

Aussies think everyone goes to heaven so you might hear at a barbecue, “God doesn’t want anyone to go to hell.”

1. Justice is important

Let me tell you a story. The Aussie Wallabies are playing the All Blacks Rugby Union for the Bledisloe Cup. The scores are locked 12 all. But Wallaby captain Michael Hooper gets the ball and is running for line. He is about to score the match winning try.

When out of nowhere a giant All Black front row forward appears. He grabs Hooper around the neck and flattens him to turf. Hooper lies there paralysed and the game stops. The medical team sprint onto the field to treat Hooper. Finally they carry Hooper off on a stretcher.

When all is clear the ref blows whistle and says, “Play on.” No one is sent off; there is not even a penalty kick awarded. The infringement is just ignored. But that doesn’t happen, does it?!!!

A game needs rules and penalties for infringements. The ref must penalise teams that violate the rules otherwise the game will degenerate into chaos. It would be unplayable.

It is the same with society. There must be laws for good order and courts must impose penalties on those who break them. A judge can’t just let rapists, murderers, child abusers go free.

In the same way if there is going to be ultimate justice in life God must judge the world. He must punish the guilty. What sort of god would he be if he said evil doesn’t matter? If he didn’t care about right and wrong?

Some people might say if God is a god of love he wouldn’t punish anyone. But upholding what is just and fair is an act of love.

The Bible rejoices in the fact that God will judge the world.

*⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;
⁹ let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:8-9)*

He will put wrongs right. He will ultimately make everything fair. He will remove all that is evil from his creation. It will be all gone. That is something to look forward to not reject.

2. Point to Jesus

In any discussion with a non-Christian it is important to bring the conversation back to Jesus. In discussion hell you could ask, “Why do you think God sent Jesus?” Why did he have to send his Son to suffer and die on cross? If there is no hell what did Jesus save us from?

You could point them to what the Bible says: ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

Firstly: God loves the people of the world. Saying, "God doesn't want anyone to go to hell" is true. God is not some tyrant who wants to punish. It is important that we correct people's idea of God. Many people have a distorted picture of what God is like. He is a God of amazing love.

He sent his Son to die on cross so we could have eternal life. He was prepared to pay that price to rescue us from hell. If we didn't need rescuing, why would God do that?

In the NRMA magazine, Open Road it was reported: "On August, 1998, 13 year old Teneille Bolte Fell into the flooded Nepean River. She was being swept down the river towards weir. It was getting dark when the Care Flight helicopter spotted her with a search light.

Ian Spencer was lowered on wire to rescue her. Twice she was swept from his arms by the force of the water. Then the helicopter was approaching power lines. With only 100m to go a last attempt was made to save her. Spencer couldn't get rescue harness on her so he just wrapped his arms and legs round in a great bear hug. They were winched back into the helicopter.

The crew received an international bravery award. NRMA CEO, Eric Dodd said, "It is fantastic that the efforts of the CareFlight crew were recognised with this award. Without their help Teneille would have drowned."

If Teneille didn't need rescuing why would crew risk lives? If we didn't need rescuing why would Jesus give his life? Jesus had to die to rescue us from a real danger, from hell. So we could have eternal life; that is to be with God for ever; to be in heaven. God is offering us a chance to be friends with him. He actually wants us to live with him for ever.

It is our choice. John 3:16 says: "...*whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" God is offering us eternal life - friendship with him for ever. We can either accept or reject that offer. All we have to do is believe in Jesus and follow him.

If we choose friendship with God we go to be with him. If we reject friendship with God, God respects our choice. We won't go to be with him. It is our choice.

3. We are answerable to God

Jesus says: "³⁶*But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.* ³⁷*For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*" (Matthew 12:36-37)

The trouble with speaking about sin and judgment is that people reject the idea of being accountable to God. Ever since the Enlightenment western society has claimed personal autonomy. Our society claims the right to make their own moral choices. You can see it in the debate about abortion. The claim is that women have the right to make their own choices about their own bodies.

It is the same in sexual morals and other areas. People claim the right to make their own choices. They are not answerable to anyone else.

When you go to a supermarket you go round the isles and you fill your trolley with all sorts of things from the shelves. You are free to choose this brand or that; whatever you want. But at the end you have to go to the check out. Every item is scanned. You have to pay for what you have chosen.

You don't own the store. You are accountable to the company for what you have taken. You have to pay for the items you have chosen.

This is God's world. God made the world and he made us. We are not free agents. We belong to him and are accountable for the choices we make: *"...everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment."*

This world is much better than the best supermarket. There is so much that is good and beautiful in it. It is God who has provided all this goodness. Above all he has given us his own love. We are all accountable for how we have responded to that love. Each one will have to stand before him and give account.

4. Hell is real

Not only do we need to convince other people of this, we need to be convinced ourselves of that hell is real or we won't have a sense of urgency to speak of Jesus.

Some people say the Old Testament presents a god of wrath but the New Testament presents a god of love. But in fact the Old Testament never uses the word "hell". It is the New Testament and particularly Jesus himself who warns us of the reality of hell.

Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats.

³¹ *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left ...*

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:31-33, 41)

He makes it clear that there will be those who will go *"...into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."*

He also says: ⁴⁷ "And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where 'the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" (Mark 9:47-48)

These are just two of several places where Jesus warns us of the reality God's judgment and of hell. The way we live this life has eternal consequences.

But we don't talk about hell to scare people into believing. We want to point people to Jesus to see the wonder of his salvation. ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)* God wants to save us. We must choose friendship with God.