

Tough Questions

Why Would a Good God Send People to Hell?

July 6, 2008

What does the Bible really have to say about hell?

1. God doesn't like hell

- Genesis 6:5-7
- Ezekiel 18:22—"None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live."
- 1 Timothy 2:4-6—"...God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."
- 2 Peter 3:9—"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

2. The Bible and Jesus himself agree: hell is real

- Matthew 5:22—"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."
- Matthew 8:11-12—"But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- Matthew 23:33—"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

3. God dignifies our free will

- Psalm 8:5-6—"You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet"

C.S. Lewis called hell "the greatest monument to human freedom" and another author said, "Hell is God's compliment to the reality of human freedom and the dignity of human choice."

4. Hell is separation from God

Tim Keller says that many people today think that hell works like this: *"God gives us time, but if we haven't made the right choices by the end of our lives, he casts us into hell for all eternity. As the poor souls fall through space, they cry for mercy, but God says, 'Too late! You had your chance! Now you will suffer!'"* *This caricature misunderstands the very nature of evil. The biblical picture is that sin separates us from the presence of God, which is the source of all joy and indeed of all love, wisdom or good things of any sort. Since we were originally created for God's ... presence, only before his face will we thrive, flourish and achieve our highest potential. If we were to lose his presence totally, that would be hell ..."*

5. Jesus is the crux of the matter

6. We are at a crossroads

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