

FREE TO CHOOSE: HEAVEN OR HELL

THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Is there a real heaven and hell, and what are they like?

BIG IDEA

Are heaven and hell actually real? Why would God send some to heaven and others to hell? Understanding what these places are like and why they exist helps us make sense of the power of the gospel and why it is the greatest story that was ever told.

SCRIPTURE USED

Romans 1:19-25 *They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.*

Jude 1:7 *In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

Revelation 22:3-4 *No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.*

For this lesson you will need:

- A board or piece of paper that is large enough for your students to see
- Something to write on your board or giant piece of paper with

OPENER

Today we are going to be talking about heaven and hell. These topics are oftentimes frightening for people to think about. The idea of heaven and hell causes us to think about what happens after we die. It reminds us that life is temporary and that there will one day be an end. But before we start jumping into Scripture, I thought it would be fun to write down some images and ideas of how culture and media portrays heaven and hell. Think of movies, cartoons or TV shows that you may have seen or heard of growing up.

Write on the board in all capital letters the words HEAVEN and HELL. Make sure you leave enough space for each to have multiple answers beneath them. Don't let the students jump between discussing heaven and hell. Pick one of the categories until you've tapped out what they see in culture. Make sure they aren't just thinking of what the Bible teaches, but what they see in culture.

EXPLAIN

Culture has a lot to say about what heaven and hell are actually like. For many people, it is culture's understanding of these places that sometimes makes them hard to believe or, for that matter, makes it hard to actually understand why there is a heaven and hell.

Today we are going to explore if heaven and hell are real places. And if they are, why God created a heaven and hell and what they are actually like. In order to do this, we need to venture back to the beginning of creation. More specifically, we need to talk about the biggest mistake ever made in the history of the world. Could you guess what that is? Rebelling against God's command... When we rebel against God, we are sinning. Sin isn't something that was programmed or created into humanity. Sin was a choice.

LESSON

EXPLAIN — Free to Love

God created all of humanity with freewill. This means that God doesn't force us to love Him or obey Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke their relationship with God—the source of all life. They, in a way, said, "We want to live life by our own rules. We want to make our own decisions about what we think is right and wrong." Here is the thing: God could have stopped them. He could have jumped into the picture and forcibly