

I DON'T GET IT Tough Topics in the Bible

"Heaven and Hell"

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Pastor Jän van Oosten

The First Thing to Realize

1. The fact that there is a heaven and there is a hell expresses to us that God is just. Because humans were created as moral creatures, it is fitting and right that God should either reward or punish what we do in this life.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;*

Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

2. If God did not reward and punish humans (i.e. give to each one his/her due), it would mean that God is unjust. So, heaven and hell are really about God's character and justice.

Question: But, if God is so good, how could He punish people?

Proverbs 13:24 *He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

Hebrews 12:7 *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*

10 *For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

Point: the idea of a parent that doesn't correct, punish or reward his/her children is a silly (and disastrous) post-modern notion.

What is Hell?

1. Hell is the eternal destination of the unrighteous. It is everlasting.

Hebrews 6:2 *of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Matthew 25:45-46 *Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 *...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 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. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day,*

2. Hell and Hades are two separate places in the Scripture. Hades is the “holding place of the unrighteous dead” until the resurrection. Hell is the eternal place of separation from God and punishment.

3. Hell is called Gehenna or the Lake of Fire in Scripture.

Mark 9:43-44 *If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell (Gehenna), into the fire that shall never be quenched—*

44 *where Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*

Luke 12:5 *But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell (Gehenna); yes, I say to you, fear Him!*

Gehenna is not Hades. Hades is a temporary place of the dead where only their souls exist. In Gehenna, the unrighteous dead exist in both body and soul. The suffering in Gehenna is eternal while the suffering in Hades is temporal.

Revelation 20:13-15 *The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

4. Hell is a place of separation and suffering AFTER the General Resurrection and judgment of mankind.

John 5:28-29 *Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His (the Risen Lord Jesus Christ) voice 29 and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

It would be unjust for God to put a person in hell before they were judged. So, there is no-one in hell currently.

Hebrews 9:27 *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

How to Avoid Hell

God has appointed one mediator between Himself and mankind by which we can be saved and avoid hell.

1Tim 2:3-6 *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,*

What is Heaven?

In the Bible the word heaven has three applications. It can refer to the place where (1) birds fly or the place where (2) the stars and moon are, or, finally, (3) where God meets His creation.

2Corinthians 12:2-4 *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the **third heaven**.*

3 *And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words,*

Specifically, since God is not limited by time or space, heaven is a place He has created where His angels and mankind can have communion with Him. He makes Himself comprehensible and available in heaven.

1Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

What is Heaven Like?

First of all, it is important to remember that descriptions of heaven with “streets of gold”, “pearly gates,” and mansions are ways of describing things that are currently beyond our wildest dreams.

1Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Of course, the greatest wonder, delight, and reward in heaven is God Himself.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

1Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

When Resurrected, What will We be Like?

We can discover what we will be like by looking at the resurrected Jesus and getting clues from 1Corinthians 15.

1John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

1. First, **Impassibility** (“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption...” 1Cor 15:42). Not only will you live forever in heaven but the gift of impassibility means that the glorified body can suffer no corruption or pain, and it will not be subject to fleshly desires.
2. Next, we will have **subtlety**. (“It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body...” 1Cor 15:44). Our bodies will not be subject to the laws of material nature, nothing will stand in our way (see John 20:19 where Jesus walks through the walls of a locked room).
3. Thirdly, your body will have **agility**. (“It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power...” 1Cor 15:43). In Heaven, your body will be so unified and obedient to your soul, it will do whatever you can think of.
4. Lastly, our resurrected bodies will possess the gift of **brightness**. (“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory...” 1Cor 15:43). This will be the light of glory which Jesus demonstrated at the transfiguration. (**Matthew 13:43** Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.)

