthroufo.info/un-hgate.html>) 2009-01-29 at the [Wayback Machine](http://www.webcitation.org/), webpage retrieved 2008-10-10.
25. Mizrach, Steven. "The Facts about Heaven's Gate" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080517153748/http://www.fiu.edu/~mizrachs/heavensgate.html>). Archived from the original (<http://www.fiu.edu/~mizrachs/heavensgate.html>) on 2008-05-17. Retrieved 2008-10-10.
26. Zeller 2014a, pp. 59–65.
27. Zeller 2014a, pp. 65–66.
28. "Free Will, or Thought Control?; Were the Deaths of Heaven's Gate Members the Result of Brainwashing?" (<http://www.histarch.illinois.edu/harper/millennial5.html>). *Los Angeles Times*. 4 April 1997. Retrieved 2016-09-30.
29. "The Online Legacy of a Suicide Cult and the Webmasters Who Stayed Behind" (<https://gizmodo.com/the-online-legacy-of-a-suicide-cult-and-the-webmasters-1617403237>). *Gizmodo.com*. 17 September 2014. Retrieved 2016-09-30.
30. Vallee, Jacques (1979). *Messengers of Deception: UFO Contacts and Cults*. Ronin.
31. Gardetta, Dave (21 January 1994). "They Walk Among Us" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070328230411/http://www.laweekly.com/general/features/they-walk-among-us/15922/>). *LA Weekly*. Archived from the original (<http://www.laweekly.com/general/features/they-walk-among-us/15922/>) on 2007-03-28. Retrieved 2007-08-23.
32. Bearman, Joshuah (21 March 2007). "Heaven's Gate: The Sequel" (<http://www.laweekly.com/2007-03-22/news/heaven-s-gate-the-sequel/>). *LA Weekly*.
33. Genoni, Jr., Thomas. "Art Bell, Heaven's Gate, and Journalistic Integrity" ([http://www.csicop.org/si/show/art\\_bell\\_heavensquos\\_gate\\_and\\_journalistic\\_integrity/](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/art_bell_heavensquos_gate_and_journalistic_integrity/)). *Committee for Skeptical Inquiry*. Retrieved 3 September 2015.
34. Louis Theroux. *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends: UFO* (<http://www.veoh.com/videos/v266439DxcWKyTx>). Veoh.



