

Apologetics 101

The Problem of Evil, Suffering & Hell Week 8

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1

Class Objectives

After completing this class, you will understand:

- key preliminaries for approaching the Problem of Evil, Suffering & Hell (PoESH)
- theological points as to why God allows suffering
- the origin, sources, and types of evil
- how to respond to the Intellectual PoE in its *logical* and *evidential* form
- what can be Scripturally affirmed and considered pertaining to the nature of Hell

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Preliminaries

Never Consider Problems Such as the Unevangelized, Evil, Suffering, and Hell in a Vacuum

- These topics may be difficult, but remember, we have spent the last few weeks crafting a powerful cumulative case for Christianity. *It is important to consider the full scope of evidence for Christianity when addressing these topics:*
 - the unviability of atheism (*no objective moral values and duties, no hope, justice, knowledge, or free will*)
 - evidence for a Personal Creator (*Cosmological, Fine-Tuning, & Moral Arguments*)
 - the compatibility of Christianity & science (*various orthodox views on Creation account, Christianity provides foundation for science*)
 - the reliability of Scripture (*bibliographic, internal & external evidence tests, archaeological record, scribes*)
 - the historical evidence for the resurrection (*Jesus' death by crucifixion, the empty tomb, transformation of disciples, etc.*)
- You've worked hard on this journey! Leverage what you've learned! 😊***
- Not only is there a compelling case for Christianity from one's personal experience and testimony, there is also a compelling case for it from an intellectual standpoint!
- The main idea is that we have an abundance of compelling reasons, or a **cumulative case**, to believe in the God of Scripture, both personally and intellectually. ***Therefore, we can trust that God's answers to such matters, even if unknown to us, are ultimately moral and just!***

3

Preliminaries

Some Degree of Mystery Doesn't Discount What we KNOW to be TRUE!!

Consider John 6

29: Jesus answered, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

35: Then Jesus declared, *"I am the bread of life."*

53: Jesus said to them, *"I tell you the truth, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood..."*

60: On hearing this, many of his disciples said, *"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it."*

66: From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

67: *"You do not want leave too, do you?"* Jesus asked the Twelve.

68: Simon Peter answered him, *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'*

Clear truth isn't negated by small levels of uncertainty

Remember: *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."* -Deu 29:29 NIV

Our faith in Christ CANNOT be a house of cards! We should strive to develop a robust web (or structure) of beliefs for it. When these individual parts come together into a complete whole, they take on structural strength!

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Preliminaries

The Parable of the Sower

“¹⁸Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²²The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” Mat 13:18-23 NIV

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Preliminaries

Emotional Problem of Evil

Christianity Immensely Equips People to Endure Suffering

- *“God is not a distant Creator or impersonal ground of being, but a loving Father who shares our sufferings and hurts with us. . . . Paradoxically, then, even though the problem of suffering is the greatest objection to the existence of God, at the end of the day God is the only solution to the problem of suffering. If God does not exist then we are locked without hope in a world filled with pointless and unredeemed suffering.” – Craig 170,173*
- When one is in the throes of suffering, it can seem God is distant or must not exist. Perhaps he might ask: Why has God allowed this to happen? Does he see or know my situation and suffering? Does he care about my pain, or is he occupied with something else? Is he totally absent (this was certainly the case for Job)?
- Scripture states God is always near, even in the midst of profound suffering. It affirms God is near to the brokenhearted (Psa 34:18), and at hand (Phi 4:5). It also affirms he is a refuge, strength, and very present help in trouble (Psa 46:1), and that he never leaves nor forsakes his followers (Heb 13:5).
- Scripture also states God is compassionate and empathizes with humans. They can approach Him with confidence when they are in need, knowing He can empathize with their weaknesses (Heb 4:14-16). Consider the account of the death of Lazarus, where Jesus weeps while being deeply moved by Mary’s mourning of the death of her brother (Joh 11:35).
- Consider also Jesus’ response to the weeping widow he encountered while entering the town of Nain in Luke 7. Here the widow’s only son, who had presumably just died, was being carried out of the town. It is told Jesus had compassion on her, encouraged her not to weep, and raised her son back to life (Luk 7:11-15).

