

The existence and significance of heaven

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“ Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.” When the famous Indian poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore spoke these sapient words, he attempted to answer an enigmatic question that has been baffling society since the creation of the earth. What happens when one experiences the ultimate destination of death?

Throughout time, many different philosophers and brilliant people have put their minds to work to try to discover an answer.

Not one has been successful. No definite answer to what happens after death exists; nevertheless, there are a multitude of theories and speculations concerning life after death and what might really happen when one leaves planet earth. In the Christian faith, practitioners believe that an empyrean by the name of heaven awaits them when life ends here on earth. In spite of that, one can still pose the questions: what is heaven; where is heaven; and does heaven really matter? One can find the answer to these contemplative questions in the explanation of the terms soul, heaven, escapism, and Pascal’s Wager, the interpretation of the “ Quo Vadis” question along with the Catholics response to it, and the various excerpts from the short story “ Pigeon Feathers” by John Updike. What is heaven? This is a common question asked by people of faiths other than Christianity and can very easily be answered.

One must first understand what Christians believe in and how the beliefs relate to heaven in order to find the answer. The Catholic Church teaches that each body is made up of something called a soul, which is the spiritual part of a human being created by the Lord Himself. Now, this soul that humans contain is also taught to be in a sense immortal because of the two

places called heaven and hell that possibly await it. Heaven, also known as the “Father’s House”, is where God dwells with His son Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and all others who choose to submit to His will. If one submits oneself to Him, then it is believed that one will spend eternity in heaven with Him, and be granted with eternal bliss and all things of necessity. To help support this explanation in Psalms 11: 4 it states, “The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.

He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.” This passage clearly illustrates heaven as a place where the Lord dwells and where He watches over all His creation. However, there does exist a place called Hell which represents the other “place” a soul can go after life here on earth. No better description of what Hell is about is found than that in Blaise Pascal’s famous Wager. Blaise Pascal states that if one believes in God and He truly does exist one will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven with Him. He continues by stating that if one does not believe in God and He does exist, one will be punished with an eternal curse in Hell where Satan and evil reign.

The wager concludes by saying if God does not exist and one believes or does not believe in Him there is no reward and there is nothing after mortal life on earth. This wager and the explanation of the terms heaven and soul give a clear definition of the empyrean heaven. Where is heaven? The exact location of heaven, unfortunately, cannot be determined. This is simply because it is a place “beyond nature.” The physical world in which humans dwell can be considered, in an analogy, the “water in a bucket” where the universe is the water and the outside of the bucket is heaven, or God’s domicile. This analogy can be supported by the recurrent question, “Quo
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Vadis?" In English, this question simply means, "Where are you going?" To many Christians, the outside of the "bucket" can be considered the answer to "Quo Vadis" question.

Where does one go when one dies? Christians say one goes to a haven "beyond nature" to live for eternity with the creator. In addition, Luke 17: 20-21 in the Bible brings up another location of heaven stating, "...the kingdom of God does not come with observation... for indeed the kingdom of God is within you." This verse connects with "Quo Vadis" and the "bucket" analogy because it expounds how the real location of heaven is inside of Christians and is discovered by their submission to His will. Does heaven matter? For one to question if heaven truly matters is for one to instantaneously give an impression of an unfaithful lifestyle towards God. Faith, or trust and confidence in something, is one of the most indispensable aspects of Christianity. Without faith, one can be quite misguided and have a right to seriously question heaven because of no belief in God.

People that do question heaven and its existence can be called believers of escapism. Escapism is the belief that if heaven does not exist and people do believe in it that these people are just using heaven as a way to escape from the tribulations of society. In addition, the belief states that if one does not believe in heaven and focuses here on earth too much they can be accused of escaping from the reality of heaven by focusing their life on earth. Escapism can question heaven's importance, but what can prove its importance? A passage from the Bible in Acts 7: 49 states, "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord.

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Or where will my resting place be?" This portion of Acts clearly depicts the true answer to why Heaven matters. Heaven matters because it is where God will grant eternal happiness and life to all that choose to follow His will. Heaven matters because it is one's chance to have an opportunity to forever dwell with the divine creator. Heaven matters because without it, or, in a sense, without God, the human soul is nothing. Throughout my experience here on earth, I have formed my own conjectures on the subjects of death, judgment, heaven, and hell. My opinions of death and judgment are very similar to that of a thirteen-year-old boy named David in the short story "Pigeon Feathers" by John Updike.

In the story, David struggles over accepting his morality and dealing with the concept of death. I have had a similar experience when I brooded over whether a place called heaven really did exist. Like David, I too experienced the "robe of certainty" in my analysis of the beauty of creation. David concluded that the patterns and colors on the birds are just too beautiful to just die out. I feel the same way.

Human life is too complex and special to just end. There has to be somewhere else out there where life continues. In my opinion, if one is a good person and follows Jesus' teachings God will judge one accordingly, in His admission process to the paradise of heaven. The final aspects of life that I have a strong opinion on are that of the belief of heaven and hell. Blaise Pascal stated that, "...Our actions and thoughts must follow such different paths according to whether there is hope of eternal blessing..." Hence, in my opinion, by living a good life, with the "hope of an eternal blessing", one can enter heaven with God and dwell in the "Father's House", while living a life <https://assignbuster.com/the-existence-and-significance-of-heaven/>

of pure evil will destroy eternal blessing and bequeath an eternal curse on the evil being one chose to be in mortal life.