

B A D I D E A S

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS TO KNOWING GOD

BAD IDEA #4: God Tortures People Forever (Part 2)

APPETIZER: Anticipating Some Big Buts...

Matthew 13:49-50; Psalm 112:10; Luke 6:36

- But I used to be certain, and now I'm less certain!
- But THAT view is not Christian!
God forbid that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depth of the Divine mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future.
~ Martin Luther (Letters to Hanseu Von Rechenberg, 1522)
- But without hell, why would anyone be motivated to follow Jesus today?
- But I don't want to go down the slippery slide toward liberalism!
- But preachers just aren't preaching enough about hell these days!

DINE IN: The 'Less Torturey' Views

Psalm 37; Revelation 21

ETERNAL TORTURE (Traditionalism / Classical View)

- Key Word: *PUNISH*. An eternal life of loss.
- We are a rock in the fire – enduring, but with feelings!
- Held by Tertullian, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, John Piper, Tim Keller, Francis Chan, and most Protestants and Catholics today.

1. ETERNAL END (Annihilationism / Conditionalism)

- Key Word: *PERISH*. An eternal loss of life.
- We are paper in the fire – won't last long!
- Held by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, NT Wright, John Stott, Greg Boyd, Edward Fudge, FF Bruce (in hope), Ben Witherington III, Clark Pinnock, Michael Green, John Stackhouse.

2. ETERNAL OPPORTUNITY (Universalism / Restorationism)

- Key Word: *PURIFY*. An eternal offer of life.
- We are a surgical scissors in the fire – decontamination!
- Held by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory Nazianzus (bishop who presided over the first council of Constantinople, where they ratified and confirmed the Nicene Creed), Rob Bell, Jacques Ellul, Hannah Whitall Smith, George MacDonald, Brad Jersak, William Paul Young, Karl Barth (in hope).

The best support for CONDITIONALISM...

1. Only God is inherently immortal (1 Timothy 6:15-16).
2. Our existence is conditional upon God's sustaining power (Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17).
3. Hell is a time of temporary punishment, followed by nonexistence.

Psalm 37; Isaiah 1:28, 30-31; Obadiah 1:16; Matthew 7:13-14; 10:28; 16:25-26; John 3:16; 10:28; 17:3; Romans 6:23; 9:22; 1 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 6:8; Philippians 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Hebrews 10:39; 12:29; James 4:12; 2 Peter 2:6, 9; 3:7-12; 1 John 5:12

The best support for RESTORATIONISM...

1. God desires to save all people.
2. God has the power to accomplish what he desires.
3. Therefore, all people will one day be saved

2 Samuel 14:14; Psalm 22:27, 29; Lamentations 3:31-33; Isaiah 45:22-23; Matthew 18:34-35; John 1:9, 29; 6:51; 12:32, 47; Acts 3:21; Romans 5:18; 11:32; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 15:22, 28; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:9-10, 23; 3:20; Philippians 2:9-11; 3:21; Colossians 1:16, 19-20; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:13; 21:4-5

Q: Why hasn't God been more clear about hell?! John 21:20-23

TAKE OUT: His Love Endures Forever

Q: Why would I worship a God who tortures people forever?

- **A1:** You shouldn't. And he doesn't. Here's what I've learned from Jesus...
- **A2:** You and I completely agree about your eternal destiny. You will cease to exist. But Jesus says there is a better way...
- **A3:** Where did you hear that idea? Not from Jesus! Here's what I'm learning from Jesus...
- **A4:** No one will be in hell who doesn't want to be. Where do you want to be?...

Psalm 136

For more on this topic...

- Sermons: *We Believe*, part 9; *Beyond the Grave*, part 3.
- Book: *All You Want To Know About Hell*, by Steve Gregg
- Movie: *Hellbound?*

NEXT WEEK: Special Guest Andy Bannister!

BAD IDEA #5: All Religions Are Basically The Same

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. After reviewing Sunday's message, talk about something you learned or any questions that remain. Take your time with this – there's lots to cover!

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE! DO EITHER QUESTION #2 OR #3...

2. Read **Revelation 21:1-10, 22-27**.
 - a. What verse or idea stands out to you the most?
 - b. Back up a bit! How would each school of thought about hell interpret 20:10-15?
 - c. What do you think "everything" is referring to in verse 5?
 - d. How would each view interpret verse 8?
 - e. How would you explain the gospel to a non-Christian using verse 22?
 - f. How does the invitation for the kings of the earth to enter the New Jerusalem in verses 24-26 support the Restorationist view? (For context, see 17:2; 18:9; 19:9.)
 - g. How does verse 27 support the non-restorationist views?
 - h. See 22:17. Who do you think the Spirit and the Bride are calling out to?
3. Read **Psalms 37**.
 - a. What verse or idea stands out to you the most?
 - b. Assignment: Walk through the chapter again and this time circle, underline, highlight, or write down every reference to the end of the wicked. How might each school of thought interpret this data?
 - c. What people or scenarios make it hardest for you to follow David's instruction in verse 1?
 - d. How have you experienced the reality described in verse 4?
 - e. Review verses 7-8. Why should we refrain from anger? Isn't anger a good, even necessary, motivation to work for justice and to fight against evil?
 - f. What in the world is going on in verse 25? Haven't we seen a lot of righteous people throughout history suffering and even dying for their faith? What are some other possible meanings of this passage? (See John 6:35, Matthew 4:4, 13:33; 26:26; 1 Corinthians 10:17).
 - g. What does God promise for the righteous? Go through the passage again and meditate on how this is fulfilled in the eternal life we receive through Jesus, which starts now. After quietly meditating on these truths, share your thoughts with one another.
4. Here's a question from last week. Has your answer changed at all?... How would you respond to someone who said, "How can you believe in a God who sets up a universe that ends with countless numbers of people being tortured forever?"

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

5. Use your Huddle Handout Questions and pray for one another.

Quotes

Welcome back to our series about common bad ideas that interfere with people knowing God.

Today we tackle one of the most powerful bad ideas that prevent people from knowing the God revealed by Jesus:
God Tortures People Forever (Part 2)

I can conceive of no more powerful and irrefutable argument in favour of atheism than the eternal torments of hell.
~ Nicholas Berdyaev (Russian Theologian)

There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.
~ Bertrand Russell (Atheist Philosopher)

I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.
~ Charles Darwin

Unending torment speaks to me of sadism, not justice.
~ John Wenham (Anglican Scholar)

Emotionally, I find the concept of eternal torment intolerable, and do not understand how people can live with it without cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.
~ John R.W. Stott (Christian Theologian)

If anyone ends up permanently in hell, it will not only be that person but God and anyone else who loved that person who will also suffer for eternity.
~ Steve Gregg (Christian Theologian)

The objections to the traditional view of the nature of hell are so strong and its supports so weak that it is likely soon to be replaced with something else.
~ Clark Pinnock (Christian Theologian)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
~ Jesus