



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Dear Luke,

You asked if we believed in purgatory. You wondered if your nihilist friend would go to hell if there is no purgatory.

We do not believe in purgatory, since there is no mention of it in the Scriptures. The origin of purgatory dates back to ancient pagan times. From Wikipedia:

“The idea of purgatory has roots that date back into antiquity. A sort of proto-purgatory called the "celestial Hades" appears in the writings of Plato and Heraclides Ponticus and in many other pagan writers. This concept is distinguished from the Hades of the underworld described in the works of Homer and Hesiod. In contrast, the celestial Hades was understood as an intermediary place where souls spent an undetermined time after death before either moving on to a higher level of existence or being reincarnated back on earth.

“The idea of Purgatory as a physical place (like heaven and hell) was "born" in the late 11th century. Medieval theologians concluded that the purgatorial punishments consisted of material fire.”

If there is no purgatory, would an unbeliever or sinful person (and we are all sinful) be subject to hell?

Where did the traditional concept of hell originate? Nowhere in the 53 passages of the Old and New Testament where “hell” is used in the King James Version is there support for the idea of torture of people by a merciful Creator. Instead, the Scriptures repeatedly support a reward of eternal life *or* death, a one-time event for eternity. As the scriptures say, “The wages of sin is death,” (Romans 6:23) not torture. The Western religions from Roman times through the Middle Ages borrowed the doctrine of eternal torture from the pagan philosophers. Certain writers of the Middle Ages had such tremendous influence on the Christian-professing world that their writings and teachings came to be generally accepted and believed, until it became the doctrine of the Christian-professing world.

Our belief is that hell is not a scriptural concept and that salvation is available to all of humanity, but that availability exists on two levels, heavenly and earthly. The subject of the two parts of salvation is basic and crucial for understanding God’s beautiful plan of the ransom for all. When Jesus died, he paid the price once for all, redeeming Adam and the entire human race. God has a place for everyone in either his heavenly or earthly kingdoms and Jesus’ sacrifice included all of humankind, regardless of when a person lived or whether he has accepted Jesus as his Savior now or not. “This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one

God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given at its proper time.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6) “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he was condemned to death, not hell. Adam and all his progeny await their reawakening in the future Day of Judgment when everyone who has ever lived (unbelievers and sinful ones as well) will be awakened from the sleep of death and granted the opportunity for everlasting life on earth during the thousand-year reign of Christ. Hell is the grave or state of oblivion and not a place of eternal punishment.

Will your nihilist friend go to hell? When your nihilist friend dies, he will know nothing. He will be in a state of oblivion until it is his time to be reawakened on earth (Job 14:13-14) and have an opportunity for salvation during the Millennial reign of Christ and his faithful followers, who are now reigning with Him in heaven. Please search our website for “hell” for podcasts where we typically address every Scripture on the subject to show how harmonious God’s plan is with His character of love.

We hope we have answered your questions. Be sure to sign up for our weekly newsletter to receive CQ Rewind at ChristianQuestions.com. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

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