

Paper 3: June 17th 2019 Afternoon: Death And The After Life



What happens after we die is a fundamental question. In Jesus' parable on Final Judgement (The Sheep And Goats in Matthew 25), he talks about not leaving it too late to do good as we do not know when God is going to return in the second coming. **God's judgement and Heaven and Hell are real, eternal and physical.** Heaven is part of God's plan for humanity. **God through Jesus will separate us as a farmer does sheep from goats.** *It may be difficult to tell the two apart but God knows. The implication is the sheep will be pulled away from the goats with a shepherds crook.* **People will be judged at the end of time. Some will go to heaven, others hell depending on whether we have earned it through helping the hungry, thirsty, strangers, prisoners and needy** (Jesus is seen in such people) **as salvation is based on actions not beliefs. Those that do not help such people will have eternal punishment, says Jesus.**

1. After death, Christians believe people will have a new life and a new kind of existence. Christians do not believe the soul moves to another body (reincarnation) or that it exists independently of the body. *They believe we will be given a new spiritual, transformed and glorified body which continues in the after life.* The person that exists after death is still the same person. **Resurrection is a miracle from God. Jesus' resurrection shows God's power and belief in life after death.** At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in The Resurrection. **Some said Jesus would return immediately** (Parousia) and had to explain the delay re-interpreting Jesus' teachings. **Others said Christ returns and will rule** for a thousand years (Millenarianism). Jesus says he is **the way, the truth and the life and if people believe in him they will never die.** Jesus taught about the Kingdom (or reign) of God in parables. **Miracles show the Kingdom here and now. The Kingdom could be actual place or spiritual state.** The Kingdom is both here (realised eschatology) and also for the future (inaugurated eschatology). **In the Parable of Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 13), the Rich Man ends up in the fires of Hades (a place where departed spirits await judgement) because he has not helped the poor man (Lazarus). He pleads for someone who cool him down and warn his relatives. Jesus said that judgement will be personal and immediate. He told the thief on the cross that "Today you will be with me in Paradise."** The earliest Christians saw Judgement as a future event. **Modern Christians believe in a particular judgement of an individual before death and final judgement of all nations at the end of time. Some Christians see judgement happening when Jesus returns. St. Paul says that Jesus' resurrection is the "first fruits" of our resurrection. Then we see everything clearly, we will see God face to face. Now in this world just see through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13).** St. Paul says "the builder will be saved but only through fire." (1 Corinthians 3). He uses the metaphors of the seed transformed into a new plant, a tent replaced by a solid house, going from naked to clothed. **The book of Revelation (chapter 21) depicts life after death as being like a new Heaven and new Earth. It was a new Jerusalem. No more death or tears. Saints rule for a thousand years before.**

2. The New Testament uses limited language to teach Heaven is a place of eternal reward. It is permanent/ real. Physical and emotional happiness is experienced. Christians describe the after life as “going to Heaven.” Sin purged. Joy experienced . Our bodies transform to spiritual bodies states St. Paul by God. Jesus’ resurrection gives a glimpse of this. Sometimes this is seen as the **transformation and perfection of creation in a future state when Jesus comes to earth (Parousia)**. NT Wright said this was the New Testament view. **Heaven is a mystery but symbols** used by Christians are *God the Father being on a throne, angels, a family returning home, a place of plenty and no more suffering*. **The Bible describes Heaven as a place; for people who have worked for righteousness, with Abraham and angels, no more hunger and pain where every tear is wiped away with no sadness.** Many Protestant Churches see Heaven as everlasting where people live for the rest of time along family and friends whereas Catholics believe how we relate to people changes. Some see it as endless days praising God. **Aquinas (Catholic view still) – said the after life was our eternal soul and reason see God face to face for all eternity (beatific vision) timelessly where past, present and future are together.** **Everlasting bliss and perfect happiness** and live in happiness and harmony with God for ever. *God reveals himself in a new way surrounded by Mary, the Angels and blessed*. Immortal souls obeying God. Dante said Heaven was beyond words in harmony with God's love and light with ten different heavens for different souls to rest and souls shine brightly. **Some may see Heaven more of a disembodied state as our spiritual journey continues.** Our souls capture who we are and leave our bodies behind to be with God. This seems to be Jesus’ understanding. **So some Christians believe Heaven is more a spiritual state than a place. Heaven different form of existence rather than a place.** Heaven could also be a symbol of a person’s spiritual and moral life on earth - the blissful happiness and positive moments experienced by people on earth both personally and when interacting with others or memories .

