

Waiting for Godot as an allegory

Samuel Beckett has explicitly stated that the character Godot, in his classic play, *Waiting for Godot*, is not an allegory for God. If Beckett's word on his play is believed to be true, there are still significant biblical corollaries that need to be analyzed in order to understand the main existential theme behind the apparent meaninglessness of the play. The two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, eternally wait for a man named Godot on the side of a road they never take. From a Christian point of view, this could be seen as Vladimir and Estragon having the free will to take the path towards enlightenment, and yet choosing inaction instead (and thus never attaining salvation).

The parallels between Christian and Existential philosophy can be seen throughout the play, and if the reader is not aware of Beckett's statements on Godot, then they could come to the conclusion that Godot is indeed an allegory for God. This relation can be most easily understood through Vladimir and Estragon's initial hypothesis as to why they are waiting for Godot,

Estragon: What exactly did we ask him for?

Vladimir: Were you not there?

Estragon: I can't have been listening.

Vladimir: Oh ... Nothing very definite.

Estragon: A kind of prayer.

Vladimir: Precisely.

One may argue however, that Vladimir and Estragon do not seem like reliable sources because of their flawed character traits, especially due to the irony of the play. But, there are many direct and indirect biblical references in the play that can support a Christian interpretation of it.

The biblical references pertain to salvation and are allegorical, particularly in one conversation where Godot is Christ, the savior and the two tramps are the two thieves:

Vladimir: Our savior. Two Thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other... (he searches for the contrary of saved)... damned.

Estragon: Saved from what?

Vladimir: Hell.

Vladimir suggests that if they do not find Godot, then they will be damned to the hell of living without meaning. The mood portrayed just by the setting alone is depressing (a country road, a dirt mound, and a willow tree), but the very plane is almost like purgatory. Now, if Vladimir and Estragon's situation is interpreted from the Christian perspective, then they appear to be the two thieves the two thieves waiting in limbo to find out whether they will be saved.

Although Vladimir and Estragon wait and come across a few travelers, none of them are Godot. However, the tramps would not know even if they met Godot because they do not even know what Godot looks like. The first act seems inconclusive until the end of the day when a messenger boy is sent from Godot to tell the tramps that he is not coming. Interestingly, the messenger boy is none other than a goatherd, a recurring symbol in both the bible and *Waiting for Godot*. Jesus was sent by God to guide men and lead them to salvation. But Godot sends his messenger to guide the tramps into inaction by not giving them any guidance at all.

The second act and day comes and goes in the same way as the last one. It signifies the monotony in the life of the tramps. Vladimir and Estragon deconstruct linear time within the play by not taking action. The brother of the messenger boy from the day before comes to give the same news to the main characters. This boy seemingly gives a hint of Godot's identity:

Vladimir: (softly) Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: Fair or... (he hesitates)... or black?

Boy: I think it's white, Sir.

Vladimir: Christ have mercy on us...

By characterizing Godot as an allegory of a classical depiction of God, and then denying him being God, Beckett seems to suggest that our perception of God is false. The play connects to the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard through the blending of Existentialist and Christian ideas. An individual must find God himself in order to escape meaninglessness, and not fatalistically wait for a divine being to arbitrarily save him.

Thus we learn that, the subject of the play is not Godot; it is waiting. The act of waiting is indeed an essential characteristic of the human condition. We all wait in our lives for something or the other- for hope, for relief, for redemption, for salvation, for freedom and the like. So throughout their lives, human beings wait for something and Godot simply represents the objective of their waiting- an event, a thing, a person, death etc. Samuel Beckett has in this play has therefore depicted a situation which has a great human application.