

RECONCILIATION

Relationship Language

Our sin separates us from God. God cannot wrap his perfect arms around our imperfection. This is a huge problem for human beings because we are “contingent beings,” which means that we do not have life in and of ourselves but depend upon God for our existence. Separated away from God (the source of life), we will die.

Study of Hell in Matthew

A common description of hell in Matthew’s gospel is “outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30).

Light is a symbol of God’s presence: (e.g. Matthew 4:16 – “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”) See also the Aaronic Blessing in Num. 6.

Darkness is a symbol of separation from God. Hell is separation from God and everything that is good.

It is very significant, therefore, that Matthew says this concerning the crucifixion and death of Jesus (27:45-46):

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The clear implication of this passage is that Jesus experienced separation from God. He did so in our place.

Heidelberg Catechism

Q&A 44 Why does the creed add ‘He descended into hell?’

To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.

It is not only the physical suffering that Jesus suffered on the cross, but most especially the ‘theological’ suffering that is significant for our salvation.

Jesus’ separation from God was the price paid to reconcile me to God and bring me back into His presence for a relationship with Him. Jesus experienced total separation from God in order to reconcile me to Him.