3. The New Testament suggests hell will be a physical place that cannot be left *In Jesus’ parable, the Rich Man is trapped in Hell because he did not help the poor man (in Heaven)*. The Old Testament does not have an image of hell. **Some people see Hell as an actual place.** *Punishment is eternally given to the wicked person otherwise God would not set moral laws.* The New Testament uses ideas of fire, torture, darkness, a rubbish dump. **Matthew 27 depicts it as the dead awakening from their tombs when Jesus died. Chaotic and irrational.** Revelation contains the image of a “burning lake of fiery sulphur.” It is depicted as a place of agony in art but these were a product of their time. Dante (medieval writer) saw it as a man carrying his head because he had taught lies and freezing caused by Satan's giant wings. **The Catholic Church believes in “the eternal fire” of Hell with alienation from God the main punishment;** if they have died without repenting serious sins they go to Hell in a state of **mortal sin**. It guides us in free will. Some see Hell not as a place in the depths on the earth but a spiritual state of alienation from God/self. **Paul Tillich thought Hell was a metaphor of alienation. Hell could be symbolic of negative elements in life. It could be a guilty conscience (Gregory of Nyssa) “inner spiritual state.” (Origen) or a period of waiting and reflecting (Sartre).** **Some think that because a loving God would not give eternal punishment, there will be no life after death for those unworthy who will be annihilated (annihilationism).**

Purgatory is the mainly Catholic belief in an intermediary state of cleansing that takes place before someone enters heaven if someone is good but not perfect. *The soul recognises sin but is not punished for ever. Dante said it was for souls who believe in Christ and repent before death. It purges wrong desires and actions. Most people are not bad enough for Hell but no one on earth is ready to meet God face to face.* Efforts on earth (like going to confession) make up for sins. Catholics point to the following Bible passages: **2 Maccabees 12** said we should pray for the dead. **Matthew 12** states sins against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this age or the next. **There are Biblical references to cleansing by fire (1 Corinthians 3). Catholics pray for the dead.** Protestants more sceptical and stress complete salvation of Christ on the cross. **Origen talked about an opportunity for the soul to perfect itself like a school. Gregory of Nyssa:** God wanted as many people in Heaven. **Ambrose:** Place where souls await judgement and have a foretaste of the future (heaven or hell). **John Hick: *Hell could not be part of God's loving plan, there must be an opportunity for all to be purified*** before heaven. Purgatory may not be a place of pain but a spiritual state where someone comes to a greater understanding of their sinfulness (Rahner) idea).

Election means being chosen by omniscient God for Heaven/Hell/salvation. Limited election – Augustine: Some are chosen to be saved. God's grace and such control necessary because of Original Sin. "Many are invited, few are chosen" (Matthew 22). **John Calvin said God is in control of our choices and eternal life in Heaven/Hell (double predestination).** *Calvin said we should not try to work out God's will (presumptuous), we do not know who God chooses. God's grace is all important.* The Catholic Church stresses **that humans send themselves to hell by choice. God knows some meet the calling (single predestination). Unlimited Election: Everyone called to be saved if they accept the Christian message.** Karl Barth stresses Jesus both elects and is elected and humans saved through God's choice through Jesus on the cross if accept the Christian message. **Universalists (Hick) – all people saved necessarily by loving God even if not Christian.**

Evaluation. **1.** Logical God rewards/punishes. **2.** Life after death not literal places. Symbolic. **3.** People make choices. No God's fault. **4.** God is loving. Would not punish people for eternity. Loving parent. **4.** If God is omnipotent and omniscient, why not stop. **5.** How will it work if Heaven/ Hell are physical place or we are disembodied. See Philosophy notes. **6.** How do we ensure it is us in the after life? (Problem of Continuity). Is a new body us? What age are we? What if a child dies? What if body disfigured? **7.** The Bible is not clear or consistent. Literal or symbolic? **8.** Does not make sense to believe in 1 punishment or 1 reward for everything. Does one sin lead to hell? **9.** Would Heaven be boring? Nothing to do. Do we need challenges? **10.** If heaven and hell are eternal how can purgatory be limited. **11.** Hick suggests everyone is going to Heaven. Does not matter what choices we make. **12.** Life after death questions free will. **13.** Where is heaven and hell? **14.** Hume: Is eternal punishment justified. **15.** After life shared with other religions. More likely to be true therefore? **16.** Believing in life after death not as difficult as other beliefs. **17.** Universalism removes free will from humans. **18.** Middle Ages – Purgatory abused. Things sold to enter.

