

Imagine Heaven – What About Hell?
Oct 26, 2015

“We were the kings and queens of promise, We were the victims of ourselves, Maybe the children of a lesser God Between heaven and hell--Heaven and hell.” Those lyrics remind us what we experience on earth—we were meant to be children of promise—like Kings and Queens we experience a small taste of Heaven, of love, joy, goodness, beauty, creativity, compassion, life together--but as victims of ourselves, we experience something gone terribly wrong—deception, abuse, alienation, dishonesty, divorce, anger, murder, war, a small taste of Hell. We live between Heaven and Hell. But Why? What explains how a Loving God could allow so much evil and suffering on this earth? [Let me say, I won't explain it all—so read chapters 14-16. But let me try with a story.

Long before the earth was created, God eternally existed. God who is Love and Light and Life, is also a Creator. In eternity, God created eternal creatures, called Angels. Beautiful creatures of Light, created to do God's will, to experience God's love, to glorify God forever. Angels were given various tasks, some tended to all God had created, some were messengers, some were servants—the most beautiful, powerful angel, created music and worshipped in the very presence of God. His name was Lightbearer—he was blameless, pure, creative, the most powerful, majestic of all God's creation. The seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He was placed in Eden, the garden of God in Heaven; and every precious stone adorned him. God himself anointed Lightbearer as a guardian cherub, he was the most powerful angel, ordained by God to be with God on the holy mountain of God; he walked among the fiery stones of brilliance there in the most splendid place in all Heaven—the throne of God. God loved him and declared, “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.”

But God created the Angels to love and serve—which meant Angels have a free will. Something horrible happened in the heart of Lightbearer. His heart became proud on account of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom because of his splendor...he said in his heart “I will rise above the throne of God. I will be like God.” And wickedness was found in him. “You were filled with violence, and you sinned” God declared, “So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.” Lightbearer, or Lucifer, was cast out of Heaven, but not before he convinced 1/3 of the angels that they could rule better than God, and these free-willed, eternal Angels made a Choice. They Chose to reject God's will and ways, to go their own way. But a choice in eternity, is an eternal choice. When time is not linear or successive, there's no such thing as a 2nd chance. They eternally chose NOT GOD! But there's no place in Heaven where God is not—there's no place where the Light, Love and Life of God does not rule. So God in His love, created a place where Lucifer and His fallen angels could have what they demanded—a place where they could rule apart from God—a place called Hell. A place where the Light, and Love, and Life of God gives way to the dark, prideful, self-centered evil rulership of the creature trying to play God.

Still, 2/3rds of the angels had not eternally rejected God. So how could God lovingly teach them so the same would never happen again? God created again—He said “Let there be light—and a universe was born out of a great explosion from nothing – right inside Heaven came a universe of only 4 dimensions. The angels of God were puzzled—it's so much less than Heaven, time only moves in one direction, instead of the Light of God that gives life to all—there was only artificial light, a dim, pale light called the sun—with a tiny spectrum of dull colors. Instead of the Living Water of Life flowing from God's throne, there was far lesser imitation, H₂O, that all earth's life would require. The angels watched as God created humans in His own Image—people who could also choose to love, create, serve God.

As the angels watched time unfold, they realized God had allowed Lucifer and his fallen angels access to this new creation—but why? Why would God allow them to follow Lucifer and be cast out of God's presence, cast out of Eden? Why let this happen again? Then the angels began to see—God's mercy, love. These humans could not experience but a fraction of the Joys of Heaven, but they also only experienced a fraction of the sufferings and evils of Hell. And God was hiding beyond their 4 dimensions, yet always near, drawing, beckoning them back to himself. This was a place between Heaven and Hell,

greatly reduced in experience, where these humans (created to live eternally) began with the knowledge of good and evil. The angels marveled at God's brilliant plan unfolding. God would not abandon humans for rejecting His will and ways, God would enter their world, disguised as one of them. He would pay His own price for Justice and righteousness to be done, so that He could forgive and take back all willing humans. God gave them a 2nd chance, and a 3rd, 4th, 70 years of chances to turn back, admit their rebellion, and forever return to God. Something impossible for eternal angels who made an eternal choice in God's very presence. God was teaching the unfallen angels and humans the cost of rebellion and the power of love, so that all who choose Him could live eternally with him. Unlike the fallen Angels, Having the knowledge of both Good and Evil in their collective history, when humans were brought into eternal life, those who chose God on earth would forever choose to love and follow God eternally—knowing a small taste of life without God's rule.

