

What Is Life All About? Why Are We Here?

The oft-ask question, “what is life all about?” can actually be answered quite simply. Life is a test, and it’s graded pass/fail.

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Does this mean that if we break any of them that we will fail at life’s test? Uhh, no, not exactly. The Ten Commandments were God’s “setting the bar” for what it means to pass the test and get into heaven. If we “miss the mark” (which is what “sin” means) even once in our lives with any commandment, we fail the test. He knew that no human being could keep all ten commandments all the time without ever slipping once. He wanted us to see that we are hopelessly lost. By the time most of us are even aware of the Ten Commandments, we have already failed. No amount of “good deeds” will erase the fact that we failed.

But God is kind to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place so that we might be cleansed, made righteous, and pass the test after all. It was an unbelievable free gift. All we had to do to be saved from failure was to accept this gift by accepting Jesus as our Savior. Those who are “saved” pass the test and will be accepted into heaven after our earthly demise.

But what about those who fail, those who reject God’s gift? They are to be sent to hell after death here. In our culture today, hell is usually dismissed with comments such as, “I don’t believe in hell.” But this *opinion* doesn’t mean it’s not real.

Hell: A real place.

Hell is a real place, mentioned 23 times in the New Testament¹, 15 times by Jesus Himself. Jesus calls it a “place of torment” (Luke 16:23). God’s word often describes hell as a place of “fire.” For example, read Luke 16:24; Matthew 13:49-50; Jude 7; Revelation 14:10-11; Revelation 20:15; Mark 9:48 (compare Isaiah 66:24).

It is also described as a place of darkness (Matthew 22:13, compare with Jude 6). Worst of all it is a permanent separation from God (Luke 16:26; Matthew 7:23; Revelation 20:14). It is called “the second death.”

Who goes to hell?

Jesus clearly taught that He is the way, truth, and life. No one goes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Those who refuse Jesus’ offer of eternal life choose hell instead. As a result, those whose names are not written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life” are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) makes it clear that such persons are punished immediately. “This is how it will be at the end of the age,” Jesus says, and then he describes “the fiery furnace” (Matthew 13:49). Paul teaches the same (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Is such judgment fair?

The rich man in Jesus’ parable knew he deserved to go there. He wanted to spare his brothers, for they deserved to go there as well. Those in hell would make the greatest evangelists on earth, but they are prevented from communicating outside of hell, so only while we’re still here on earth can we change our minds or influence others to accept God’s free gift.

Heaven is a perfect place; one sin would ruin it. So Jesus died to pay for our sins, to cleanse us from them. He offered to pay for our sins. But if we refuse his forgiveness, *we must pay for our sins ourselves*. This also means we are unable to come into the presence of God, forever.

Calvin Miller puts it this way. "God, can you be merciful and send me off to hell and lock me in forever?" "Pilgrim, I would not send you there, but if you choose to go there, I could never lock you out." God doesn't chose hell for us (2 Peter 3:9), but we can choose it for ourselves.

What is hell like?

Dr. Charles Garfield has done extensive research with those who have died physically but were brought back to life medically. His results: Almost as many of the dying patients reported negative visions (demons and so forth) as reported blissful experiences².

Bill Wiese, a Christian who has researched end-of-life experiences, describes many of these visions of hell in his book *What Happens When I Die?*³:

Dr. Richard Eby died and was shown a vision of hell. "Instantly I realized I was a dead sinner being taken to the lowest bowels of the earth...A sense of absolute terror gripped my being. The immensity of my isolation in the stark darkness and soundless silence was overwhelming...No one could help but Jesus, and He was gone!...I would never see another person; I could not break out; I would never hear a voice again, either friend or enemy. Nothing to read. Nothing to look at. Nowhere to go...And the smell! Horrid, nasty, stale, fetid, rotten, evil...stinking, crawling demons seen mentally delighting in making me wretched...I would now have an eternity of inescapable nausea, beside all the rest of hell. I was an eternally lost soul by my own choosing."