35. "GROUP: 39 Found Dead in Apparent Suicide" ([http://www.newspapers.com/clip/32138115/the\\_los\\_angeles\\_times/](http://www.newspapers.com/clip/32138115/the_los_angeles_times/)). *The Los Angeles Times*. 1997-03-27. Retrieved 2019-06-01 – via Newspapers.com.
36. "The Marker We've Been... Waiting For" (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,986136-4,00.html>), by Elizabeth Gleick, Cathy Booth and Pmes Willwerth (Rancho Santa Fe); Nancy Harbert (Albuquerque); Rachele Kanigal (Oakland) and Richard N. Ostling and Noah Robischon (New York). *Time*. Monday, April 7, 1997.
37. Edith Lederer, "Alien Abduction Insurance Cancelled!" (<http://www.artgomperz.com/newse/abd.html>), *Associated Press*, 2 April 1997, Retrieved March 12, 2008
38. Ramsland, Katherine. "Death Mansion" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20061211012614/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/5.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20061211012614/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/5.html)). *All about Heaven's Gate cult*. CourtTV Crime Library. Archived from the original ([http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/5.html](http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/5.html)) on 2006-12-11. Retrieved September 20, 2006. "On Saturday ... The first team of 15 ... Sunday, the next team of fifteen followed. Finally there were seven on Monday, and then only two."
39. Thomas, Evan (April 6, 1997). "'The Next Level'" (<https://www.newsweek.com/next-level-171594>). *Newsweek*. Retrieved June 3, 2019. "March 23: The first group of 15 swallow applesauce ... March 24: Fifteen more die ... March 25: The remaining cultists kill themselves"
40. Coleman, Loren (2004). *The Copycat Effect: How the Media and Popular Culture Trigger the Mayhem in Tomorrow's Headlines* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=3B4ITZE58oC&pg=PA80&lpg=PA80>). Simon and Schuster. p. 80. ISBN 978-1-4165-0554-9. "On March 22, 1997, thirty-nine members ... consumed phenobarbital ... all dying"
41. Hux, Clete. "Heaven's Gate Timeline" (<https://www.watchman.org/articles/cults-alternative-religions/heavens-gate-timeline/>). *www.watchman.org*. Retrieved June 3, 2019. "March 23 – Fifteen of the group commit suicide ... March 24 – Fifteen more commit suicide ... March 25 – Remaining nine commit suicide"
42. Reimann, Matt (October 14, 2016). "Suicide, Nikes, and comet space ships: the story of the Heaven's Gate cult" (<https://timeline.com/the-heavens-gate-mass-suicide-7f440ab4b333?gi=9d87ef1ddca3>). *Timeline*. Retrieved June 3, 2019. "15 people on March 24, another 15 on March 25, and the final nine on March 26"
43. dweisman (March 27, 2019). "22 years ago, Heaven's Gate couldn't wait" (<https://escondidograpevine.com/2019/03/27/20-years-ago-heavens-gate-couldnt-wait/>). *Escondido Grapevine*. Retrieved June 3, 2019. "March 24 ... Fifteen members died that night. Fifteen more died the next day, followed by nine on March 26."
44. Kube, Michelle (March 27, 2017). "March 26, 1997 – Heaven's Gate Suicides" (<https://kfiam640.iheart.com/content/2017-03-27-march-26-1997-heavens-gate-suicides/>). *kfiam640.iheart.com*. Retrieved June 3, 2019. "three days starting on March 22"
45. "Some members of suicide cult castrated" (<http://www.cnn.com/US/9703/28/mass.suicide.pm/>). *CNN.com*. March 28, 1997.
46. Meyer, Norma; Medina, Hildy (1997-03-28). "Package to office alerts ex-member to the fate of cult" (<https://www.sacred-texts.com/ufo/39dead07.htm>). *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Copley News Service. p. A-1. Archived from the original (<https://www.newslibrary.com/sites/sdub/>) on 2002.
47. CNN (2011-03-25), *CNN: Heaven's Gate suicides remembered* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzWpfq103q4>), retrieved 2019-06-01
48. Calvo, Dana (1997-03-27). "At Least 39 Found Dead in Luxury Estate" ([http://www.newspapers.com/clip/32137981/the\\_signal/](http://www.newspapers.com/clip/32137981/the_signal/)). *The Signal*. Retrieved 2019-06-01 – via Newspapers.com.
49. "First autopsies completed in cult suicide" (<http://www.cnn.com/US/9703/28/mass.suicide/index.html>). CNN. 28 March 2016. Retrieved 2007-10-06.
50. "An Interview with Astronomer Alan Hale – CTV call-in (Knoxville Freethought Forum 4/23/13)" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuAg1WA5fW0>). *Youtube.com*. Retrieved 11 September 2016.
51. "Second World Skeptics Congress (Schedule)" (<http://amber.zine.cz/AZOld/occam/congress.htm>). *amber.zine.cz*. Retrieved 18 September 2016.
52. Frazier, Kendrick (1998). "Science and Reason, Foibles and Fallacies, and Doomsdays" ([http://www.csicop.org/si/show/science\\_and\\_reason\\_foibles\\_and\\_fallacies\\_and\\_doomsdays](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/science_and_reason_foibles_and_fallacies_and_doomsdays)). *Skeptical Inquirer*. 22 (6): 6. Retrieved 18 September 2016.