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

Why doesn't God just eradicate all evil and wrongdoing, and destroy at once all that opposes Him?

1. He is a **Loving** God.

1 John 4:8-10 ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Sometimes 'suffering' forces people to reach the end of themselves and look to God for help.

2. He is a **Patient** God.

2 Peter 3:9 "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

1 Tim. 1:16 "Christ Jesus might display his **unlimited patience** as an example for those who would believe and him and receive eternal life."

** The goal of His **Love** and **Patience** is to see more of His lost children, who may be responsible for the pain and suffering in our own lives and in this world, restored to fellowship with Him.

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

Why doesn't God just eradicate all evil and wrongdoing, and destroy at once all that opposes Him?

3. Sometimes it may be His **will** for us to suffer.

1 Peter 4:19 "So then, those who suffer **according to God's will** should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

4. To **build** and to **prove** the quality of our faith.

1 Peter 1:6-7 ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that **your faith**—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—**may be proved genuine** and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

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5. To produce perseverance.
6. To build character.
7. To inspire hope.

Romans 5:1-5 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also *rejoice in our sufferings*, because we know that suffering produces *perseverance*; perseverance, *character*; and character, *hope*. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

Why doesn't God just eradicate all evil and wrongdoing, and destroy at once all that opposes Him?

8. To discipline His children.

Hebrews 12:5-11 “My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” **Endure hardship as discipline**; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.”

“Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that *we may share in his holiness*. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, *but painful*. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

Why doesn't God just eradicate all evil and wrongdoing, and destroy at once all that opposes Him?

Reasons why God may Discipline His Children:

- Discipline is for correction – to turn us from sin or disobedience.
- Discipline is for training – to teach us to live a righteous life.
- Discipline is for restoration – to restore us to right standing with our Father.

9. To create opportunities to display his Power.

John 9:1-5 “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*” ⁴As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Note: Here we have an indication that suffering is not necessarily due to God's punishment for sin

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Why Would God Allow Evil and Suffering?

A Further Point to Consider

God can be glorified through suffering such that humans experience his goodness in ways they might not have otherwise, and are hence drawn closer to Him

- Psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl suggests it is not merely pleasure that drives humans, but rather the pursuit of what is meaningful. *He indicates that one of the ways humans experience profound meaning is by using their inner freedom to choose to act nobly, even in immense suffering:*
“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. . . . Dostoevski said once, “There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings.” . . . It can be said that they were worthy of their sufferings: the way they bore their suffering was a genuine inner achievement. It is this spiritual freedom—which cannot be taken away—that makes life meaningful and purposeful.”¹
- The actions of such men, particularly amid their profound suffering, deeply move the human heart and serve as a glimpse of the goodness of God. Additionally, through such acts, these men surely experience an inner gratification of the soul that far surpasses many other shallow and fleeting pleasures. *In these ways we see how God is glorified in suffering such that people experience his goodness and are drawn to him.*

1. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), 65-67.

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The Origin, Sources, & Types of Evil

Three Types of Evil – Recall our talk from last week on ‘What went wrong?’

The existence of any non-perfect circumstances is the outcome of God having endowed his creatures with the freedom to choose their own path. Free moral agents. Moral autonomy.

- **Spiritual Evil** – evil caused by the opponents of God (starting with Satan) and of all things good. Mainly evil by demonic forces and Satan.
- **Natural Evil** – evil brought on by natural causes in the world, such as floods, earthquakes or tornadoes, and different sorts of diseases, accidents, and injuries
 - Evil is a general term. Perhaps more appropriately it could be called misfortune?
- **Moral Evil** – man’s own inhumanity, harm and evil towards other man
 - Usually based on hate, greed, overindulgence...