If you read Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, and Revelation 12 you see something close to the story I just painted. As we talk today about Hellish NDEs and how a Loving God could possibly create Hell—I want you to keep this perspective in mind. Many people think Hell is eternal punishment for finite sins. So they say, that's unjust and makes no sense—how could a loving God eternally punish for finite sins? But I don't think that's what is happening. We are not temporal creatures given eternal consequences—we are eternal creatures given temporal chance after chance after chance to choose God. If you understand this, it answers so many questions—like how in the world God would allow so much evil and suffering if He really loves us more than any other!

I remember when my 5 year old daughter fell on the tile, cracked her skull. The doctors shot her with dye to do a CScan and found bleeding under the skull. The next day she had to have a follow up CScan because if the bleeding continued, she could have died. When the doctors went to inject the dye, she screamed and kicked and cried “daddy don't let them hurt me.” The doctor said, “Dad—you have to hold her down so we can do this.” I had to hold my daughter and let them hurt her while she cried “Dad, why are you doing this, they're hurting me.” I cried, she cried—but I did it because I loved her, and I understood something she didn't. That temporary pain and suffering was necessary to save her from something much worse. I believe that's what God does too.

1 out of 25 people have Near Death Experiences which have convinced skeptical doctors of the reality of an afterlife, but most of the ones initially reported were all good. Seemed blissful for everybody—a spiritual body with heightened senses, feeling more alive and better than ever, meeting people on the other side who seem like a friendly welcoming committee. All sounds good—and initially, researchers even declared, “Yeah—it's all good, we all go to Heaven.” But as reports of NDEs became more known, more and more hellish NDEs got reported.

Dr. Maurice Rawlings did not believe in God or the afterlife when a 40 year old man had a cardiac arrest and dropped dead in his office. Three nurses rushed in and began CPR. Dr. Rawlings recalls, “I had to insert a pacemaker wire into the large vein. The patient began “coming to.” But whenever I would reach for instruments and stop compression, the patient would again lose consciousness, stop breathing, and die once more. Each time he regained heartbeat he screamed, “I am in hell!” He was terrified and pleaded with me to help him. I was scared to death. In fact, this episode *literally* scared the hell out of me! After several resuscitations, the man pleaded, “Don't you understand? I am in hell. Each time you quit I go back to hell! Don't let me go back to hell!” I dismissed his complaint and told him to keep his “hell” to himself . . . until I finished getting this pacemaker in. But the man was serious. “Pray for me!” He begged. “I told him I was doctor, not a preacher. “Pray for me!” He repeated. Dr. Rawlings drew on the little bit of Sunday school he remembered. Though he didn't believe it himself, he had the man repeat: “Lord Jesus, I ask you to keep me out of hell. Forgive my sins. I turn my life over to you. If I die, I want to go to Heaven. If I live, I'll be ‘on the hook’ forever.” The patient's condition finally stabilized. A couple of days later, Dr. Rawlings asked his patient to explain the hell he saw. The patient could not recall *any* of the unpleasant events—only pleasant ones when he again flat-lined after the prayer! Rawlings reflects, “Apparently, the experiences were so frightening . . . they were suppressed far into his subconscious.” This event changed Dr. Rawlings beliefs and after doing his own research, he wrote *Beyond Death's*

Door, theorizing that many people who have hellish NDEs subconsciously suppress the memory because it's so traumatic.

Studies show that Positive NDEs are not often reported because people fear being labeled crazy—So imagine how under-reported hellish NDEs would be. Despite this, 23% of all reported NDEs are negative or hellish in nature. [Dutch researcher Dr. Pim van Lommel summarizes hellish NDEs: **“To their horror, they sometimes find themselves pulled even deeper into the profound darkness. The NDE ends in this scary atmosphere. . . . Such a terrifying NDE usually produces long-lasting emotional trauma...The exact number of people who experience such a frightening NDE is unknown because they often keep quiet out of shame and guilt.”**—Dr. Pim van Lommel] That's disturbing—It disturbs me. Most don't talk about hellish experiences. I don't want to either. But I realized that to ignore them is possibly the most selfish, unloving thing I could do. Jesus taught that hell is just as real as heaven, he spoke of an outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth, he spoke of a pit, and a fiery place—levels of a world turned away from God. Jesus made it clear—God doesn't want any human going there. Then why would anyone end up in hell? Jesus said, **“God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light.... John 3:19-21** Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis, an atheist turned believer, said that God does not *send* anybody to hell: “I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked from the *inside*. Last week I interviewed Howard Storm—a tenured, college Professor, in Paris when his stomach ruptured, unable to get surgery—he died. At first, like many NDEs he felt great—more alive than ever, he had a friendly welcoming committee, if it had stopped there, it might have been tagged another “heavenly experience”. But just like first appearances can be deceiving in this world, so also in the world to come.

