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HEAVEN, YES - HELL, NO ??

Someone has said that when it comes to eternity, you have two choices, smoking or non-smoking. However, many Americans just aren't sure what awaits them in the afterlife. How about you?

TheStateOfTheology.com reveals considerable confusion. In response to the statement "*Heaven is a real place, not just a concept*" only 47% of Americans agree strongly. Only 41% agree strongly with "*Hell is a real place, not just a concept.*" Only 27% agree strongly with "*God shows His wrath.*" Only 42% agree strongly with "*There will be a time when Jesus Christ returns to judge all people who have lived.*"

And what are the alternatives about the afterlife? Worldview Academy publishes an interesting flyer entitled "***What Happens When You Die?***" which summarizes the possibilities in three major alternatives: extinction, reincarnation, and heaven-or-hell as revealed in the Bible. It's a useful exercise.

EXTINCTION - some people believe that when you die, you simply cease to exist. How do they know? Opinion or fact? Based on what authority? Is the authority you trust "all-knowing"? If you say yes, there are lots of questions we'd like to ask that authority! But of course, only the God of the Bible is all-knowing, and He says heaven and hell are real. So what happens to your belief in extinction when you die - and find out you are wrong? Your "faith" in the idea of extinction won't do you any good then!

REINCARNATION - is the idea that the human spirit gets recycled into a new body, even animals. You may become a god or merge into the "nirvana" of nothingness. Ask "how do you know?" If they say because so-and-so claims to have been reincarnated, then we need to know if that authority is totally trustworthy? All-knowing? Ever been wrong about anything? Have YOU ever been wrong about anything? Yes, of course - so you can't be totally sure about either extinction or reincarnation, because that requires a level of knowledge impossible for any human being to possess. Unless such truth were revealed by Someone who does know all things, as in the Bible. That's the third alternative.

HEAVEN OR HELL - The Bible says heaven or hell awaits every person (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12). Either eternal consequences of sin and rejecting Jesus, or eternal rewards from receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Heaven for believing in Jesus - and hell for all who choose not to believe and "take their chances" being measured against the pure holiness of God. Remember, believing Jesus is based on the authority of God as the Creator of life and Author of Scripture. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "***I AM the way, the truth and the life.***" Jesus forgives sin and gives eternal life to all who belong to Him. Undeserved.

Think carefully about these three alternatives. If you believe what the Bible says, trusting in Jesus and living your life accordingly, what's the worst that could happen? If the Bible is wrong and you go extinct or reincarnate, all you've done is trade a Christian life for the risk. No great loss, since that's the greatest life - and imitating Jesus would be the best "karma" anyone could ever have. And thinking about karma as the basis for reincarnation - what happens to infants who die? What if they reincarnate as a Hitler or Mao or rapist or suicide bomber? How is that fair? And really, would you prefer to get what you really deserve from your earthly life - or would you prefer to get mercy and grace through Jesus?

Plus, how can you KNOW where you will spend eternity? Most people say "I'm hoping for heaven" but the Bible says you can know NOW. 1 John 5:11 says "***this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.***" That's really clear. Trust Jesus. And - faith comes with the assurance of the authority of God. The next verse says "***I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.***"

So what will it be for you? Smoking or non-smoking? Heaven, yes - Hell, no? There's no second chance. Hebrew 9:24 says "***Just as it is appointed for man to die once, then after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly awaiting Him.***"

How about you? Are you eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus - because you are trusting in Christ alone for salvation and that He has already paid the penalty for your sins in thought, word, and deed? If you're a believer, that's the **GOOD NEWS** about Jesus - that you get to share with everyone around you!