

Sermon Series: Honest to God: Real Questions People Ask
To be used with: Session Three: What About People Who've Never Heard About Jesus?
Sermon Title Possibilities:
 Is Hell for Real?
 The Other Option
Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Connection to Unit Theme: When we die there are two options for eternal dwelling. These two are for everyone, even those who have not heard about Jesus. This message addresses one of those options—Hell.

Introduction: Benjamin Franklin famously said, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” The truth is, death is even more certain than taxes. A clever person can find ways to evade taxes, but no one evades the Grim Reaper. When your time is up, it’s up. Death can be postponed but never eliminated. Death is coming—eventually for all of us, sooner than we think for some. As Hebrews 9:27 says, “it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment” (HCSB). Statistics bear this out. At some point in their lives, one out of one people die. But what happens next? That’s what we’re going to talk about today.

I. What Happens When We Die?

- A. What happens after you die depends on what happens before you die.
- B. All people will be gathered before Jesus. Then he will separate or divide the whole human race into two broad categories—those on his right hand and those on his left hand. Those on his right hand are called the saved for they have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Those on the left are referred to as the lost for they have failed to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- C. When the saved die they go directly into the presence of the Lord.
- D. For the lost, death begins an experience of unending conscious punishment.

II. The Trouble with Hell

- A. Hell presents a side of God that seems unfair and unpleasant.

Actually, this argument is half-right. Hell does present a side of God that is unpleasant. But it is not unfair. Hell is the absolute just punishment of those who have refused to accept God’s right to reign in their lives. In a way, it is no more than what those who have rebelled against God desired all their lives—an existence apart from God. Hell is exactly that—for all eternity. So when a human being desires to live a life with no place for God, then he will spend eternity in a place without God. And because God is the source of everything good and pleasant (James 1:27; Psalm 133), then existence apart from Him can only be very bad and very unpleasant.

- B. Atheists have called hell cruel, inhuman, and barbarous.

There is one part of this argument that is true as well. Hell is inhuman because God is not human. God is God. Because He is completely holy, anything unholy or sinful cannot be in His presence. For that reason, hell has to exist. We get confused about hell when we try to make God like us. But God isn’t like us. If He was, He would not be worthy of our worship.

- C. Some believers question the justice of hell and doubt its existence. In order to speak to that, let's look at what Jesus said about hell:

III. What Jesus Said About Hell

- A. Hell is real.
- B. Hell is separation from God. The essence of hell is relational. Hell is separation or banishment from the most beautiful being in the world—God himself. It is exclusion from anything that matters—God and those who have come to know and love him.
- C. Hell is for the cursed. “Depart from me, you who are *cursed*, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41 NIV).
- D. Hell is eternal. Just as heaven is eternal so, too, is hell. Hell is not annihilation as many hope for. Hell is a real separation from a loving God for eternity.
- E. Hell is a fire. The flame imagery is a metaphor for the judgment of God.

IV. Will You Heed the Warning?

- A. Hell is a tragedy that can be avoided.
- B. Jesus spoke of hell not to manipulate, but to warn.

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