

What is Your Future?

Once, pollsters found that 78% of Americans believe in Heaven, 60% believe in Hell, and just 4% believe that they are going to Hell. Hell, some say, "is for other people." The rejection of the idea of a place of conscious eternal punishment has spawned a number of other ideas, such as:

--*annihilationism*--in which sinning souls will be completely destroyed. This is the Jehovah's Witness belief;

--*universalism*--in which everyone will be saved in the end. This is usually a liberal belief.

--*restorationism*--in which there is punishment, but ultimate reunion with God;

--*purgatory*--in which sinful souls are purged of sin before being admitted to Heaven. This is found in Roman Catholic theology, but not in the Bible.

Some believe that there are two kinds of sins and sinners: the ordinary sinner, who goes to Heaven no matter what; and the really bad sinner, who goes to Hell no matter what. People would place themselves in the former category, and put people like Genghis Khan, Hitler, and Jeffrey Dahmer in the latter one.

What does the Bible say?

In Hebrews 9:27, we find "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment." That is, there *will* be a day or time of reckoning or accounting. Those who are in right relationship with God, will find themselves in Heaven. Everyone else will be "punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power" (2 Thessalonian 1:9).

Hell is a fact. It was not "invented" by the church to keep people in line. *Jesus* talked about Hell. He said that Hell was created by God for "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). He compared it to a "furnace of fire" and to "outer darkness." In Matthew 25, Jesus said that Hell is "everlasting," using the same word as He referred to Heaven. Scripture has many references to Hell. Paul talked about Hell, John talked about Hell. If it is not real, why would they waste words on it? We believe Heaven is a place—and so is Hell (Luke 16:28).

Hell is to be feared. The Bible says that Hell is a "place of torment" (Luke 16:28), and is a place of "everlasting burning" (Isaiah 33:14). We find it to be a place of fire (but not all torment comes from

the flames); of thirst (Luke 16:24); of good memory (Luke 16:25); of separation; of darkness (Matthew 8:12); and of hopelessness.

Hell is final and forever. We are familiar with one way streets. Once a person is in Hell, there is no backing out, no finding mercy, no hope. As much as we would like to think that ultimately all will be saved, we cannot honestly use the Scriptures to build a case for it. Hell is everlasting or eternal.

Hell is fair. What most people want is justice on their terms, or they want mercy on their terms. What few people acknowledge is that God is in charge and He has set His own terms. Some say that God is loving, and that He would not judge our sin with such an infinite punishment. But we must realize that our sin is infinite, because it is the act of rebellion against an infinite God.

Does God send sinners to Hell? C.S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*, wrote that God is giving people just what they have chosen. "Sin is man's saying to God throughout life, 'Go away and leave me alone.' Hell is God finally saying to man, 'You may have your wish.'" Folks reject God here; He will reject them at the judgment. As sinners choose to live ungodly lives, God simply confirms their choice-- forever.

God will "judge the world with justice" (Acts 17:31). He did not create people for wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9); and He has given His all so that people would not go to Hell. Romans 2:5-11 tells us that God is completely impartial and fair.

You will live somewhere forever. If you have not trusted Christ alone to take you to Heaven when you die, how will you escape being condemned to Hell? "The saddest road to Hell is that which is under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the midst of warnings and invitations" (J.C. Ryle).

All who die rejecting God's provision for the forgiveness of sins will endure the consequences of those sins in the lake of fire. That punishment will last for the countless ages of eternity.

The good news is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the Cross and arose the third day. You do not have to endure the punishment of eternity, for Jesus died to take the punishment of your sins. By trusting in Him alone, you can have eternal life. The Bible says, "Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Pastor Craig Alan Myers

