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# Erasing Hell: What God Said About Eternity, And The Things We Made Up



## Synopsis

How could a loving God send people to Hell? Will people have a chance after they die to believe in Jesus and go to heaven? With a humble respect for God's Word, Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle address the deepest questions you have about eternal destiny. They've asked the same questions. Like you, sometimes they just don't want to believe in Hell. But, as they write, "We cannot afford to be wrong on this issue." This is not a book about who is saying what. It's a book about what God says. It's not a book about impersonal theological issues. It's a book about people God loves. It's not a book about arguments, doctrine, or being right. It's a book about the character of God. Erasing Hell will immerse you in the truth of Scripture as, together with the authors, you find not only the truth but the courage to live it out.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After watching the promotional video from David C. Cook Publishing I was excited to read a book by an author whom I deeply respect and even admire for their previous emotional & challenging works. After watching the video I expected Erasing Hell to be a exegetical and challenging study of the topic of hell from a Biblical perspective by an author passionate about the truth. I had expectations when I started reading Erasing Hell. Were my expectations correct? Yes. Francis Chan and co-author, Preston Sprinkle (whom Chan admits did . . . "the majority of the research" pg. 11) do a phenomenal job of examining the context of scripture and presenting the Biblical truth about the realities of hell. This book is a sobering reminder of how we as Western Christians and the Western

church have watered down the language of hell to appeal to our own comfort, when in reality the words that Jesus and others used in the Bible are both intimidating and clear: Hell is a real place and many people will go there.

**WHAT I DIDN'T LOVE** Maybe I missed the point but after watching the promotional video I was expecting Chan & Sprinkle to present their own Biblical study of hell, which they did, however I did not expect them to spend so much time challenging the book: *Love Wins* by Rob Bell. I am not 100% sure why I did not expect this from Chan, but regardless it was my expectation. In no way do they "bash" Bell or throw him under the bus like many other Evangelical authors, pastors and leaders have been doing over the past few months, but they definitively challenge quotes, thoughts and passages of scripture directly from *Love Wins*. Although this challenge does not overwhelm the entire book, in the seven chapters of *Erasing Hell* there are 87 footnotes, fourteen of these footnotes directly reference *Love Wins*, all within the first three chapters. The fact that Chan & Sprinkle have done this make the book relevant to it's counterpart and possibly irrelevant to the general population of readers. It makes me wonder if this book will be relevant in a few years when *Love Wins* fades off the bestsellers lists.

Another minor thing that bothered me was the cover. I know it sounds petty, and I might just be that in this scenario, but the fact that the cover of *Erasing Hell* resembles another book by Rob Bell, *Jesus Wants to Save Christians*, leaves me wondering why they choose the design they did. Maybe it was just happenstance but I wonder the context of why it was chosen.

Lastly, and more importantly the one thing I struggled with from *Erasing Hell* was the fact that the authors spent so much time emphasizing the context of scripture. Context can be a great thing, in fact it may just be the most important thing other than the words themselves, but when it came to the chapter titled: "Has Hell Changed? Or Have We?", the authors provide numerous references to first century authors yet they provide very little context to the passages they reference. At the end of the chapter I wrote: "I feel like I am supposed to take their word for it, but I know nothing about the context of the passages the authors quoted."

**WHAT I LOVED** Maybe I shouldn't use the word love. It is too nice. Hell is not nice, and nobody, myself included should love a book that frames up the realities of what hell is about. After reading this book some may want to use words like: sobering, humbling, motivating and convicting. Chan & Sprinkle do a great job of intertwining truth and emotion. Some authors write only from an emotional perspective, others only from a knowledge-based point of view. Hell is difficult topic to wrestle with, but manipulating the conversation to make us feel comfortable is both irresponsible and selfish; however, so is forgetting that peoples lives are at stake. Chan and Sprinkle make this point clear on many occasions: "This is not one of those doctrines where you can toss in your two cents, shrug your shoulders, and move on. Too much is at stake. Too many people

