

Reality of Heaven and Hell

John 3:16, 18, 36

Introduction:

1. There are several questions from Christians about heaven and hell, likewise, there are a lot of objections to heaven and hell from non-believers.
 - a. For Christians the questions probably come from a lack of a Biblical understanding of:
 1. God's love
 2. God's justice
 3. God's judgment
 4. Hope
 - b. For the modernist/atheist the questions are mostly borne from
 1. a lack of belief in God
 2. a refusal to submit to God (if one recognizes that there is a just God then that person must decide where to obey or submit).
 - c. Some argue that there is no life beyond the grave. They argue that our life is made up only of the material, and once our bodies and brain cease to function then that is where life ends. i.e. a car that has become old and rusted and the motor seizes up, then it no longer runs. They say the same applies to human life.
 1. But, humans do not commonly have funerals for cars, shoes, clothes.
 2. Why do we have funerals (even atheists believe in funerals) if there is nothing more to life than our functioning bodies?
2. This lesson's aim to to speak about the reality of heaven and hell, but more about the nature of why both places exist.

I. God's love

A. How big is God's love?

1. The earth is \approx 93 million miles from the sun. The sun's light, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, takes about 8 minutes to reach the earth. We are just one solar system in the Milky Way galaxy. (Caltech)
2. Scientists believe that our galaxy could contain as many as 100 billion solar systems.(Administrator)
3. The Milky Way galaxy, where we are, is so huge that even at the speed of light would take 100,000 years to travel across it! (ibid)
4. King David was not a degreed astronomer, but had enough sense to know how vast the heavens are. He compared God's love to the vastness of heaven. (Psalm 36:5-9) "Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness [reaches] to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are [like] a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light."
5. God's love has no end, it never goes dry.

B. His love is so great that He sent His Son to die for a lost world

1. 1 John 4:9-11 - "In this phrase we find the deepest meaning of the term 'love': love means forgiving the sins of the beloved and remembering them no more. This is what God has done for rebellious mankind: he pardons their sins against himself at his own cost." (Womack)
2. God's Holy Love rescues us from God's Holy wrath!
 - a. Romans 8:3

- b. Galatians 4:4
 - c. Philippians 2:5-8
 - d. Colossians 1:19
 - e. Colossians 2:9
- II. God's justice
- A. God's justice is in response to sin.
 - 1. In order to understand God's justice one needs to understand what sin is:
 - a. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4)
 - b. Sin is iniquity (Daniel 9:4-5; Micah 2:1; James 3:6)
 - c. Sin embodies everything contrary to God's holy nature and sin is offensive to Him.
 - 2. Sin is a crime against God, and justice/fairness, demands a penalty - in this case, a perfect atoning sacrifice.
 - a. Romans 1:18-32; 2:5; 3:23
 - b. Romans 5:8-11, 6:23
 - 3. Since we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) we become outraged when the guilty go unpunished.
 - 1. This is what King David felt when he was told a story about a wealthy man taking a poor man's lamb.
 - 2. "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. "He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion." (2 Samuel 12:5-6)
 - B. God's eternal holiness demands an eternal:
 - 1. heaven:
 - a. as a great reward (Matthew 5:11)
 - b. the future glory will be better than where we are now (Romans 8:18)
 - c. is more than what we could ever imagine or hope for (Ephesians 3:20)
 - 2. hell:
 - a. as a great punishment for the heartache the devil introduced into the world (Matthew 25:41)
 - b. RE: Matthew 25:41; "The reason they suffer such a fate is their failure to be sensitive to the sufferings and hardship endured by the Lord." (Chouinard)
- III. God's judgment
- A. God's righteous judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)
 - 1. "...there remains a final reckoning in which God will bring fitting punishment on those who have persecuted his people." (Weatherly)
 - 2. In the end evil will be punished eternally, and good will be rewarded with heaven.
 - B. This retribution is a fair response to the death of the Son of God on the cross.
- IV. The hope
- A. The Bible hope stands in stark contrast to the human view of hope. Human hope usually conveys doubt, celestial hope is grounded in God - God is true, never wavers.) (Hebrews 11:1)
 - B. Old Testament figures had a hope of heaven
 - 1. Abraham desired to be with his fathers (Hebrews 11:9-16)
 - 2. Moses left everything behind because he looked forward "to the recompense of reward." (Hebrews 11:24ff)
 - 3. David believed he would one day be with his father in heaven. (2 Samuel 12:23)
 - C. Facts about heaven
 - 1. Beautiful city (Hebrews 11:16; 13:14)
 - 2. Eternal (Revelation 21:25; 22:5)
 - 3. Place and time of eternal worship (Revelation 22:3)
- V. The burning questions:
- A. Why would God condemn people to suffer the torments of eternal hell?

1. The question is worded wrongly: "If God is love, then why do some people go to hell?"
 - a. As we have already seen, God is just/fair. Imagine: If a person is rebellious here on earth and does not submit to God's will, why should they receive a reward? On the other hand, if people submit to God's will and suffer on this earth for the sake of Christ, they should receive a reward. (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; Christians have been destined to suffer for the cause of Christ, but woe to those who cause Christians to suffer persecution!
2. Answer: Romans 1:18-20 - ...people are without excuse.
- B. How can we be in heavenly bliss when we will know some of our loved ones are in eternal hell?
 1. God is big enough to take care of any issue that may arise. He will wipe away every tear (Revelation 7:17; 21:4)
 2. "We will have a heightened sense of spirituality, we will not view loved ones who died in rebellion to God with the same jaundiced vision we now have." (Jackson, "Why Would a Loving God Send Us to Hell?")
 3. "If the Lord Himself can be happy (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15), with his **greater** love for humanity than any of us has, we should be confident that the joy of heaven will eclipse any and all sadness of this life's remembrances." (ibid)

Conclusion:

1. God does not want anyone to be lost (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9)
2. Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19ff)
 1. The living ask questions about hell, where, when and how long. The Rich Man simply wanted to know if he could get some relief and, if someone could go and preach to his brothers so they would avoid torment.
 2. The Rich Man did not ask if he deserved hell, he knew that his life of excess and disobedience on earth was enough to deserve hell.
3. In the long run, the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell, is itself a question: 'What are you asking God to do?' To wipe out their past sins, and at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing over every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does. (Lewis)

Reference Works

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- Caltech. "Ask an Astronomer." *Cool Cosmos*, 2019, coolcosmos.ipac.caltech.edu/ask/8-How-far-away-is-the-Sun-. The Sun is at an average distance of about 93,000,000 miles (150 million kilometers) away from Earth. It is so far away that light from the Sun, traveling at a speed of 186,000 miles (300,000 kilometers) per second, takes about 8 minutes to reach us. Like all of the other planets in our Solar System, Earth does not travel around the Sun in a perfect circle. Instead its orbit is elliptical, like a stretched circle, with the Sun just off the center of the orbit. This means that the distance between Earth and the Sun changes during a year. At its closest, the Sun is 91.4 million miles (147.1 million km) away from us. At its farthest, the Sun is 94.5 million miles (152.1 million km) away. The Earth is closest to the Sun during winter in the northern hemisphere.
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Weatherly, Jon A. *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Joplin, Mo., College Press Pub. Co, 1996. "...there remains a final reckoning in which God will bring fitting punishment on those who have persecuted his people." "God is both just, judging sin wherever it exists, and powerful, able to bring his sentence to bear on evildoers. The Thessalonian church may appear to be a small, insignificant group of people whose enemies have the best of them, but the end of history will show what the unseen reality has always been."

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