

Hell post-talk Discussion Questions

1. Over the centuries people have had many varied reactions to the doctrine of Hell. How would you respond to these views?

a) *Inconsistent with the notion of a good God*

"I do not believe myself that any person who is profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment." Bertrand Russell

I have lately taken to read the New Testament which I assure you is a very good book; but there is one article to which I cannot accede; it is that of the eternity of punishment. I cannot comprehend how this eternity is compatible with the goodness of God! –La Fontaine (1621-1695)

b) *My friends will be there – joking response*

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company. *Mark Twain*

I don't like to commit myself about heaven and hell - you see, I have friends in both places. *Mark Twain*

c) *Invented by Religion*

The extreme horribleness of hell, as portrayed by priests and nuns, is inflated to compensate for its implausibility. If hell were plausible, it would only have to be moderately unpleasant in order to deter. Given that it is so unlikely to be true, it has to be advertised as very very scary indeed. RICHARD DAWKINS, *The God Delusion*

Hell doesn't even exist ... It's all in our minds. We invented it as a warning to those who don't live up to our standards. S. KAYE SAUNDERS, *Hell Exposed*

2. Choose one or more of these passages, what does it tell us about Hell?

Matt 18:7-9

Matt 10:28

Luke 16:19-31

Matt 7:13

John 3:17

Matt 22:1-14

Matt 25:31-46

Matt 13:24-29,36-43

3. In the passages above, what imagery is used of Hell? (darkness, fire, weeping, exclusion...)

What is conveyed by the imagery?

4. Looking at Romans 12:17-21, if we leave vengeance for the Lord, how will this shape our attitude to those who wrong us? Does this mean we shouldn't have courts and a penal system?

5. What do you make of the idea that “people choose Hell”? Do you agree? Why?

6. “Imagine there’s no Hell” ...What would change?

7. How should the doctrine of Hell shape our attitude to

- a) unbelievers
- b) our own sin
- c) the death of Jesus

“I had far rather walk, as I do, in daily terror of eternity, than feel that this was only a children’s game in which all the contestants would get equally worthless prizes in the end.”

T. S. Elliot

“We must picture Hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned with his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone lives the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment.” C S Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*