

Is Hell Made by a Cruel God?

I was a teenager when I heard an atheist debater declare the “evilness” of the Biblical God. He said, “How can you believe in a God who uses a blowtorch to punish people?” This was purportedly unanswerable, as it makes God so cruel that the thought of his existence is intolerable.

The “cruel God” argument first suggest that such a God could not exist, and if he does exist, who would want to serve him?

The argument is based on descriptions of hell, the everlasting punishment of the unrighteous.

- Matthew 25:41 “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”
- 2nd Thessalonians 1:8 “In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Revelation 21:8 “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Do these descriptions of hell prove that God is cruel? No! God is not cruel.

- God is love (1st John 4:16). God, who is love, cannot be cruel. Punishing the wicked has to do with justice and preserving those who are righteous. Love must protect the righteous and practice justice against evil. Otherwise it would be cruel.
- God works to save sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9). God gave us the life of His Son to save sinners. We deserve punishment, yet God’s mission is our salvation. This is not cruel.
- God is patient (2nd Pet. 3:9). “God is longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” God’s patience demonstrates that He is not cruel.
- God does not force us to serve him (Rev. 22:17). “Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely.” God gives us a choice! He is not cruel.

- God does not keep us from the objects of our affections (1st John 2:15-17). God wants us to choose Him and enjoy His eternal relationship and blessings. Unrepentant sinners reject God for their own affections: “lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.” Regardless of the divine warnings to repent, the sinful rebels persist. Their outcome is destruction. God gave heaven’s best to prevent this, but these sinners could not be dissuaded. God cannot be blamed for this. God is not cruel.

Yes, hell is horrible. But it is not God’s cruel blowtorch for the unrighteous. God is love, God is just, and hell is the appropriate destination for lovers of the world.

God is not cruel. I want to serve Him because He is loving and righteous.

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