

Confronting Christianity – Part 12

How Could a Loving God Send People to Hell?

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Nov. 20th, 2022

Intro:

- This morning is our last installment of our series, and I hope it has been helpful to you as we have covered some significant ground and important subjects over the last twelve weeks. I am grateful for the work of Dr. Rebecca McLaughlin, who has helped guide us in forming a biblical and Christian response to the "12 hard questions for the world's largest religion" through her book, *Confronting Christianity*. I am glad that so many of you have invested in this resource for yourself and others.
- The question of "how could a loving God send people to hell?" is an important question, and I would venture to say that it is the most important question we have covered so far because it deals with the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and the nature of eternity. These things together drive us into the heart of the Gospel, leading to a choice of placing our trust in Christ. So let's look at these three points together. The first being the divine nature of God.

The divine nature of God

- This question is based upon a faulty and incomplete understanding of love and the nature of God.
- This question assumes that it is unloving of God to hold people accountable for their intentions and actions. I think the exact opposite is true; it is because God loves that He holds people accountable for their intentions and actions. For example, scripture says that "**the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son**" (Heb 12:6 NIV). Because God loves us, He disciplines and punishes us because of our actions and behaviors so that we learn to become and do what is right and good and loving. We see God doing this with His people all throughout scripture, and we see Jesus doing this with His disciples and the church. This is true in our own families. It is because I love my children that I disciplined them to help them shape their minds and character to become what is good and right.
- The next thing to consider when it comes to love is, how loving would it be for God to allow those who have chosen to abuse others to go free? Would this be a loving act to those who have been victimized? Because of love for both the victim and the victimizer, one must be held accountable for their actions. And if someone persists in doing what is wrong and evil, greater and greater punishment will be given. Scripture makes it clear:

Rom 2:6-11 ESV

He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

- This is done out of and because of love, so those who think love means that you don't deal with sin and misbehavior misunderstand the nature of love.
- Stating that "God is love" or "God is loving" is a true statement, and it is important to understand what this means. But when it is given as what God is, it is incomplete and, therefore, inaccurate.

The nature of God is many things, and He is not one thing more than another. On the last page of your notes, there is a list of the many things that are true about God according to scripture. For example, God is a consuming fire, and God is a righteous judge, God is mighty, God is a rock of refuge, God is holy, God is righteous, God is truthful, God is for us, God is faithful, and God is just. He is not one thing more than other things. He is all these things. God is powerful and right and true all at once. He is divine, and He is perfect. To say that God is love in exclusion of all His other attributes is wrong and a misrepresentation of who He is.

- Next, we need to have a biblical understanding of people.

The fallen nature of humanity

- When God created humanity, He called it "very good." We were innocent and free of sin. Because love is not love if it is not chosen, God gave the crown of His creation the choice to love Him by knowing Him, honoring Him, and trusting Him as good and right and worthy of our love.
- We, collectively in Adam and Eve, choose to exchange the truth of God for a lie, and have been put under a curse because of this choice. Then we personally, in turn, make the same choice because of our fallen nature. Paul states it this way:

Rom 1:21-23 ESV

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

- The basis of our sin is that in our futile thinking and with foolish hearts, we exchange the glory of God for something else. We would rather have something else other than God. We value other things more than God and "exchange" Him for something else. This is why Jesus exclaimed that if you love anything more than Him, you are not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37-38). We have all fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and no one is righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10-18). Jesus said that "no one is good, except God alone" (Luke 10:18).
- Those who ask the question, "how could a loving God send people to hell" have an overinflated opinion of humanity's righteousness and goodness. The better question is, "how could a holy God admit anyone into heaven?" And to this question, Jesus responds, "I am the way" (John 14:6).

2 Cor 5:21 NIV

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Rom 5:8 HCSB

But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!

- God displayed His great love for us by taking the punishment of our sins on Himself so that we would become the righteousness of God. Those who put their faith in Him will receive eternal

life. If we are in Him, we have life, and outside of Him, there is no life, only the pending judgment to come.

The assured nature of eternity

- Here is what scriptures reveal about what happens after you die.