53. Purdum, Todd S. (May 7, 1997). "Ex-Cultist Dies In Suicide Pact; 2d Is 'Critical'" (<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/07/us/ex-cultist-dies-in-suicide-pact-2d-is-critical.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 2007-10-21. "A former member of the Heaven's Gate cult was found dead today in a copycat suicide in a motel room near the scene of the group's mass suicide in San Diego County, and another former member was found unconscious in the same room, the authorities said."
54. "Heaven's Gate: A timeline" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20081003124716/http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070318/news\\_lz1n18timelin.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20081003124716/http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070318/news_lz1n18timelin.html)). *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. 18 March 2007. Archived from the original ([http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070318/news\\_lz1n18timelin.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070318/news_lz1n18timelin.html)) on 2008-10-03. Retrieved 2007-10-21.
55. Cornwell, Tim (7 May 1997). "Heaven's Gate member found dead" (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/heavens-gate-member-found-dead-1260149.html>). *The Independent*. Retrieved 23 June 2014. "In an earlier suicide bid, on 1 April, a 58-year-old recluse was found dead in his home in a remote mountain canyon in northern California after committing suicide. He had left a note indicating he believed that he would also join the dead Heaven's Gate cult members."
56. Harding, Nick (April 4, 2017). "Mass suicide survivors who stayed behind to keep death cult's bizarre teachings alive for 20 years" (<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/two-decades-after-heavens-gate-10158830>). Retrieved July 31, 2018.
57. Burks, Tosten (3 August 2018). "HEAVEN'S GATE CULT THREATENS LIL UZI VERT WITH LEGAL ACTION OVER 'ETERNAL ATAKE' ARTWORK" (<https://www.xxlmag.com/news/2018/08/lil-uzi-vert-eternal-atake-heavens-gate-2/>). *XXL*. Retrieved 5 July 2019.
58. "Last Chance to Evacuate Earth" (<http://www.heavensgate.com/misc/vt092996.htm>). *www.heavensgate.com*. Retrieved 2019-05-26.
59. "Doomsday Preppers – Brad is a Bad Person" (<http://www.bradisabadperson.com/2019/05/05/doomsday-preppers/>). Retrieved 2019-05-26.
60. Ramsland, Katherine. "The Heaven's Gate Cult: The Real End" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20150210050304/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/4.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20150210050304/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/4.html)). *Crime Library*. Archived from the original ([http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/4.html](http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/4.html)) on February 10, 2015.
61. Balch, Robert (2002). "Making Sense of the Heaven's Gate Suicides". In Bromley, David G.; Melton, J. Gordon (eds.). *Cults, Religion, and Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 211.
62. Zeller 2014a, p. 38.
63. Zeller 2014b, p. 99.
64. Zeller 2014a, p. 102.
65. Zeller 2014a, p. 155.
66. Zeller 2014a, p. 95.
67. Zeller 2014a, p. 104.
68. Zeller 2014a, p. 182.
69. Lewis 2001, p. 16
70. Lewis 2001, p. 368
71. Lewis 2001, p. 17
72. Zeller 2014a, p. 193.
73. Zeller 2014a, p. 31.
74. Zeller 2014a, pp. 123–24.
75. Zeller 2014a, p. 184.
76. Zeller 2014a, pp. 171–72.
77. Zeller 2014b, p. 38.
78. Zeller 2014b, p. 143.
79. Ross, Rick (October 1999). "'Heaven's Gate' Suicides" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20020114093018/http://www.culteducation.com/hgate.html>). The Rick A. Ross Institute. Archived from the original (<http://www.culteducation.com/hgate.html>) on 2002-01-14.

80. Weise, Elizabeth (1997-03-28). "Internet Provided Way To Pay Bills, Spread Message Before Suicide" (<http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19970328&slug=2531080>). Seattle Times. Associated Press. Retrieved 2007-12-30.
81. Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (Verso, 2005), p. 41.
82. "Contact" (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118884/>). Retrieved July 22, 2019.
83. MacFarlane, Seth, 1973- Borstein, Alex. Green, Seth, 1974- (©2003-), *Family guy* (<http://worldcat.org/oclc/1035045760>), Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, OCLC 1035045760 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1035045760>), retrieved 2019-08-09 Check date values in: |date= (help)

## Further reading

---

- Balch, Robert W. (1982). Roy Wallis (ed.). "Bo and Peep: A Case Study of the Origins of Messianic Leadership". *Millennialism and charisma*. Belfast: Queen's University.
- Balch, Robert W. (1985). Rodney Stark (ed.). "When the Light Goes Out, Darkness Comes: A Study of Defection from a Totalistic Cult". *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus and Numbers*. Paragon House Publishers. pp. 11–63.
- Balch, Robert W. (1995). James R. Lewis (ed.). "Waiting for the ships: disillusionment and revitalization of faith in Bo and Peep's UFO cult". *The Gods have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds*. Albany: SUNY.
- Chryssides, George D. (2005). "'Come On Up and I Will Show Thee': Heaven's Gate as a Postmodern Group". In James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagaard Petersen (ed.). *Controversial New Religions*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-515682-9.
- DiAngelo, Rio (2007). *Beyond Human Mind: The Soul Evolution of Heaven's Gate*. Rio DiAngelo Press.
- Lalich, Janja (2004). *Bounded Choice: True Believers and Charismatic Cults*. University of California Press. ISBN 0-520-23194-5.
- Lewis, James R., ed. (2001). *Odd Gods: New Religions & the Cult Controversy* ([https://archive.org/details/isbn\\_9781573928427](https://archive.org/details/isbn_9781573928427)). Prometheus Books. ISBN 1-57392-842-9.
- Theroux, Louis (2005). *The Call of the Weird*. Pan Macmillan. pp. 207–21.
- Lewis, James R. (2003). "Legitimizing Suicide: Heaven's Gate and New Age Ideology". In Christopher Partridge (ed.). *UFO Religions*. Psychology Press. ISBN 978-0-415-26324-5.
- Raine, Susan (2005). "Reconceptualising the Human Body: Heaven's Gate and the Quest for Divine Transformation". *Religion*. Elsevier. **35** (2): 98–117. doi:10.1016/j.religion.2005.06.003 (<https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.religion.2005.06.003>).
- Lifton, Robert Jay (2000). *Destroying the World to Save it: Aum Shinrikyō, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism*. Macmillan Publishers. ISBN 978-0-8050-6511-4.
- Balch, Robert; Taylor, David (2002). "Making Sense of the Heaven's Gate Suicides". In David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (ed.). *Cults, Religion, and Violence*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-66898-9.
- Urban, Hugh (2000). "The Devil at Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space". *Nova Religio*. University of California Press. **3** (2): 268–302. doi:10.1525/nr.2000.3.2.268 (<https://doi.org/10.1525%2Fnr.2000.3.2.268>).
- Bearak, Barry (April 28, 1997). "Eyes on Glory: Pied Pipers of Heaven's Gate" (<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/28/us/eyes-on-glory-pied-pipers-of-heaven-s-gate.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 11, 2012.
- Goerman, Patricia (2011). "Heaven's Gate: The Dawning of a New Religious Movement". In George D. Chryssides (ed.). *Heaven's Gate: Postmodernity and Popular Culture in a Suicide Group*. Ashgate Publishing. ISBN 978-0-7546-6374-4.
- Goldwag, Arthur (2009). *Cults, Conspiracies, and Secret Societies, The Straight Scoop on Freemasons, The Illuminati, Skull & Bones, Black Helicopters, The New World Order, and many, many more* (<https://archive.org/details/cultsconspiracie00gold>). Vintage Books. pp. 75–78. ISBN 978-0-307-39067-7.
- Bearman, Joshua. "Heaven's Gate: The Sequel" (<http://www.laweekly.com/news/heavens-gate-the-sequel-2147951>). *LA Weekly*.

