

How Can A Loving God Send Someone To Hell?

All through history the question on hell represents a major objection to the belief in God, particularly the God of the Bible. Since the God of the Bible is defined as love (1 John 4:8) people find it a huge contradiction when this same God is presented as wrathful. To the modern mind love and anger are opposites. In the Bible, on the other hand, God's love and anger are complements.

Is it fair to separate love from anger? Why can't a God of judgment also be a God of love? We know from human experience that human anger sometimes comes out of love. 'If you love a person and you see someone ruining them – even they themselves – you get angry.'¹ God is worthy of our worship because He is angry at injustice and deception and will make a final end to violence. Would God be a loving God if He allowed evil to exist unchecked and unnoticed?

For Christians, the Bible teaches hell as God's ultimate response to evil and violence and the way he puts an end to them. Many people believe that hell works like this: "God gives us time, but if we haven't made the right choices by the end of our lives, he casts our souls into hell for eternity. As the poor souls fall through space, they cry out to mercy, but God says 'Too late! You had your chance! Now you will suffer!'"² But this caricature misunderstands the very nature of evil. Rather, hell is one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into eternity. People in hell don't cry out to God for mercy because they have spent their entire lives on earth ignoring or hating God. That does not change in hell.

To simply say that God is a God of pure love- in which there is no judgment and everyone is accepted- is an act of faith with no historical or religious textual support. Without any external appeal for such proposition, one is on shaky ground. Tim Keller argues, "The source of the idea that God is Love is the Bible itself. And the Bible tells us that the God of love is also a God of judgment who will put all things in the world to rights in the end."³

¹ Keller, Tim. The Reason for God: Belief in An Age of Scepticism. (New York: Penguin Group, 2008) 73.

² Keller 76.

³ Keller. 82-83.