

General Topics :: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell?**Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell? - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/3/23 12:17**

By Steve Gregg

From today's inbox:

Why does God send unbelievers to Hell?

Mr. Gregg.

My grandson asked me a question that stunned me, and I didn't know how to answer it. He's only 10 years old. He said to me, "Why would God send people to hell just because they don't believe in him? Isn't that unfair? I don't know how to answer him can you please help me with this. thank you.

Joe

Hi Joe,

Thanks for writing. I don't know how precocious your grandson may be at age 10, or at what maturity level one may need to explain things to him. Therefore, this answer is given in words for you to understand. Once you grasp the concept, you can find the words to communicate it at your grandson's level.

The question is mistakenly framed as if everybody is safely and legitimately minding their own business. God, like some kind of bully, is depicted as imposing some unreasonable and arbitrary demand upon them, with the threat that if they do not comply, He will torture them. This scenario would indeed be objectionable to reasonable people of any age. However, though most people mistakenly see the situation this way, the facts are just the reverse.

It isn't that God sends people to hell unless they believe. People take the path toward hell voluntarily from an early age. They don't know that it is the path to hell, but that is the destination to which the path of selfishness and sin leads. It is the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt.7:13). Humans are not immortal. By nature, they eventually die. Eternal life is not a natural endowment or characteristic of human beings. Such Life does not exist apart from Jesus: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12).

Ultimate Death (or hell) is alienation from God, who is the only source of Life. All people live their lives either approaching God or walking in the opposite away from Him. The further they get from God, the closer they get to ultimate Death. This is not God's doing, but the choice they are permitted to make.

God seeks to interrupt their journey and to persuade them to leave that lethal path and to follow Him on the path that leads to eternal life. If they refuse to leave the path they are on, they eventually reach its natural destination, despite God's attempts to rescue them. He will not force them against their will to take the right path.

It is as if a ship is sinking and all the passengers will drown unless they get into the alternative ship that Jesus provides. It is big enough to accommodate everybody, but it is not going to their original destination. It is a ship on its way to battle, and those who board it will survive, but must also join its mission. The rescue ship does not have all the comforts, diversions, and entertainment that the first ship provided and it has certain reasonable rules for its passengers, with which some of the doomed passengers do not wish to comply. Their old ship is sinking, but while it is afloat, they can be their own bosses, and they don't want to trust or submit to the captain of the rescue vessel. It is not God who wrecked their ship, and does not send them to their doom. Rather, He desires all to be saved. He warns of the danger they are in, and offers salvation to all, but does not force anyone's decision.

Blessings!

General Topics :: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell?

Steve

Re: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell? - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/3/24 17:19

Everyone gets eternal life according to the Bible . The Bible makes it clear that there is a resurrection of both the just and the unjust--Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29, and Revelation 20 are some good verses on that topic.

I could be wrong, but it seems from the language and way in which this Steve Gregg guy is speaking, he is an annihilationist, which is not/ a biblical position.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/3/24 18:44

Only believers have eternal life.

You are talking about immortality which is different.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/3/24 19:20

Yes, you are correct. That was my mistake. Eternal Life and the immortality of the flesh are not the same concept and I interchanged them without thinking about what I was saying. Regardless, a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous is correct.

Either way, Steve Gregg is using some funny language in his article regarding the topic. After about 30 seconds of research (I read his bio on his website), he does indeed shy away from the traditional view of hell as the weakest possible position. I find it very interesting that his indecision on the doctrine of hell is a major part of his bio!

So, while not an annihilationist, per se, he does hold that position as more probable than eternal conscious torment, and it shows in his response to this person.

Feel free to check out his website at www.thenarrowpath.com

I am not advertising for him (cause I don't know what the dude believes in full), but I am posting it so anyone can verify the things I am saying.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/3/24 20:00

I have listened to many many hours of his teaching through the Bible so I have no need to visit his website.

He has written a book that lays out the strengths and weaknesses of the three primary views of hell and he does not endorse any of them. It is true that he thinks the case for the traditional view has many problems, and I certainly agree with him.

But that has nothing to do with the OP.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/3/24 20:09

TMK,

I assumed that others would be reading this thread. I posted that stuff for anyone to verify what I was saying about a person that none of us know personally.

It does have to do with the OP because I immediately read it and picked up on it without knowing anything else about Steve Gregg. The very language he uses shows that he has an odd view on hell.

It is okay if you don't want to discuss it though :). I was just commenting on what I read. Thanks!

General Topics :: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/3/25 8:20

I don't have a problem discussing it at all. I assume you are referring to his term "ultimate Death." I think he is contrasting it with eternal life and the Bible uses similar language.

Just to reiterate, I have heard and read Steve Gregg's position many times. He believes there is a better biblical case for some positions (be it hell, Calvinism/Arminianism) but rarely does he blatantly say what his position is. This is because he views his mission as a Bible teacher, not someone who makes take it or leave it assertions.

