

# **Why God Allows Evil – Study Guide**

## *Chapter 5: How Can Eternal Punishment Be Fair?*

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## Study Questions: Chapter 5: "How Can Eternal Punishment Be Fair?"

1. Jones says "the plain and most unforced reading of Scripture" is that "eternal punishment awaits those who reject the good news" (p. 94).
  - a. Is hell really eternal? Some people object to the idea of hell, offering explanations like annihilation or universal salvation as alternatives. From which Scriptures do we know that hell is eternal?
  - b. Others object to the idea that "a good and loving God could send people to hell." From what Scriptures do we know that God is good? From what Scriptures do we know that God loves us?
2. Jones says many seem to believe, "If I don't understand hell, if I don't understand how eternal punishment could possibly be fair, then it must not be fair" (p. 94). Therefore, many conclude that hell is no more than a period of punishment followed by annihilation—that is, we simply cease to exist. What are two reasons Jones says we may improperly judge the fairness of hell?
3. Jones says that in addition, we underestimate the seriousness of rebellion against God, and therefore "to say that rebellion in God's kingdom is a big deal is akin to saying that global thermonuclear war is inconvenient" (p. 94).

On p. 94, Jones mentions a surprising effect of sin and rebellion on earth. Why is this surprising to us?

4. Why should the answer to this question make us wonder whether we can understand the fairness of an eternal hell?
5. To describe the nature of hell, D.A. Carson says that figurative language about hell uses incompatible images to describe hell (p. 95). What is the point of Carson's comment?

6. Hell is described by picturesque language, including fire. Do you think the fire of hell is literal or figurative? Is it more serious if it is literal? Or figurative?
7. Jones describes some ways that people have portrayed hell as worse than it really is. Why is it important, especially in discussing hell, not to say more than what is described in Scripture?
8. Jesus describes the suffering of the rich man in Luke 16. Jones emphasizes that although the rich man was in pain, he was able to do several things (p. 98). Jones quotes Murray Harris, saying that the rich man was still able to do three things. What were these things? Why is this important?
9. Jones observes that nowhere does Scripture suggest that hell will be filled with repentant souls. Do you agree?
  - a. Why might no one in hell be able to repent?
  - b. Considering again the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, do you think this is an example of repentance (Luke 16:30)? Why or why not?
10. Jones observes “when the veneer of civilization is stripped away at the judgment and people are revealed for who they really are, then we will see that all human rebels will reject God” (p. 103).

What does civilization have to do with masking our rebellion?

As an example, Jones observes that hijack survivors later divorce their spouses who acted with cowardice during the hijack crisis. Can you think of other examples which show our “true colors”?

11. John Stott says, “I question whether ‘eternal conscious torment’ is compatible with the biblical revelation of divine justice, unless the impenitence of the lost also continues throughout eternity.”
  - a. Is eternal punishment of a continually unrepentant heart justified? Why?
  - b. Can you think of another reason why eternal punishment is justified?

12. On p. 104, Dallas Willard says, “I am thoroughly convinced that God will let everyone into heaven who, in his considered opinion, can stand it.”

What does he mean by this?

13. Jones says, “perhaps the existence of an eternal hell will serve as an eternal reminder of the horror of rebellion” (p. 105). Would anyone need to be reminded? Who and why?

14. Read Luke 13:1-5 and summarize Jesus’ teaching.

Do you think anyone *should* go to hell?