

# God's Mercy Endures for the Age

Psalms 136:1 "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his mercy endures for the age."

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that God is both loving and omnipotent. Let's further assume that God loves everyone and sincerely desires that all of us eventually become "saved." That being the case, how is it possible that anyone could possibly be consigned by God to everlasting torture in Hell without any possibility of redemption?

Obviously, eternal conscious torment of unbelievers in Hell is incompatible with God's desire that all be saved. It is also incompatible with God's omnipotence.

Here is a list of various Christian views about Hell that would be compatible with God's love and omnipotence:

1. Hell is a real place, but people don't stay there forever.
2. Hell is not a place, but a state of mind, and people may be freed from it by changing their attitudes towards God and humanity. No one is stuck in a "hellish" frame of mind forever.
3. Hell is a series of situations whereby people who have strayed from God, reap the negative effects of what they have sown, thereby learning from their mistakes. Eventually all of the strays are led home to God.
4. The imagery of fire in the Bible represents a process of purification and cleansing, not retribution.

All of the above interpretations of Hell are supported by Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments.

The ONLY INTERPRETATION that is NOT SUPPORTED BY SCRIPTURE is that HELL LASTS FOREVER. The words in the Bible that are translated "eternal" and "forever" are derivatives of the Hebrew word "Olam" and its Greek counterpart "Aion." The meaning of these two words, and their derivatives, is the EXACT OPPOSITE of "eternal." The literal meaning is "age", "age-during," or "pertaining to an age or series of ages." By definition, an age, or series of ages, has a beginning and an end.

Fortunately, God's mercy does not need to last forever. It only needs to last for an age, until we are redeemed from the Hells of our own making. This is the literal meaning of the word "לֵבְיָוֶן" in Psalms 136:1.