It is certainly possible to strongly hold a certain view, but be man enough to admit you might be wrong, whether it is one's view on hell, eschatology or the Calvinism debate- or any of a number of doctrinal issues.

ADD: this last paragraph was not directed to you personally Havok- just a general statement.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/3/25 19:04

The "ultimate death" was certainly a factor, but it is the entirety of his response that made me go, "huh? I wonder if this guy is an annihilationist." Of course, had he been saying that to me personally, that would have been my immediate follow-up question. And of course, he would have said whatever he is accustomed to saying about it.

I am very, very analytical when it comes to words, facial expressions, etc. Sometimes it gets me into trouble, but most of the time, it has served me well. In the context of Christianity, I have been able to peg people's doctrinal beliefs pretty quickly. I thank God for that ability, because it has allowed me to protect the church in which I serve and disciple the men with whom God has placed me.

I have definitely moved theological positions over the course of my life as a believer, and I have no problem admitting when I am wrong (eventually, because sometimes it takes a while for me to think and search through an issue). The issue of hell, for me, is settled. I can't even see how the other beliefs could be a possibility without abandoning a simple hermeneutic.

Re: auto-bio - posted by savannah, on: 2022/3/25 20:12

havok20x,

You called it right!

Steve Gregg from his autobiography;

"I have not yet come to the place where I can embrace "Open Theism," though I have unashamedly softened in my opposition to it. Way back in 1980, I publicly debated the issue of God's foreknowledge against a man who held to what was then called Moral Government Theology (now called "Openness" or "Open Theism"). When I first heard it, it seemed to me that this view was an assault on the nature of God Himself (some opponents of Openness still seem to think this to be the case). More recently, having read the views of more gracious (and more intelligent) Openness advocates, I now understand that the view does not posit any departure from orthodoxy in terms of God's omniscience. Rather, it merely asserts an alternative philosophical understanding of time and the future's subjects upon which orthodoxy need not take sides. Openness thinks that future, undetermined choices of morally-free agents belong in the category of those things which do not (yet) exist. If they do not exist, then they do not exist to be known. Therefore, they cannot be known, even by a Being who knows everything there is to know. God does not know them, just as He does not know of any Martian cyclopes. Since they don't exist, He cannot know them. This suggests no deficiency in God's omniscience. It is simply a different philosophical approach to the nature of time and the future. Most other Christians seem to think of the future as an existing component of an eternity, every part of which is visible to God's omniscience though this is just another philosophical position, not addressed in scripture.

My most recent theological shift seems to be concerning the nature and purpose of "hell." As long ago as the late eighties, I became aware that two of my most-admired evangelical leaders, John R.W. Stott and Clark Pinnock, had taken the surprising position that hell is a place of annihilation, not eternal torment. I could not immediately accept this (being fundamentally conservative by temperament), but it lodged in my mind. Somewhere along the way, I also heard that cert

General Topics :: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell?

ain evangelical Christians, like Hannah Whitall Smith and George MacDonald, were Christian Universalists. This bothered me, somewhat, but I had become much more open-minded to letting others reach their own conclusions, by now, and was not as greatly alarmed as I would have been a decade earlier.

It still seemed to me, however, that the safest position to take is the traditional view of a hell of eternal torment (might as well prepare people for the worst possibility!). I found it fairly easy to remain dispassionate on the subject while presenting all three options to callers on my radio program, but I still felt that the evidence for the three views was about equally distributed, allowing me to retain my default position (the traditional view) in good conscience. In the last few years, however, I have become less and less impressed with the nature of the biblical evidence for the traditional view, and more concerned about its implications with reference to the character of God. Today, I have been thoroughly moved from my former confidence in the view of endless torment. I am currently in the process of deciding between the two options—both of which seem to be superior, in terms of biblical evidence, to the traditional view, though neither provides a thorough refutation of the other."

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2022/3/25 20:25

//I can't even see how the other beliefs could be a possibility without abandoning a simple hermeneutic.//

Then you do not (or don't want to) understand the hermeneutics. If you did, you would not be so certain.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2022/3/26 0:10

Actually, I do (and do want to) understand the hermeneutics of those with opposing theological positions. I am not uneducated (not that you were suggesting I was!). These are things I have studied for much of my Christian life. There are many things on which I am uncertain. This is not one of them.

Re: Why Does God Send Unbelievers to Hell? - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2022/3/27 15:38

Quote:

-----Ultimate Death (or hell) is alienation from God, who is the only source of Life.

This is true. When a person goes through his/her life rejecting the call of God, then, in an ironic twist of fate, God will give them what they wanted their whole life.

They will be separated from Him for ever, they will only have themselves and they will live in a world of people who only have themselves. We've seen a small glimpse of such a place in two world wars.

In the light of this we cannot talk about hell lightly, but we should tremble and have tears over this matter.