Thomas Welch was a sawmill worker in Bridal Veil, Oregon. This story is well-documented. He fell off a beam and was under water for more than 45 minutes. He was not a believer at the time. Here is his story:

"I landed on my head on the first beam thirty feet down...until I fell into the water and disappeared from view...The search went on for forty-five minutes to one hour...I was dead as far as this world is concerned. But I was alive in another world...The next thing I knew, I was standing near a shoreline of a great ocean of fire. It appeared to be what the Bible says it is in Revelation, "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone"...I was standing some distance from the burning, turbulent, rolling mass of blue fire. As far as my eyes could see it was just the same...I saw other people that I had known that had died...We recognized each other...Their expressions were those of bewilderment and confusion. The scene was so awesome that words simply fail...There is no way to escape except by Divine intervention...I said to myself in an audible voice, "If I had known about his I would have done anything that was required of me to escape coming to a place like this."...I saw another man coming by in front of us. He had a strong, kind, compassionate face, composed and unafraid. Master of all he saw. It was Jesus himself...I said to myself, "If He would only look my way and see me, He could rescue me from this place...He turned his head and looked at me. His look was enough. In seconds, I was back entering my body again...I thank God for people who can pray. It was Mrs. Brocke I heard praying for me. She said, "O God, don't take Tom. He is not saved." (James 5:13)

Do you need to avoid hell?

Weise relates a story from his own experience.

I had just finished speaking at a church in the San Diego area, and the pastor's grandson, Mike, shared with me about his best friend, Nick, who was 23 years old. He said he'd brought his friend to hear me speak, but his friend said he didn't believe in God, heaven, hell, or anything else I spoke about. Mike said to him, "You are my best friend, and I want you to go to heaven with me." The atheist, Nick, said, "Don't talk to me about that bible junk. I'm not interested." A couple of weeks later they were having breakfast together, and Mike tried to share with Nick

again about God. Nick again said, "Don't ever talk to me again about this nonsense. I'm not going to become a Christian, so leave me alone." Mike was sad, but he honored his friend's request and stopped trying to convince him at breakfast. Nick got up from the table, got in his car, and drove off. Five minutes later, he was in an auto accident and hit a brick wall. He died instantly. We all have a free will. God won't force anyone into heaven.

Conclusion

Going to hell is our own choice. Either we accept God's free gift in the form of Jesus' redemption, or we don't. You don't have to be an active God hater to go to hell, indifference to Jesus' gift will do. We never know when our time is up. Like Nick in the story above, today may be one's last chance to accept the gift. Do you, or do you know anyone, who needs prayer because they're not saved? Who can you talk with that needs to hear about heaven and hell?

Again, the oft-ask question, "what is life all about?" can actually be answered quite simply. Life is a test, and it's graded pass/fail. Either you accept God's gift of salvation, or you fail. The above discussion shows what failure means. The consequences of failing are so devastating that we should want no one to fail.

Accepting the gift:

If you want (or someone you know wants) to have your name written in His book, you can say the prayer below. It will mean a changed lifestyle because you will find that you, over time, will be less drawn to sinful things. This is the process of sanctification, which will assure your entry into heaven and keep you out of hell.

Dear God in heaven,

I know that I have sinned, and I cannot save myself. I believe you sent your Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for me. I believe He was crucified, died, and was buried, but He rose from the dead, and lives forevermore. I know my works cannot save me, but only by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross can I have my sins washed away. I ask you to come into my heart, and I receive you as my Lord and Savior. You are the Son of the living God. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my life. Thank you, God, for saving me!^{3,4}.

References

1. The Holy Bible
2. Rawlings, Maurice, *To Hell and Back*, Published: September 6, 1993 by Thomas Nelson
3. Weise, Bill, *What Happens When I Die?*, Published 2013 by Charisma House
4. For further reading:
<https://static.billygraham.org/sites/billygraham.org/uploads/pro/2019/08/GF-Basics-of-Christianity.pdf>