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The Origin, Sources, & Types of Evil

Spiritual Evil: Satan & Dark Spiritual Forces

Isaiah 14:12-14

“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”

Concerning Satan, Scripture ascribes to him the following:

- **Tempter** – Matt. 4:1-3
- **Angel of Light** – 2 Cor. 11:14
- **Schemer** – Eph. 6:11
- **Accuser of the Brethren** – Rev. 12:10
- **Adversary** – 1 Peter 5:8

It is therefore obvious that Satan is a source of many of the great difficulties and trials that we face in this life. His total aim is to *deceive* and to *destroy*.

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The Origin, Sources, & Types of Evil

Natural Evil: The Curse of Sin

Gen. 3:17-18

“To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”

Romans 8:20-24

“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope *that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay* and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.”

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The Origin, Sources, & Types of Evil

Moral Evil: The Heart of Man

We must be reminded that **MOST** of the non-perfect circumstances in our lives are the result of other free moral agents exercising their God-given free moral agency.

Jeremiah 17:9	“The heart (of man) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (NKJV)
James 1:14	“but each one is tempted when, by <i>his own evil desire</i> , he is dragged away and enticed.”
Matthew 15:19	“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”
Romans 3:10, 23	“There is no one righteous, not even one.” “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

“The vast majority of human evil and suffering is a direct result of human irresponsibility.” - Cliffe Knechtle, *Give Me an Answer*

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Intellectual Problem of Evil

Logical Problem of Evil (LPoE)

Video: Craig: Evidential Problem of Evil (Part 1)³ (4:47)

LPoE: it is *logically impossible* for an omnipotent (*all-powerful*), omniscience (*all-knowing*), and omnibenevolent (*all-good*) God to exist given the evil and suffering in the world

*“Is he (God) willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”*¹ -David Hume (*famous 18th century skeptic philosopher*)

- *This statement assumes the truthfulness of two hidden premises, which must be exposed:*²

HP1: if God were omnipotent, *he could* eliminate all evil in the world, and

HP2: if God were omnibenevolent, *he would* eliminate all evil in the world

To rebut the LPoE, one must simply demonstrate that it is merely possible one of these hidden premises is false!

- Alvin Plantinga: if it is *even possible* humans have free will (FW), neither of these hidden premises are necessarily true!
 1. if humans have FW, the actual world that unfolds would be contingent upon their free actions such that God, despite his omnipotence, per the laws of logic, could not create any world he desired
 2. it might be that human FW, which implies the occurrence of moral evils, is a required feature of an overall good world, or the best feasible world, such that God has a morally sufficient reason for allowing moral evils. In other words, it is possible that God, despite his omnibenevolence, would not want to eliminate all moral evils, since doing so would prohibit him from creating an overall good world, or the best feasible world

1. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), part 10, p. 198 quoted in Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 542.

2. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 541-543.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil

Logical Problem of Evil (LPoE)

A World with Human Free Will is Better than a World Without it

- If humans did not have FW they could not freely engage in authentic loving relationships (of any type) with each other, and more importantly, their Creator.

This is the most existentially satisfying thing humans can do!

Without FW humans would be biological robots robbed of the experience of love.

- Augustine was convinced a world with free creatures was far better than one without them. He writes:
 - *“such is the generosity of God’s goodness that He has not refrained from creating even that creature which he foreknew would not only sin, but remain in the will to sin. As a runaway horse is better than a stone which does not run away because it lacks self-movement and sense perception, so the creature is more excellent which sins by free will than that which does not sin only because it has no free will.”*¹ -Augustine

1. *The Problem of Free Choice*, Vol. 22 of *Ancient Christian Writers* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1955), bk. 2, pp. 14-15 quoted in Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 27.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil Evidential Problem of Evil (EPoE)

