

Q&A: Might OBL end up in heaven?

A follow-up from a previous Q&A post.

Anonymous asks:

I wanted to comment – of all the twitter nonsense and rhetoric about the killing of Osama Bin Laden I have read, two things have stood out: “So far no one has explained how this killing was an act of justice, even though this is what people are celebrating”. and a Quote from Ezekiel 18:23 “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”

I’m not sure how to feel about the death of Osama – I think I would have preferred the justice of his capture and trial if that were possible. But the ‘celebration’ of his death feels appalling.

I was once taught that even in suicide, at the last moment, a person may repent and find Jesus. If this is right, is it possible that even Hitler and Osama may end up in heaven?

Hi Anonymous, a quick response.

1) Is this killing an act of justice? Yes, to the extent that it was punishment wielded against a guilty person. Did Osama deserve to die? The blunt answer eventually is : Undoubtedly.

2) Ezekiel 18. I think this verse strikes the balance I was alluding to in the original answer. God desires repentance above all. I don’t think this prevents the authority of the Romans 13 sword from acting, however.

3) Would capture and trial be a better demonstration of justice? Perhaps. It certainly would have demonstrated a high

road of measured justice that is not exactly evident on the other side of the coin. But I think this is a matter of degrees within the one category of "punishment."

4) Can Hitler or Osama end up in heaven? I severely, severely, severely doubt it. From all accounts their lives were shaped and defined by a rejection of all that is good and rebellion against the grace of God. Yes there is mystery here, and grace upon grace – and I'm sure we will be surprised when Christ returns as to who exactly rides with him. But hypotheticals like these are simply conjecture, ignoring the realities of life and the evidence of degenerate hearts. When considering the demise of obviously sin-ridden people, I think the best response is not to ask "Might they be in heaven?" but to declare "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

W.