**#14 – Is Hell Unjust?**

The doctrine of eternal punishment in hell is the most unpleasant subject in all the Bible, but a crucial one to make sense of the Christian faith. It is a doctrine despised by many. The fundamental charge is: Why would a loving God send people to hell, and do so for an eternity? It appears to be a doctrine of a cruel, vindictive, and unjust deity. On the other hand, we can ask: How could a just and holy God ever declare guilty sinners righteous in his sight?

**I. The Attributes of God**

Understanding who God is forms the foundation for the doctrine of hell.

**A. God Righteousness**

* Deut. 32:4; Job 34:10; Psa. 5:4; Hab. 1:13; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 1:5

**B. God’s Justice**

* Exod. 34:7; Psa. 7:6-11; 97:2; Rev. 20:12-13

**C. God’s Love**

God’s love does not mean unconditional universal equal benevolence. Love means God allows no sin to go unpunished. His love of righteousness demands his justice.

* Exod. 34:6-7; 1 John 4:16-21

**D. God’s Omniscience**

* Matt. 12:36-37; Heb. 4:13

**II. Moral Responsibility**

Being created in the image of God, we are moral creatures endowed with an innate understanding of what is right and wrong and of our moral accountability before the Judge of our hearts.

* Rom. 1:18-23, 32; 2:14-15

Note God’s standards never change because he never changes (God’s Immutability)

* Psa. 119:89; Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:22-25

Our sense of justice derives from God. ILL: Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge, and the Killing Fields

**III. The Reality of Hell**

**A. Hell as Punishment**

* Matt. 5:22; 7:19; 8:11-12; 13:41-42

**B. Hell as Destruction**

* Matt. 10:28; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9-10

**C. Hell as Eternal**

* Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:11; 20:10

**D. Hell as Banishment**

* Matt. 7:23; 25:30, 41; 2 Thess. 1:9
* “Outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)

**IV. Infinite & Eternal Punishment for Finite & Temporal Sins?**

Does eternal hell represent a punishment that is greater than the crime? Note first of all, there are degrees of punishment in hell. See Matt. 11:24; 18:6-9; Luke 12:42-48; Rom. 2:5.

1. **We Are Not Good Judges**

Humans downplay the seriousness of sin (not as bad as the Bible says). We downplay the justice of God, thinking he is obligated to show mercy. Yet, we know better (Rom. 1:32).

**B. Sin Never Stops & Gets Worse**

* When restraints are removed, gets worse (Rom. 1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).
* No repentance (Heb. 9:27; Luke 16:26). Blaspheme God (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9, 11, 21). “Gnashing of teeth” = intense anger (Acts 7:54). 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 14:10; 16:5-7; 19:1-2
* Unchecked, sin only gets worse until it reaches the uncharted depths of perversity (Isa. 59:12-13). Sinners store up more divine wrath (Rom. 2:5).

**C. Sin is Cosmic Treason**

* Sin offends the honor of the infinite, Almighty God. We do not sin against a small, trifling deity. The cost of sinning against the infinite value of God is insurmountable.

ILL: Mona Lisa

ILL: Killing Jesus

**Resources:**

* Benjamin M. Skaug, *How Could a Loving God Send Anyone to Hell?*
* Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*
* Christopher W. Morgan & Robert A. Peterson, editors, *Hell Under Fire*
* W. G. T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*