EPoE: it is *improbable* that an omnipotent (*all-powerful*), omniscience (*all-knowing*), and omnibenevolent (*all-good*) God exists given the quantity of, intensity of, and seemingly gratuitous nature often evident in the evil and suffering in the world

P1: *“There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse*

P2: *An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse*

C: *There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being*¹ -William Rowe (20th Century Philosopher of Religion)

- Most theists would agree with P2 above, so the crux of the issue is P1:

*“The key to the evidential argument is the atheist’s claim that God doesn’t have good reasons for permitting the suffering that occurs. . . . we all recognize that much of the suffering in the world looks unjustified. . . . The success of the atheist’s argument will depend on whether we’re warranted in inferring that because the suffering looks unjustified it really is unjustified.”*² -Craig

1. William Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (October 1979): p. 336, quoted in Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 217-218
2. Craig, *On Guard*, 158.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil Evidential Problem of Evil (EPoE)

Responses to the EPoE: 1. Human Limitations

- *“We’re not in a position to say that it’s improbable that God has good reasons for permitting the suffering in the world.”*¹ –Craig

-In other words, we do not have the right to assert that some suffering is pointless. God has more wisdom, knowledge, and understanding than finite humans confined to a limited scope of time in history. *Consequently, the greater good behind certain evils may not be discernable to humans such that they could know it*
**in academia, this would be Stephen Wykstra’s CORNEA principle (Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access)*

–“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” –Isa 55:8-9 NIV

- (ILL – Alvin Plantinga’s “no-see-ums”)
*“If you look into your pup tent for a St. Bernard, and you don’t see one, it is reasonable to assume that there is no St. Bernard in your tent. But if you look into your pup tent for a “no-see-um” (an extremely small insect with a bite out of all proportion to its size) and you don’t see any, it is not reasonable to assume they aren’t there. Because, after all, no one can see ‘em. Many assume that if there were good reasons for the existence of evil, they would be accessible to our minds, more like St. Bernards than like no-see-ums, but why should that be the case?”*²

1. Craig, *On Guard*, 158.
2. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 466-67 quoted in Keller, *The Reason for God*, 24.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil Evidential Problem of Evil (EPoE)

Responses to the EPoE: 2. Full Scope of Evidence

- Recall: never look at the PoE in a vacuum! It should be considered among the backdrop of the full scope of evidence. What might this look like applied? Suppose someone made the following argument against the existence of God due to the problem of the unevangelized, as worded by Groothuis:¹
 1. If Christianity is true, then those who have not had the opportunity to respond to God's saving revelation (either during the old covenant or during the new covenant) cannot be redeemed.
 2. It would ill befit a God of love and justice to punish people so severely for what they could not have known.
 3. Therefore, Christianity is not true, since it teaches that (a) God is loving and just, and that (b) most people are damned.
- Without even addressing the problem of the unevangelized, *one can respond to this argument by flipping it on its head*
 1. If there is good reason to believe that Christianity is true (considering the cumulative case argument here and elsewhere), then *however* God relates to his creatures who did not have access to covenantal revelation, God will demonstrate his just, holy and loving character.
 2. There is good reason to believe that Christianity is true given the manifold evidence in its favor.
 3. Therefore, the fate of those outside of the covenantal revelation is in the hands of a just and loving God, however God works this out.
- *This approach of leveraging the cumulative case for Christianity serves, at minimum, as an excellent starting point for answering the questions of the unevangelized, evil, suffering, and Hell*

1. This argument is shown in the exact wording of Groothuis in Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 586.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil Evidential Problem of Evil (EPoE)

Responses to the EPoE: 3. Suffering actually Makes More Sense Under Christianity

1. The problem of evil and suffering actually points to the existence of God!
 - Recall from Week 2: *if God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist* (there is no right or wrong, and no good or bad). *If that is true, the problem of evil collapses on itself*, since it invokes values morality which are entirely subjective
2. The number one purpose of life is not happiness, but knowledge of God. Such a purpose has eternal implications far beyond the scope of this life!¹
 - *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*
—Rom 8:18 NIV
3. Recall: Christianity immensely equips people to explain and endure suffering
 - Though the evil and suffering in the world is certainly a difficult question for Christianity, it is an even more difficult question if God does not exist

1. Craig, *On Guard*, 163.

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Intellectual Problem of Evil

Difficult Questions

Why doesn't God intervene more to stop the evil in the world?

