

I Don't Want to Go to Hell

Introduction. Have you thought about how bad hell will be? Jesus said, “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, into the fire that shall never be quenched — where ‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched’” (Mark 9:43-44).

The punishment of the wicked in hell will be so terrible that Jesus said it's better to take whatever drastic measures are necessary to avoid going there.

In a lot of ways, hell is an uncomfortable truth. The idea of eternal torment for unrighteous behavior is deeply troubling to people. But God doesn't arbitrarily or vindictively “send” people to hell out of cruelty for a number of reasons. First, hell exists because God is perfectly holy and just, not just loving. Second, hell was originally created for Satan and sinning angels, not primarily for humans. Humans end up there because they join in rebellion against God through their own choices. Third, people ultimately choose separation from God. Hell is the natural and just outcome of persistently rejecting God's love and authority. With hell, God honors human free will: if someone wants nothing to do with God in this life, God allows that choice to be confirmed eternally. Someone once said, “The doors of hell are locked from the inside.” God doesn't force anyone into relationship with Him; love can't be coerced.

Judgment is something we must respect and fear, because trying to imagine what hell will be like is overwhelming. However, the New Testament gives a pretty complete picture of hell, and we're going to consider four prominent reasons why no one should ever want to go to hell.

I. It Will Be Filled With the Worst People

A. Hell is the destiny of sinners.

1. The Bible teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin is a real violation of His infinite goodness and glory. Those who remain in their sins instead of receiving forgiveness from God by obeying the gospel will be condemned to spend eternity in hell. A vivid picture of their deeds is in Revelation 21:8 (cp. v. 27).
2. Religious people who follow false teachers and have never actually obeyed the gospel, people who've simply failed to do anything about their spiritual condition, and even people who've lived decent, moral lives, but who've never surrendered to the King of kings, will be there because they've never been forgiven of their sins.

B. Hell will be populated with the worst people who've ever lived.

1. Imagine being trapped in a room for one day with some of the most immoral, insolent, disrespectful, and violent people that you've ever encountered. Hell will be much worse than that. Hell will feature an ongoing existence filled with those who've spent their lifetimes behaving in the most ungodly ways.
2. Think about being surrounded by the mass murderers, the serial rapists, the predatory child molesters, the oppressive tyrants, the genocidal maniacs, and all the most foul-mouthed abusive people who have ever walked the earth, not just for a day, but for all eternity.

3. And if that's not enough, Jesus described hell as "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Do you want to be with the worst people who ever lived, and inhabit the same space as the devil and his angels? If not, then you don't want to go to hell.

II. It Will Be Absolutely Miserable

- A. Hell is a place of eternal misery.
 1. Speaking of the final judgment, the Lord warned of "wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41-42, 49-50; cp. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).
 - a) "Wailing" is crying and extreme sadness suggesting suffering.
 - b) "Gnashing of teeth" indicates despair, bitter pain, and frustration.
 2. The Savior said that hell is a place of boundless misery and endless regret.
- B. Hell will be a place without any comfort.
 1. As our society takes the Bible less and less seriously, the prospect of facing eternity in hell is also taken less seriously. In fact, for many people, hell has become a joke.
 - a) Some go so far as to say that, in their view, ending up in hell won't really be so bad because all of their friends will be there with them.
 - b) The drunken party they've been involved in here is just going to continue on with all the same people hereafter.
 2. But hell isn't a place where one can find comfort, happiness, and revelry in the company of friends. Instead, Jesus described hell as a place of separation and exile from all that's helpful and comforting (Matthew 8:12; 25:30, "outer darkness"). Do you want to experience comfortless anguish and misery? If not, then you don't want to go to hell.

III. It Will Be Everlasting Punishment

- A. Hell is a condition of ongoing punishment.
 1. Of those who'll go to hell the Lord says they'll experience everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46a). It's also described as "the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:43).
 2. Many people have become convinced that hell won't be so bad because it'll will only be temporary and, before long, all those who go to hell will just cease to exist. This is known as Annihilationism.
 3. But the Lord describes hell in terms of a state of punishment that's eternal, conscious, ongoing, and continuous.
- B. Hell will offer no relief from torment.
 1. It's one thing to experience misery and torment, but it's something else entirely to experience misery and torment without end for all eternity.
 2. A lot of people have to psych themselves into sitting in the dentist's chair for a few minutes of misery, but the misery and torment of hell will last for much longer than just a few minutes.
 3. It's worse than anything anyone can experience on this Earth because there's no hope of relief and no hope that it'll ever end or finally be over. Said another way, there's no breaks or periods of rest from the torment (Revelation 14:11).

4. Do you want to spend the boundless ages of eternity in a place of unceasing conscious torment described as “the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41)? If not, then you don’t want to go to hell.

IV. It Will Be Completely Removed From the Presence of God

- A. Hell is a situation in which the blessings and care of God are absent.
 1. People will inhabit hell because they don’t know God and they don’t obey the gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10).
 2. Notice that the everlasting destruction in hell is a punishment in which the condemned are removed from the presence of the Lord and His glory forever and ever.
 3. It would be terrible to be cut off from God and His glory for even one day, but those in hell are cut off for eternity. There’s no worse condition one may find himself in than to be permanently shut out from God’s presence.
- B. Hell will be devoid of anything pleasant.
 1. Every blessing of life, every good thing, and every pleasant thing we might enjoy is the result of God bestowing His blessings upon us (James 1:17).
 2. In the world God makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:45). But that won’t be the case in the hereafter.
 3. The inhabitants of hell will be completely separated from the presence and blessings of God for all eternity. And all that’s good, pleasant, enjoyable, and helpful will be totally withdrawn.
 4. Do you want to spend your unending existence in a condition that’s absolutely devoid of the blessings that proceed from the Lord? If not, then you don’t want to go to hell.

Conclusion. In the 2007 film *The Bucket List*, two terminally ill men — played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman — take a road trip to do what they said they would do before they “kicked the bucket.” Before the film’s release, Nicholson was interviewed by *Parade* magazine. Reflecting on his personal life, Nicholson said, “I used to live so freely. The mantra for my generation was, ‘Be your own man!’ I always said, ‘Hey, you can have whatever rules you want — I’m going to have mine. I’ll accept the guilt. I’ll pay the check. I’ll do the time.’ I chose my own way. That was my philosophical position well into my fifties. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve had to adjust.”

Reality has a way of getting the attention of even Jack Nicholson. Later in the interview, he adds, “We all want to go on forever, don’t we? We fear the unknown. Everybody goes to that wall, yet nobody knows what’s on the other side. That’s why we fear death.”

If we believe in the Word of God, we do know what’s on the other side of physical death: everlasting punishment or eternal life (Matthew 25:46). The problem isn’t a lack of revelation, but a lack of belief.

Within that everlasting punishment, hell will include those who almost made it to heaven. King Agrippa was “almost persuaded” to become a Christian the day Paul preached to him (Acts 26:28). Imagine the terrible, unending regret that’ll be felt by

those who are in hell even though they knew better, like the rich man in hell opposite of Lazarus (Luke 16:24). Given all this, I don't want to go to hell and neither do you.

The good news, of course, is that our loving God has reached out to us in His mercy and grace, sending His Son to be the sacrifice to take away our sins so that we can be with Him in heaven instead of being removed from His presence for all eternity.

God wants to bring people to repentance. God has done everything possible to save people from hell — at enormous personal cost. If you've sinned, and you don't want to go to hell, then you need to come to the Lord on His terms for forgiveness and salvation today.

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