Why Do You Want To Go To Heaven? [1]

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Scott Adams, the creator of the once wildly popular *Dilbert* comic strip, passed away [2] on 13 January 2026. For decades, *Dilbert* was a staple of newspapers, where it made fun of corporate culture, which more and more people in that time, globally, increasingly experienced. However, in his last years, Adams courted controversy with racist remarks, and ended up with *Dilbert* being pulled from syndication. He was deplatformed and ostracised. Due to his fame and infamy, his death was widely reported. Many of these reports quoted from the last statement which he published, mere days before his death. In this last statement, he announced his conversion to Christianity [3] (sort of).

Adams' Deathbed Conversion

To quote from the last statement which Adams released:

> [M]any of my Christian friends have asked me to find Jesus before I go. I'm not a believer, but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks attractive. So, here I go:
>
> I accept Jesus Christ as my lord and savior, and I look forward to spending an eternity with him. The part about me not being a believer should be quickly resolved if I wake up in heaven. I won't need any more convincing than that. And I hope I am still qualified for entry.
>
> Scott Adams

Many faithful, myself included, have agonised over loved ones as they drew near to their death. Our desire is for them to find the same hope, joy, and forgiveness in Christ that we have, and to be able to be reunited with them and spend eternity alongside them. We can only cast our hopes on God's grace and mercy.

While some found Adams' profession of faith sufficient, others were not convinced. He invoked (whether knowingly or unknowingly) a version of Pascal's Wager. Again, God alone knows and can judge his sincerity. But I want to look at his wording, and how that is emblematic of many, if not most, people's erroneous view of eternity.

The Risk-Reward Calculation

Adams wrote that his unbelief would be dispelled by waking up after death. Unfortunately, that scenario wasn't one of the ones covered by John 20:29. In that verse, Jesus touches on the options of those who believe by seeing or not seeing, but it assumes that the person who believes is alive. It does not discuss the option of being convinced once God has already let you into heaven. All of Scripture assumes that one needs to come to faith before death. Indeed, it alludes to that, once one passes away, one's fate is sealed (Luke 16:19–31). We don't know whether Adams, if he had made up his mind on the matter, was an annihilationist, or what form he thought hell would take[1]. Becoming Christian is more than reciting a kind of Christian Shahada[2] (James 2:18–19) to escape an undesirable fate. It involves repentance, confession, and submission.

Look Forward to Spending Eternity with Him

I previously wrote [4] about the difference of coming to Christ out of fear of punishment, and coming to Him because of a desire to want what is right. Adams didn't express a fear of hell, so it seems like his motivation was the "reward" aspect of going to heaven.

The purpose of the Christian life isn't to escape earth to have some ethereal existence where every whim and desire is met. It is to live in God's Kingdom, which has already arrived, and which He is building at this very moment, and to which we are invited to contribute. In the "life after life after death" (as N. T. Wright puts it), every tear will be wiped away, and we will be in awe of being in God's presence and reunited with Him, but we'll also continue to work and build and shape a physical creation, as we are intended to do now. It won't be a world of our making, but one built according to the blueprint which God has already laid out. This blueprint is the vision of the Kingdom of God with which Jesus left us: love, compassion, humility, obedience, and self-denial. If that is not what we want to do *for eternity*, then "heaven" is probably not where we want to be.

I'll continue on this point in my next article, which will loosely be a companion piece to this one.

What was Left Unsaid

Sometimes, what is unsaid is just as salient as what was said. Adams did not explicitly express repentance from sin, which is a key factor of the Christian faith. He did mention accepting Jesus as "savior" (sic), but we don't know whether that was as an appellation ("lord-and-saviour"), or whether that word meant for him a deep repentance. We come to Jesus, not to claim our reward, but precisely to express that we do not deserve any reward,

> But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'
>
> Luke 18:13

Even if a sinner does ask for forgiveness, that is not an end in itself. As N. T. Wright wrote in *Surprised by Hope*, the goal of repentance isn't to escape to heaven. The forgiveness that we receive from Jesus *enables* us to build for the Kingdom project. Forgiveness isn't just about personal gain (not going to hell), but corporate as well (working with others who are forgiven to be the bride of Christ, who builds for the Kingdom). Often this work is taken to solely be evangelism: like a kind of salvific pyramid scheme. While gospel work is about proclaiming forgiveness to others, it is also much more than that.

The Efficacy of Deathbed Conversions

To be clear, I do believe that people can be saved on their deathbeds. If their faith and repentance is sincere, and they still had a life to dedicate to Jesus, then their faith can be saving. My view for a long time has been that, if the death of someone is imminent, and they come to faith, and if they were to then be miraculously healed, with a guarantee of years of life left unencumbered by illness, would they then live out the faith that they professed on their deathbed, and live a life dedicated to Jesus and His teachings, with zeal? Sadly, often this is something that God can only know.

Heaven Is Not Made For You

Heaven isn't "for" you. It's not about your wish fulfilment, your happiness, or your desires being met. It's not a paradise built around you. God, and His angels, won't be your butlers. Yes, "He will wipe away every tear", and "there will [not] be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more" (Revelation 21:4). But you will be joining something far bigger and larger than yourself: a new reality, an entire world made new, a Kingdom with the most glorious and magnificent King imaginable. It won't be built around you. We know very little about this new world to come, although the essence of it is glimpsed today already among those who are in Christ [5] and building for the Kingdom of God.

The question is: what reward was Adams anticipating? If he arrived, would he be satisfied by it, or disappointed?

And, with your idea of what "heaven" is, would you?

Conclusion

I am no better, nor am I more deserving of receiving God's forgiveness, and going to heaven, than Scott Adams. We can but throw ourselves on God's mercy and judgement. May I one day meet him3 as an enthusiastic participant of the Kingdom. Those of us who are still alive and believe, embrace Christ, as slaves who have been elevated to friends by His grace (John 15:15), and preach the gospel, so that everyone who is willing to go by the narrow way, may enter freely in God's Kingdom; that is, His vision for new creation, not ours.

- 1. Assuming that his perception of hell wasn't really, like he caricatured it in *Dilbert*, a human resources department.
- 2. The Shahada is the succinct, one sentence Islamic profession of faith. If someone utters it, Muslims consider that person to be a Muslim. They may be evaluated as a good, bad, or apostate Muslim, but they are no longer considered a non-believer who hasn't been reached by the message of Islam, or has heard the message and rejected it.
- 3. I understand that some Christians in certain traditions will have concerns or doubts about Adams because of not keep sacraments (like baptism or communion), but because we don't know what Adams' friends told him about the requirement for salvation and the necessity of sacraments, I think we need to not be harsh on him in judging his actions or inactions, and leave it up to God's mercy and grace.

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