- Quantifying the amount of, or intensity of suffering in the world is not as straightforward as it may seem.
 - there is a thread throughout Scripture where God intervenes in the world in unseen ways to suppress evil. One example of this is found in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians where he states the time has not yet come for the man of lawlessness to arrive, because God is restraining Him (2 The 2:3-9)¹
The point here is that it may be that the world is in a fairly orderly and peaceful state, relatively speaking, compared to what it could be if God were not intervening in hidden spiritual ways
- This notion resides in the doctrine of Common Grace, which is, *"the grace of God by which he gives people immeasurable blessings that are not part of salvation."*²
 - In other words, from the earth bearing crops for food and rain for water (rather than being totally barren), to humans possessing an innate moral law and intellect which allows them to understand the world and employ science, any good thing is a gift of God's common grace to all humans, for a time, whether they revere him or not.
 - If it were not for God's common grace, the world as it is now may be far better than many might believe.³
The implication then, is what seems to be abundant and miserable suffering to many, might be, relatively speaking, quite minimal.
- **CRAIG VIDEO #2**

1. Edward Martin, "William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil and Suffering – Analysis, Critique" (lecture, APOL 620 Module 6, Liberty University, 10/12/2020)
 2. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 657.
 3. *Ibid.*, 658-660.

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Hell

Sheol, Hades, Paradise, Abraham's Bosom, Hell, Lake of Fire, Gehenna?¹

Sheol: OT Hebrew word for the grave, or realm of the dead

Hades: NT Greek word for *sheol*. The temporary, intermediate place of punishment for the souls of the dead who have rejected God. Hades will eventually be thrown into the *Lake of Fire*: *"death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."* -Rev 20:13-15 NIV (**SK Illustrate - Luk 16:19-31; Rev. 21:7-15**)

Note: the terms used synonymously indicating the *opposite* intermediate location of hades would be *Paradise* (Luk 23:43 2 Cor 12:3-4, Rev 2:7), *Abraham's Bosom* (Luk 16:19-31), and *Heaven* (*place of peace, rest, and joy*)

Hell: the "Lake of Fire," which is the final, permanent place (after Hades, the final resurrection, and the final judgement), where those who have rejected God will spend eternity, both soul and body conjoined. Hell is most commonly translated from the Greek NT word *Gehenna*

1. Information derived from <https://www.gotquestions.org/sheol-hades-hell.html>, and Don Stewart at https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_168.cfm

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Hell

Sheol, Hades, Paradise, Abraham's Bosom, Hell, Lake of Fire, Gehenna?¹

Gehenna: Greek NT word for "Valley of Hinnom". Jesus used this place as an illustration for Hell:

- *"Gehenna originally was a valley west and south of Jerusalem where children were burned as sacrifices to the Ammonite god Moloch. This practice was carried out by the Israelites during the reigns of King Solomon in the 10th century BC and King Manasseh in the 7th century BC and continued until the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century BC."*²
- Jeremiah spoke of this horrific place and prophesied the Lord's judgement over it:
 - *"The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. Jer 7:30-32 NIV*
- *"The place where child sacrifices were previously performed will be the place where the wicked will be slaughtered. Gehenna, therefore, came to represent the place where the unrighteous are eternally punished." –Don Stewart*

1. Information derived from <https://www.gotquestions.org/sheol-hades-hell.html>, and Don Stewart at https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_168.cfm
 2. Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Gehenna," accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gehenna>.

