



AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

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Why So Wide the Gate?

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If God knows the future, why would He have created a world in which the majority of souls would end up in hell forever?

The short answer: to glorify Himself. God did not take counsel from anyone when he authored creation. Actually, creation is understood to be part of the expression of God's eternal purposes.

What does it mean to "glorify?"

To glorify means to honor or to reveal. Essentially, the creation is a product of God honoring and revealing Himself as He really is.

So you're telling me that God intended for people to be destroyed in hell right from the start? How can that honor God?

The Bible reveals that God created the world *very good* (Genesis 1:31). It was the choices of men and women that plunged humanity into its sinful and fallen state. Furthermore, the Bible addresses how God feels about lost humanity. For instance, God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

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He is also patient in bringing about His necessary judgment because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Even in the Old Testament God is revealed as desiring

to see the lost saved when He says, "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:23, 32). If we are to assume anything regarding God's intentions for people, we should certainly consider what He's revealed personally in Scripture.

Are you suggesting that God was unaware that mankind would become sinful or that this was somehow beyond His control?

No, not at all. The Bible assures us that Jesus was considered a "sacrificial lamb" who was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). It is also apparent that

God knew and controlled the future of the prophet Jeremiah when He said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). God had all knowledge when He created the world. To suggest that God was unaware that mankind would fall into sin runs contrary to our understanding of the omniscience of God.

This is starting to sound like "double-speak." How can God plan the creation and then feel bad for folks when it goes the way He planned it?

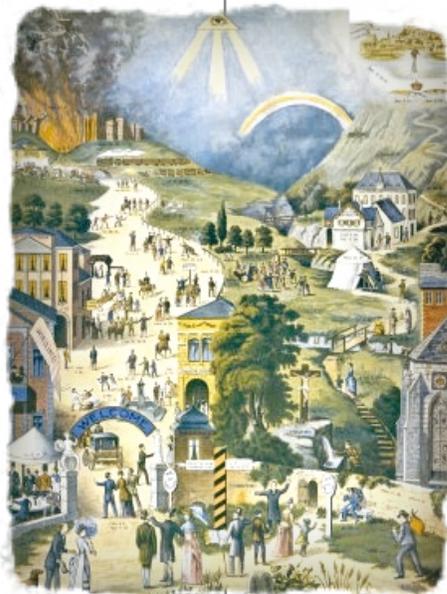
The problem here lies in our inability to fully grasp the eternal purposes of

God, not with God contradicting Himself. God does not determine to do a thing like we humans would do it. He is not subject to time, the reasoning process, or the limitation of knowledge. He says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways (Isaiah 55:9)." What we ascertain of God is the result of His condescending to us in a way that we can understand. Our minds can barely process the concept of an

eternal state, let alone the details of an eternal Mind. When trying to comprehend an infinite being, one would expect to come up a bit short.

I'm still unsettled with this.

Well, you're in good company. But there are many things that we *can* settle. We can accept the Biblical revelation of who God is. He



Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. —Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:13, NASB

is the Creator who works all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). That means that He is ultimately in control. He is also the merciful Savior who is faithful and just to forgive us

of our sins (1 John 1:9) if we will confess them to Him. He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6) and He is the Judge who will sit on a great white throne (Revelation 20:11).

In His initial creation and in all eventual outcomes, God will be glorified (honored; displayed) as He really is. He is the savior of the needy. He is merciful and gracious to the ones who put their trust in Him. And yes, He is the Judge who will bring all unrepentant sinners to account for their own actions, respecting the dignity of their choices. Even in the judgment, God is glorified as wholly just, righteous, and respectful.