

## Two big questions:

- **Who will God send to hell?**
- **Is there really only one way to God?**

First question: *What about the person who is kind and good, but who has never heard about Jesus - would God really send that person to hell? That doesn't seem fair.*

### **1) Yes, there really is a hell. Most of what the Bible says about hell is spoken by Jesus Himself.**

Matthew 10:28 CSB

28 Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 13:49-50 CSB

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:41 CSB

41 "Then he will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!

Matthew 25:46 CSB

46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

### **2) God is wrathful when goodness is violated, and He is right to be.**

We don't like wrath, because our experience of it is nearly always (maybe even always) tainted by our selfishness, pride, impatience, etc., even when we are feeling wrath about something we should be wrathful about.

God's wrath rises up out of His goodness. This is not true for us.

3) God is just. When a wrong has been committed, a price must be paid. Amazingly, God offers to pay that price Himself, and that happens only through Jesus. We must be telling people about Jesus!

Romans 10:13-20 CSB

13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. 16 But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? 17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ. 18 But I ask, "Did they not hear?" Yes, they did: Their voice has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world. 19 But I ask, "Did Israel not understand?" First, Moses said, I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that lacks understanding. 20 And Isaiah says boldly, I was found by those who were not looking for me; I revealed myself to those who were not asking for me.

4) God will *always* do what is right and good. We may not be able to see it clearly now because we are broken and blind, but at the end, we will say "God is good."

Genesis 18:25 "...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

Second question: *Aren't all religions really worshipping the same God?*

We can take three approaches to this question:

- 1) Biblical
- 2) Rational
- 3) Historical

### **The Biblical approach:**

- Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.
- Exodus 23:13 Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.
- Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one
- Deuteronomy 6:14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you
- Isaiah 43:11-12 I—I am the Lord. Besides me, there is no Savior. I alone declared, saved, and proclaimed— and not some foreign god among you.
- Isaiah 44:6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god."
- Isaiah 46:9 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

### **A rational approach**

"God is too big for one religion." "I think God is like...." "Every religion is talking about the same God." *Where did you get that knowledge??*

A purely speculative approach to God is unwise. We don't approach daily life that way. We live in a universe made of laws, and there are three important facts about those laws:

- 1) They are what they are, and not something else
- 2) We are subject to those laws
- 3) Those laws cannot be violated

In light of that, it's unwise for us to approach life in the universe in a speculative way. It's far better for us to seek actual knowledge of the universe and then live in cooperation with what is true.

If God exists, then God is what God is and not something else. God is powerful, so we are subject to that God, and God's ways cannot be violated. It's far wiser for us to seek actual knowledge about what God is like, rather than just speculate about what we want to be true.

Someday, our *ideas* about God will come face to face with the *reality* of God.

\* All other versions of "god" say that it is up to us to pay the price of justice and balance the scales. Only Christianity says that we can't do anything to restore the balance, because God is too good, and we are too broken, and only Christianity says that God offers to pay the price Himself. When we are finally met with the reality of God, do you want to stand before Him hoping that you did enough to appease Him, or do you want to come before Him fully assured that the price has been paid and that He will welcome you like a loving Father?

## **A historical approach**

Setting the stage:

- The Jewish people were eagerly waiting for a King who was prophesied about in their scriptures. He was going to set up a kingdom that would be both global and eternal, and it was going to be glorious.
- Almost nobody believed in *physical* resurrection, not even many of the Jews.

Christianity formed very suddenly and spread very rapidly. Some characteristics of the movement:

- They believed Jesus had *physically* resurrected, and *physical* resurrection was coming for all who put their trust in Him. People were changing their beliefs about the afterlife in droves.
- They believed that Jesus was the King who had been prophesied about.
- They refused to follow the polytheistic religion of the Romans, even in the face of violent execution.
- Other movements and rebellions against Rome died out when the Romans captured and killed their leaders, but not Christianity. Why?

When we look from a historical perspective at the formation of Christianity, how it formed, the environment in which it formed, at what those early Christians believed and how they behaved, *these things are very difficult to explain if Jesus stayed dead.*

His resurrection would have been easy to debunk. Just produce a body, or go and talk to the people who were there in the days after His crucifixion. Paul even encourages this.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 CSB

3 For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. 6 Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep.

If Jesus stayed dead:

- Why would so many people change their beliefs about the afterlife?
- How could a dead guy be a King?
- Why would they be willing to die for what they weren't certain was true?
- Why didn't the Christian movement die out when its Founder was killed, when other movements did?

The Old Testament was pointing at Jesus, His death, and His resurrection all along. It is the dramatic plot twist that validates and ties it all together.

The Old Testament claims to give us a picture of the ultimate nature of reality - how the universe got here, why the universe is the way that it is, why we are the way we are, what our purpose is, who God is, what God is like, and the nature of His relationship with us. It claims to be the voice of God.

If Jesus really did come back to life, fulfilling the prophecies about Him, then we should take very seriously the idea that God really is speaking to us through His word and through Jesus.

In light of all of this, does it make sense for us to reject this claim of truth and decide to find our own truth? Do other options have this kind of validation?

...and if it's all true, is there anything more worth living for?

### **The implications for COH**

When we don't tell people about Jesus, then we live as though we believe they don't actually need Him, that their road will lead them to a salvation without Him.

Could 2020 be the year that we begin, as a church body and as individuals, to loudly, boldly, and lovingly tell people about Jesus?

Can we love God enough to not be okay with other "gods" getting the glory that only He deserves?

Can we love people enough to tell them about the best thing they can live for, about where they can finally find true purpose and satisfaction