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# Why Hell?

*What kind of God do  
Christians worship?*

The question of hell is necessarily central to this inquiry, since a person's character is revealed as much (if not more) by how he treats his enemies as it is in his conduct toward his friends. Jesus was clear in teaching how His disciples should treat their enemies. He said that we should love them, bless them, and do good to them, so that we could be as merciful as God is (Luke 6:27-28, 35-36).

Here is a thought experiment: If the Bible said nothing specific about hell's nature and purpose, then, based upon your knowledge of God's character, which of the alternatives available to Him — eternal torment, annihilation, or reconciliation — would you expect for Him to choose for His enemies?

Based upon *your* character, which would you *wish* for Him to choose?

You may think that the Bible gives a clear and consistent picture of hell. If so, you will have occasion to be surprised in considering the biblical evidence in the following pages. I have no intention of telling you which of the alternative views is correct (since I am still waiting for someone who really knows to tell me which is correct!), but I can tell you with certainty that the correct view, if discovered, would tell you more about the nature and character of God than would most other theological inquiries.

In dealing ultimately with His enemies, who hate and curse Him, does God behave otherwise than He has instructed us to do toward ours? Does He have options? Is He forced by factors outside Himself (like human free will) to follow a course of action contrary to His preferences, or has the ultimate means of punishing sinners been deliberately designed to accomplish some inevitable sovereign purpose? If God is purposeful, what purpose does He have in mind? Why is there a hell — and what is actually accomplished there?

Since we are not competent to do so, God has pledged to resolve the perennial problem of sin in the universe — to rectify the results of the fall. Those who, above all things, seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, desire earnestly to see God's final, righteous solution implemented.

The manner in which He plans to do so is what is debated in these pages, and is more than worth the effort to discover. (Taken from *All You Want To Know About Hell* by Steve Gregg Copyright © 2013 by Steve Gregg. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson. [www.thomasnelson.com](http://www.thomasnelson.com). See "All You Want to Know about Hell by Steve Gregg-Book Review" YouTube)

## Love

"...if a community of love is a condition of the highest form of human happiness — if love, and only love, could make life worth living forever — then God must first purge us of all the selfishness and arrogance and lust for power that separates us from others before he can fulfill his own loving purpose for us."

## The Inclusive Nature of Love

"Not only is a disposition to love essential for supreme happiness; it can also be an instrumental evil, making a person more miserable, not less. Indeed, the more one is filled with love for others, the more the unhappiness of others is likely to jeopardize one's own happiness.... If I truly love my own daughter, for example, and love her even as I love myself, then I simply cannot be happy knowing that she is suffering or that she is otherwise miserable — unless, of course, I can somehow believe that, in the end, all will be well for her. But I cannot believe this, if I were to believe instead that she has been lost to me forever — even if I were to believe that, *by her own will*, she has made herself intolerably evil — my own happiness could never be complete, not so long as I continued to love her and to yearn for her redemption. For I would always know what *could* have been, and I would always experience that as a terrible tragedy and inescapable loss, one for which no compensation is even conceivable...."



Given the right circumstances, then, love can render happiness utterly impossible, and herein lies a paradox that the Augustinians would do well to ponder. If two persons are bound together in love, their purposes and interests, even the conditions of their happiness, are so logically intertwined as to be inseparable. That is why Jesus could say, as we saw in chapter 6, "just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40 — RSV); it is also why the letter of 1 John can declare, "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20 — RSV). Jesus' interests are so tightly interwoven with those of his own loved ones that, if we do something to them, it is as if we have done it to him; and God's interests are likewise so tightly interwoven with those of *his* loved ones that, as a matter of logic, we cannot love God *and* at the same time hate those whom God loves. Indeed, if we say that we love God whilst hating some of our brothers and sisters, then we are liars. But the reverse is true as well: just as we cannot love God and hate those whom he loves, neither can God love us and, at the same time, hate those whom we love.

...God cannot love one person unless he loves all other persons as well" (Thomas Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), Cascade Books, 2014. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com)).

## "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25b)

God will do what is right because he loves us. Love will make all things new. <https://jesus-wept.net/love>

But what about what the Bible says about eternal punishment? It might be time to take a closer look. <https://jesus-wept.net/eternal-life>  
<https://hopebeyondhell.net/audiobook/>

If we love our doctrines more than we love truth, how will we ever know if those doctrines are true or not? <https://jesus-wept.net/evangelical-censors>

If you find yourself hoping this is true, *Heaven's Doors* by George Sarris is a good place to begin. Warm, well written, and easy to read (see the reviews on Amazon).