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Hell

What Can We Affirm About the Final Judgement and Hell?

- There will be a final judgment and Jesus Christ will be the judge (2 Tim 4:1; Act 10:42; 17:31; Mat 25:31-33)
- There will be different degrees of punishment (Rom 2:5-7; Mat 11:20-24; Luk 12:47-48; Rev 20:12-13) and reward (1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10) at the final judgement (SK – Jude 13)
- Those consigned to Hell will experience eternal conscious torment (Mat 25:30; Luk 16:22-24; Rev 14:9-11)
- Hell was created for the devil and his angels - Not for Human Beings!
- *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"" . . . "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'". . . . "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."" -Mat 25:31-34,41,46 NIV*

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Hell

What Can We Affirm About the Final Judgement and Hell?

- Hell will be a real, literal, physical place. More importantly, however, it will be a relational place: *permanent separation from God*
 - *According to Jesus, Hell is a Real Place: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” -Mat 10:28 NIV (see also Mat 13:41-42; Mat 10:28; 25:30; Mar 9:43; Luk 16:10-31)*
 - *“Jesus talks about hell more than he talks about heaven, and describes it more vividly. There’s no denying that Jesus knew, believed, and warned against the absolute reality of hell.” -The Gospel Coalition*
- *God, however, desires that **no person** enter this place.*
 - *“Son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’ Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’” -Eze 33:11*
 - *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.” Mat 23:37 NIV*
 - *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” -Luk 23:34 NIV*

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Hell

What Can We Affirm About the Final Judgement and Hell?

- God will consign people to Hell as punishment, however:
 - such people will also freely choose this and impose the course of Hell upon themselves:
 - *“there are only two kinds of people in the end: Those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in hell chose it.” –C.S. Lewis*
 - *God is a gentleman and will not force anyone into His presence against his will*
 - *“in a sense, God doesn’t send anybody to hell. His desire is that everyone be saved, and He seeks to draw all persons to Himself. If we make a free and well-informed decision to reject Christ’s sacrifice for our sin, then God has no choice but to give us what we deserve . . . Our eternal destiny thus lies in our own hands. It’s a matter of our free choice where we shall spend eternity. Those who are lost, therefore, are self-condemned; they separate themselves from God despite God’s will and every effort to save them, and God grieves over their loss.”¹ -Craig*
 - *Mankind only goes here as a result of their voluntary rebellion against God and their rejection of His free gift. Thus, they are not permitted access into His presence*
- Hell will NOT be God’s divine torture chamber. There is no indication in Scripture that God is a sadistic torturer
 - *“For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.” -Lam 3:33*
 - *Hell will consist of torment, but not torture. This torment is the self-inflicted consequence of sin.*

1. Craig, *On Guard*, 272.

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Hell

What Can We Consider About the Final Judgement and Hell?

- Though Hell will be a real, literal place, some of its descriptions may be figurative
 - Hell is described as a place of outer darkness (Mat 8:12; 22:13), yet also of fire and flames (Mat 13:42; Mar 9:48; Rev 20:14). If taken in a literalistic fashion, this seems incompatible. 187 case for faith
 - Scripture also says death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire. How can death literally burn? It's not a physical object that can be set on fire¹
- Why eternal punishment for finite sins?
 - it may be that the inhabitants of hell eternally continue to be unrepentant and reject God such that they eternally accrue guilt and punishment. This ongoing sin would make hell self-perpetuating.²
 - SK NOTE: This only makes some sense, however, it could be misleading since it assumes that no person in hell would ever decide to stop accruing guilt!
 - The story of Lazarus and the Rich man seems to indicate the Rich man *does* regret his sinful choices amid his suffering: "In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'" –Luk 16:23-24

1. J.P. Moreland interviewed in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 187,196.

2. Craig, *On Guard*, 273.

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Thanks for Coming!!!
See You Next Week!!!

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