[LISTEN as Howard describes what happened.]

God loves us like no other. Jesus explained in Matthew 25 that hell was not created for people—but for the devil and his angels. They had a free will, we have a free will. God created both species to love God and experience his love and goodness forever. Angels made an eternal choice, so a 2nd chance is impossible. We've made the same choice, but we get a 2nd, 3rd, lifetime of chances to turn back to God. He allows pain and suffering as a merciful warning of something much worse—the reason Howard and others could still choose, I believe, is because they hadn't crossed that boundary into eternity—they all came back! God is giving us a way to be restored eternally to Him, now. Scripture explains: **For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus. Romans 3:23-26**

All the world's religions basically say the same things about morality—but what does this teach us? We've all sinned--no one perfectly keeps the 8 fold path of Buddhism, the 5 pillars of Islam, the 10 commandments—shoot, we don't even keep our own moral laws (ever swore you'd never, but you did?!). Yet God in his love and mercy paid His own price for justice, so He would be just in taking back all people who realize they need forgiveness and want God to be God of their lives. Because of Christ's payment, God has removed every barrier between us and him, except our pride. He won't force us to love or accept his gift, because love must be free.

The Scriptures teach there are many fallen angels—demonic spiritual beings who followed Lucifer. They are void of the love of God; they are consumed with their own desires. They lie to us about God and the path to life. **“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... [Lucifer] has always hated the truth,**

because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:31-44 This is why God tells us not to try to contact the dead, or seek out of body experiences, or Spirit guides—because Satan can masquerade as an angel of Light—so you are opening yourself up to a spiritual world that can deceive you. **Should the living seek guidance from the dead? Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark. Isaiah 8:19-20** Evil seeks to whisper lies and deceive.

So let me just unmask one of those lies—some of you may be hearing this: “This can’t be right—how unfair God only save those who have heard of Jesus—there are billions who have never heard of Jesus. That’s stupid.” Think about what that does—with the smokescreen of caring about people you don’t even know, you hear lies that can effectively keep you from getting right with God. The irony is that God loves those people you don’t know enough to die for them—you wouldn’t die for them—so why do you think God would care less about them than you do? Truth is, we don’t know how God deals with people who have never heard the name of Jesus. Jesus said, **“it is not my heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish” Matthew 18:14** But we need to worry about ourselves before we worry about others, because Jesus also said, **“anyone who rejects me is rejecting God, who sent me.” Luke 10:16** So don’t reject Jesus because you’re worried about others. We know there will be people from every tribe and language in Heaven so don’t try to judge God—seek Him.

But why doesn’t God just make it so everyone goes to Heaven—if that’s his will? Because Love requires a free will. What would God do with Hitler, or anyone who does not want to submit to God’s rule? Force him? Take away his free will? But he’d be a slave, a prisoner in Heaven, not a loving child. If left with free will, he would chose eternally his will over God’s, and he’d be cast out just like the angels. God knows all this, and this earth is perfectly suited to shape us into eternally free, loving children. And God is teaching the angels as they serve us—**“God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 3:10)** Through earth’s sufferings, God is birthing eternally free children, and teaching the Angels, so all will forever choose to love him. That’s why Jesus still has the marks in Heaven. Angels and Humans all need to remember forever.

It doesn’t matter what you’ve done, where you’ve been, God’s grace will forgive anyone of anything. You don’t have jump through religious hoops, get your act together, or prove you’re worthy—He loves you more than you can imagine already. He wants you to know you’re eternally secure with him, and then He wants to lead you to truly make a difference by loving God and letting Him teach you to love others sacrificially—and as we’ll see next week, He promises to eternally reward a life well lived. I want you to hear from a man who is living that way—but it’s not where he started. Help me welcome my dear friend, Paul Ojeda. INTERVIEW

NEXT Week – gonna hear from a PhD in near death studies, plus many of our past guests who entered the Astounding City of God—the New Jerusalem, the significance of the Life Review, and what we will do forever—spoiler alert—it won’t be boring.