

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WHY WOULD A LOVING GOD
SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?
Apologetics — Week 6

ICEBREAKER: What factors have most influenced your current beliefs about God?

OVERVIEW: The traditional doctrine of hell as a place of conscious, eternal punishment is under attack. Atheists argue that if God exists then He would not send people to eternal hell. Some “Christians” argue that the doctrine of eternal punishment contradicts both the love and justice of God, and the church has been misreading Scripture all these years. The doctrine of hell is not easy to hold in this age of intolerant tolerance. In this discussion we will go deeper with how to defend the biblical teaching of hell.

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday’s message?)
2. Use no more than two words to describe what each verse says about hell.
 - Matthew 5:22
 - Matthew 8:12
 - Matthew 13:41-42
 - Matthew 18:8
 - Mark 9:43, 48
 - Matthew 25:41, 46
3. There are several alternatives to the doctrine of eternal punishment. The first is universalism – the teaching that in the end all human beings will be saved. How does this view contradict the Bible?
4. The second alternative to universalism is annihilationism – the view that while those who are saved enjoy everlasting life in God’s presence in the life to come, all those who are lost will ultimately be annihilated. How does this view contradict the Bible?
5. Both Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists believe in forms of annihilationism. What is the difference between their views? How do their views contradict Scripture?
6. Some of those who reject the doctrine of eternal punishment argue that the word “destruction” points to annihilation, not eternal, conscious punishment. How would you answer this argument?
7. Some of those who reject the doctrine of eternal destruction argue that the imagery of fire when describing hell points to annihilation. They say that since fire normally destroys, then hell must mean ultimate destruction (annihilation). How would you answer this argument?
8. Others who believe in annihilationism argue that the phrase “eternal punishment” refers to a result and not an experience. Hell, they claim, is an eternal punishment because a person ceases to exist forever; but it is not an eternal experience of conscious torment. How would you respond to this claim?
9. The main argument used against the traditional doctrine of hell is that it does not align with the love of God. A loving God, it is claimed, would not punish someone in hell for eternity. How would you respond to this argument?
10. Those who reject the doctrine of eternal punishment also claim that it violates the justice of God. How is it just for God to punish someone for all eternity?
11. Because hell is a real place of eternal, conscious punishment, how then should we live?

The Last Word: “And the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever.” Revelation 14:11