

## HE DID NOT COME BACK FROM HEAVEN

Rob Robinson

Alex Malarkey claimed to be “the boy who came back from heaven.” In a book by that title, Alex and his co-writer father give an account of experiences which include seeing heaven’s gates, hearing God’s voice and seeing Satan and Jesus. The book describes an out-of-body visit to heaven following a 2004 automobile accident in which Alex was severely injured. The book was very popular and, like other books about such near-death heaven visions, sold more than a million copies since being published in 2010. Earlier this year, more than a decade after the events described, Alex Malarkey announced in a statement that none of his claims were true. It was all complete fiction.

One of the most amazing things is the enthusiastic reception the book received. Some people I know read it and recommended it to me. Many found in the book an affirmation of their faith in heaven, life after death and the Christian faith in general. It seems people want to believe these things are true. They hunger for more detail about what lies on the other side of the grave. They long for some tangible, objective verification that these things we believe are true.

But this demonstrates our need to learn a lesson from the ancient Jewish residents of the Macedonian city of Berea. When Paul brought fresh teaching to their synagogue, they were eager to learn what he had to say. They are commended for their eagerness and their response: “*examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*” As people who put our faith in Jesus, we get our information about what we believe from him, by way of sacred scripture. Whether it is a question about creation, morality, salvation or heaven, we go to the pages of Scripture to see if these things are so. We just consider that these pages contain all the information God has chosen to reveal to us about heaven and what it is like after we die. Our hope and confidence are in Jesus Christ and his word, the Bible. It is the Scriptures alone that bear witness to Jesus and the truths he reveals. Only therein do we find the truth in which we trust. (*Acts 17:11, John 5:39*).