

The Biggest Questions in Life – Part 4: Is There An Afterlife?

Another question many ask is: Is there an afterlife?

There are many theories as to what happens to us upon our death. Cultures since the beginning of recorded history have developed their own afterlife theories. Heaven, hell, limbo, reincarnation, and purgatory are just a few destinations for the soul. Ghosts are believed to be spirits trapped for an indeterminate amount of time here on Earth. Even in the Bible, there are attempts to communicate with departed souls.

Science rejects the existence of an afterlife. After all, from the materialistic perspective, once the body dies, there is nothing left to continue. The mind, or soul, does not exist, and is merely the product of our advanced brains.

But if an afterlife does exist, then it would be indirect proof of God's existence. After all, something has to guide the spirit in the afterlife. Who decides if the spirit is rewarded, punished, reincarnated, rehabilitated, or meant to wander the world as an apparition? God would be the likely choice.

Consequently, the existence of an afterlife is the next step in comprehending God. The nature of that afterlife will reveal God's character. The concept of a heaven – or some divine place in the afterlife – exists in every culture. And why not. We see the injustice in our world, and we assume, or hope, that there must be some reward in the next. Who doesn't desire to spend the rest of eternity in blissful peace? No pain, no suffering, and no worries of any kind – please sign me up! Without heaven, we merely exist, live, suffer, and die. No further relationship with our Creator is possible.

However, a heavenly reward only reveals part of God's nature. There must be a place in the afterlife for punishment. Without punishment for evil acts, most of us would perceive God very differently. If only heaven exists, it reveals that God only rewards in the afterlife, and does not punish. Some might consider this unfair, since many were treated cruelly during their lifetimes, and the perpetrator of their suffering is never held accountable.

Is a God that only rewards a God of justice? If God is good – as most believe – then He must also punish the evil in an afterlife. The type of punishment He chooses will also reveal His character. Will it be a horrible, painful, eternal suffering? Or will the punishment be

brief and more tolerable?

Generally, an afterlife is associated with God. However, what if God exists, and neither Heaven nor Hell exists? Is it possible that our entire existence is only the time spent here on Earth? If so, what does that reveal about God? Is it possible that He is not interested in any long-term relationship with us? What would be the implications if we learned of this situation?

If our conduct during our lives on Earth is irrelevant to the future of our soul, then I believe most people would act as they wanted. There are already such terrible injustices during our lives, and God clearly does not prevent evil from succeeding here. Knowing there is no reward or punishment in the afterlife would certainly increase such cruelty.

Still, most cultures in our world believe that both some type of reward, and some type of punishment, will be administered to us in our afterlife. It is what most of us hope and pray exists. It is only in our afterlife where we can learn God's true nature. Here's hoping we'll be satisfied.

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