

■ Knowing Good and Evil ...

- (Genesis 2:9 ESV) And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- (Genesis 2:17 ESV) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.
- (Genesis 3:5 ESV) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
- (Genesis 3:22 ESV) Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”
- (Romans 11:33 ESV) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

■ What does it mean that Adam and Eve would then “be like God, knowing good and evil”?

Here is what I believe that we can take away from the preceding biblical texts:

- Adam and Eve had not yet “known” or experienced evil.
- In eating the fruit they began a new stage of their lives in which they would make the choices as to what was good and what was evil.
- The first decision that Adam and Eve made apart from God led to death.

Here is what I believe that we can take away from observing this discussion in life:

- “How could a loving God ... “
- The people who object to hell or its eternal nature cannot fathom how God could do such a horrible thing.
- This presupposition then--that a loving God could not do such a thing--is the basis for their philosophy concerning the nature of hell and their biblical exposition.
- This reasoning is fatally flawed because they refuse to believe something that they can neither understand nor explain.
- They make decisions from their “knowledge” of good and evil which is outside the bounds of their ability.
- As people living in the wake of Adam and Eve’s rebellion, we have experienced good and evil, and we can make some decisions of right and wrong.
- What we cannot do is make decisions that are beyond us and call into question God’s judgment.
- What we cannot do is begin our exposition of Scripture on whether or not we can understand what God has done, is doing or will do.

■ C.S. Lewis on hell ...

- Heaven is a place for sinners who trust in God for salvation. Hell is a place for sinners who do not trust in God for salvation.
- There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of our Lord’s own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason.
- In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: “What are you asking God to do?” To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But he has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what he does.

■ Question: Is hell real? Is hell eternal?

From Got Questions web site.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/hell-real-eternal.html>

Answer: It is interesting that a much higher percentage of people believe in the existence of heaven than believe in the existence of hell. According to the Bible, though, hell is just as real as heaven. The Bible clearly and explicitly teaches that hell is a real place to which the wicked/unbelieving are sent after death. We have all sinned against God (Romans 3:23). The just punishment for that sin is death (Romans 6:23). Since all of our sin is ultimately against God (Psalm 51:4), and since God is an infinite and eternal Being, the punishment for sin, death, must also be infinite and eternal. Hell is this infinite and eternal death which we have earned because of our sin.

The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described throughout Scripture as ...

- “eternal fire” (Matthew 25:41),
- “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12),
- “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2),
- a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-49),
- a place of “torment” and “fire” (Luke 16:23-24),
- “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9),
- a place where “the smoke of torment rises forever and ever” (Revelation 14:10-11),
- and a “lake of burning sulfur” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

The punishment of the wicked in hell is as never ending as the bliss of the righteous in heaven. Jesus Himself indicates that punishment in hell is just as everlasting as life in heaven (Matthew 25:46). The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. Those in hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God (Psalm 76:10). Those who are in hell will know that their punishment is just and that they alone are to blame (Deuteronomy 32:3-5). Yes, hell is real. Yes, hell is a place of torment and punishment that lasts forever and ever, with no end. Praise God that, through Jesus, we can escape this eternal fate (John 3:16, 18, 36).