Heb 9:27-28 ESV

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

2 Cor 5:10 ESV

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

- This is the reality of what is going to happen. There is no getting around it, and there is no misrepresentation of the truth or corruption in the judge. *That day matters more than every day, and every day matters on that day.* Martin Luther, the great church reformer, lived his life in light of this reality. He said, "**There are only two days on my calendar: Today and that Day**" (Woodrow Kroll, *Facing your final job review* p. 61).
- Jesus talked more about both heaven and hell than any other person in the Bible. He described both heaven and hell as a place. Jesus said that He came from heaven (John 3:13), and to heaven He ascended. He will return from heaven to save those eagerly waiting for him (Acts 1:11, Heb. 9:28, John 14:3). Whoever believes in Him, will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). And for those who exchange the glory of God for something else, those who refuse to repent of their sins and deliberately keep on sinning, all that is left is a "fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" of God (Heb 10:27 ESV).

John 3:36 ESV

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Conclusion

- Take time to consider right now, in light of what has been presented today, to evaluate your life and your heart. If you are in Christ, rejoice in what He has done for you and give Him praise and glory as you continue to live in Him and for Him as your highest treasure.
- If you have not given your life to Christ, you are still in your sin. Give your heart to Christ today and receive the newness of life and life eternal.
- Prayer and transition to communion

GOD IS:

- God is a witness (Gen 31:50 NIV)
- God is near us whenever we pray to Him (Deut 4:7 NIV)
- God is a consuming fire, a jealous God (Deut 4:24 NIV)
- God is a merciful God (Deut 4:31 NIV)
- God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands (Deut 7:9-10 NIV)
- God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing (Deut 10:17-19 NIV)
- God is God in heaven above and on the earth below (Josh 2:11 NIV)
- God is among you (Josh 3:10 NIV)
- God is with you (1 Sam 10:7 NIV)
- God is greater than all other gods (2 Chron 2:5 NIV)
- God is gracious and compassionate (2 Chron 30:9 NIV)
- God is greater than man (Job 33:12 NIV)
- God is mighty (Job 36:5 NIV)
- God is exalted in his power (Job 36:22 NIV)
- God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day (Ps 7:11 NIV)
- God is present in the company of the righteous (Ps 14:5 NIV)
- God is my rock, in whom I take refuge (Ps 18:2 NIV)
- God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Ps 46:1 NIV)
- God is the King of all the earth (Ps 47:7 NIV)
- God is seated on His holy throne. God reigns over the nations (Ps 47:8 NIV)
- God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end (Ps 48:14 NIV)
- God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me (Ps 54:4 NIV)
- God is for me (Ps 56:9 NIV)
- God is our refuge (Ps 62:8 NIV)
- God is a God who saves (Ps 68:20 NIV)
- God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. (Ps 73:1 NIV)
- God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Ps 73:26 NIV)
- God is known (Ps 76:1 NIV)
- God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless (Ps 84:11 NIV)
- God is greatly feared; He is more awesome than all who surround Him. O Lord God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you (Ps 89:7-8 NIV)
- God is holy (Ps 99:9 NIV)
- God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him (Ps 115:3 NIV)
- God is full of compassion (Ps 116:5 NIV)
- God is with us (Isa 8:10 NIV)
- God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid (Isa 12:2 NIV)
- God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god (Isa 45:14 NIV)
- God is the salvation of Israel (Jer 3:23 NIV)
- God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries (Dan 2:47 NIV)
- God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone He wishes (Dan 5:21 NIV)
- God is merciful and forgiving (Dan 9:9 NIV)
- God is righteous in everything He does (Dan 9:14 NIV)
- God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing (Zeph 3:17 NIV)
- God is one and there is no other but Him (Mark 12:32 NIV)
- God is truthful (John 3:33 NIV)
- God is for us (Rom 8:32 NIV)
- God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (1 Cor 1:25 NIV)
- God is faithful (1 Cor 10:13 NIV)
- God is not a God of disorder but of peace (1 Cor 14:33 NIV)
- God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Cor 9:8 NIV)
- God is one (Gal 3:20 NIV)
- God is our witness (1 Thess 2:5 NIV)
- God is just (2 Thess 1:6 NIV)
- God is the builder of everything (Heb 3:4 NIV)
- God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them (Heb 6:10 NIV)
- God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29 NIV)
- God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5 NIV)
- God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything (1 John 3:20 NIV)
- God is love (1 John 4:8 NIV)