- Feinburg, Ashley. "The Online Legacy of a Suicide Cult and the Webmasters Who Stayed Behind" (<https://gizmodo.com/the-online-legacy-of-a-suicide-cult-and-the-webmasters-1617403237>). *Gizmodo.com*.
- Monmaney, Terence (1997). "Free Will, or Thought Control? Were the Deaths of Heaven's Gate Members the Result of Brainwashing?; The Debate Reflects Larger Cultural Questions about the Role of Choice and the Issue of Vicimization" (<http://www.histarch.illinois.edu/harper/millennial5.html>). *Los Angeles Times*. Times Mirror Company.
- Zeller, Benjamin E. (2010). *Prophets and Prottons: New Religious Movements and Science in Late Twentieth-Century America*. NYU Press. ISBN 978-0-8147-9720-4.
- Zeller, Benjamin E. (2010). "Extraterrestrial Biblical Hermeneutics and the Making of Heaven's Gate". *Nova Religio*. University of California Press. 14 (2): 34–60. doi:10.1525/nr.2010.14.2.34 (<https://doi.org/10.1525%2Fnr.2010.14.2.34>).
- Zeller, Benjamin E. (2014a). *Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion*. NYU Press. ISBN 978-1-4798-0381-1.
- Zeller, Benjamin E. (2014b). *Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion*. NYU Press. ISBN 1-4798-0381-2.
- Zeller, Benjamin (2014c). *Cults, Conspiracies, and Secret Societies, The Straight Scoop on Freemasons, The Illuminati, Skull & Bones, Black Helicopters, The New World Order, and many, many more*. NYU Press. pp. 59–65. ISBN 978-1-4798-1113-7.
- Chryssides, George D., ed. (2011). *Heaven's Gate: Postmodernity and Popular Culture In A Suicide Group*. Ashgate Publishing. ISBN 978-0-7546-6374-4.

## External links

---

- "Heaven's Gate Website" (<http://www.heavensgate.com/>). (still online, but has seen some changes since the mass suicide)
- "Profiles: Heaven's Gate Timeline" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130302021044/http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/profiles/Heaven'sGate.htm>). Archived from the original (<http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/profiles/Heaven'sGate.htm>) on 2013-03-02.
- Ramsland, Katherine. "All about Heaven's Gate cult" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20050305162149/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/1.html?sect=8](https://web.archive.org/web/20050305162149/http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/1.html?sect=8)). *The Crime Library*. Archived from the original ([http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious\\_murders/mass/heavens\\_gate/1.html?sect=8](http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/mass/heavens_gate/1.html?sect=8)) on 2005-03-05.
- News Story: Heaven's Gate Still Alive and Checking Emails (<http://www.monsterchildren.com/38576/breaking-news-heavens-gate-cult-still-alive-and-checking-emails/>)
- List of "class members" with vehicular (human legal) names (<https://crlody.wordpress.com/2018/10/22/list-of-class-members-with-vehicular-human-legal-names/>)
- Heaven's Gate Podcast (<https://www.heavensgate.show/>) providing more in-depth information, including interviews with former members and relatives

---

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Heaven%27s\\_Gate\\_\(religious\\_group\)&oldid=921787720](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Heaven%27s_Gate_(religious_group)&oldid=921787720)"

---

**This page was last edited on 17 October 2019, at 22:00 (UTC).**

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.