

# Is Planet Earth Actually Hell?

Years ago, I wrote a short story I titled "Aka Earth." In the story, an angel is transporting a soul to hell, through the blackness of space. The angel described hell as distance from God. The sentence was temporary, but its length was unknown. It was populated with murderers, thieves, hypocrites, liars, rapists, and an assortment of blasphemers and non-believers who set their own rules, and governed the dreadful abode.

Hell was an existence without God's guidance and laws. The inhabitants did not even know that they were in hell, serving a sentence for the transgressions of a previous existence. In hell, God neither acknowledged them nor answered their prayers.

Because of God's silence, the prisoners questioned His existence. They endured pain, suffering, insatiable desires, and unpredictable emotions. They cheated and used each other, and lied and plotted against one another. All happiness was fleeting, and any rewards or advancements only garnered jealousy.

Their existence was inundated with sadness, frustration, and loneliness. The occupants were aware of their physical limitations, vulnerabilities, and fragility. Yet, they were sentenced to live in a world of their own making.

Earth is also known as hell in my story. And, in many ways, it does not seem much of a stretch of the imagination.

This scenario provides answers for many enduring questions. Why is there pain and suffering? Why does God remain silent and not reveal Himself? Why do prayers go unanswered? The answer is: because we are all serving a life-sentence in hell, and were separated from His presence.

If Earth is in fact hell, why then do so many have seemingly good lives? Goodness is a relative term. Even the wealthiest and luckiest among us still suffer in a multitude of ways. Hearts are broken, families separated, friends use each other and then quickly move to the next friendship, and people we know best disappoint us, and even intentionally hurt us. Wealth can buy us better – but not perfect – health. To be alive is to suffer in some manner.

And what of the monsters of history? Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Mao, and today's monsters in North Korea and throughout the Middle-east, slaughter and oppress millions of people. If this is hell, why are

they not suffering? Perhaps they are actually demons. We do not recognize them as such, because we do not even know we are in hell. We assume they are people like us. But, are they?

In a sense, this is the ultimate suffering. The fact that we are in hell, surrounded by evil demons (or souls), and are unaware of it. We hope – even pray – for peace and happiness, yet never realize it. If we knew we were located in hell, and that our sentence was limited, we could resign ourselves to accept the suffering and wait for our sentence to end when we died. An analogy might be an inmate in a prison, counting the days until his sentence was over. However, unlike a prisoner, we still hope to change our surroundings, to pray and believe in a better world, and to seek a God that we are unaware has turned away from us until our death.

Is Earth actually hell? It is doubtful. Yet tragically, when we learn, hear, or experience the atrocities humanity inflicts on itself, it sometimes seems very much like hell for too many. If hell is actually worse than our current condition, then it must be a truly frightening place.

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