are at stake." Pg. 14/15 The one thing that I struggled with most from Rob Bell's book was context. The exegetical study of the passages of scripture seemed sloppy at best. Erasing Hell flips that on its head. If context is everything, as one of my professors always pointed out, then Chan & Sprinkle have done the groundwork for the reader to lead them to a solid conclusion based upon research and Biblical truth. I am grateful to the authors for the sincere effort to present both sides of the argument in context. After reading Erasing Hell, I am deeply challenged by the honesty, transparency, and conviction that Chan & Sprinkle write with. As a reader I am left wrestling with what I believe about hell and how far I am willing to go to know & share the truth. "Coming face-to-face with these passages on hell and asking these tough questions is a heart-wrenching process. It forces me (us) back to a sobering reality: this is not just about doctrine; it's about destinies." pg. 72 The reality that destinies are at stake makes my stomach turn. It turns Francis Chan's stomach and it should turn yours. Hell is tough to read about, study or talk about. However, we must read about it, talk about it and study it. I agree with the authors that hell is too important to get wrong, so if you have read Love Wins you MUST read this book. If you haven't read Love Wins but you are curious what the Bible says about hell, then I highly recommend you pick-up this dynamic book from Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle. "While hell can be a paralyzing doctrine, it can also be an energizing one, for it magnifies the beauty of the cross." pg. 148

I picked up Chan and Sprinkle's book on hell and read it in a day. As other commenters have noted, it is not a bad book. But, it also is not a compelling read either. It appears to have been written as a counter to Rob Bell's book "Love Wins" and, in that sense, it presents some notable rebuttals to some of Bell's points. But, unfortunately, after reading it, I felt like I had not actually read a whole book, but only a "Cliff's Notes" version. Too often, I got to the end of a chapter or a section and thought "where's the rest of it?" There were many points that were tossed out there interestingly, but then not expanded on. I was often left wanting more on the subject and feeling like I had just gotten a summary rather than an analysis. To me, Chan and Sprinkle were not really attempting to explain hell in more detail, but only to rebut a few limited points from Rob Bell's book. As such, it should not be subtitled "What God said about eternity, and the things we've made up." Rather, it should be something much more limited and simpler, like "Rebutting some misconceptions about hell." That is really all it does -- although I do think it does that effectively. But, to give the impression it is a more detailed discussion of hell is not really accurate. Perhaps this is because Chan and Sprinkle are wrestling themselves with where they come out on understanding hell. From comments in the book, they clearly give both annihilationism and eternal conscious torment views a fair seat within

orthodoxy. And, although Chan clearly supports eternal conscious torment, he also goes to some length to indicate that annihilationism is a possible view from an exegesis of the scriptures. (in all honesty, the book would have been better if it discussed this issue more) At times, though, it appears that Chan and Sprinkle do the very thing they warn against. Namely, they read scripture in a way that supports their theology rather than taking it at face value. For example, in chapter 1, they discuss 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and the meaning of the passage that says "God wants all men to be saved." They say that "all men" must mean "all kinds of men" because surely God is not telling Timothy to pray for every person on earth in verse 1, where Paul encourages prayers for "all people." I think Chan and Sprinkle twist the passage to fit their theology. There is no reason the passage cannot mean what it says - namely prayers should be offered for everyone. In the passage, Paul is not telling Timothy himself to pray for everyone by name. Rather, the passage is directed to the church and the point is that we are to pray for the whole world. Namely, we are called to love the whole world, and not just some people. It is not impossible to pray for the whole world. There is no requirement that we pray by name for everyone! For example, I can fulfill that passage by praying something to the effect of "God, bless our president, our senators, and give them wisdom. And, not only them, but I pray that everyone throughout the world would come to know you." Boom! Just like that I prayed for everyone! I am not trying to be trite, but I am just trying to show that reading "all kinds of men" into that passage is simply a theological gymnastic exercise to try to fit into a certain theology, rather than taking it for what it appears to say on its face. One reaches the "all kinds of men" interpretation usually to try to fit into "reformed" theology - not because anything in the passage demands "everyone" or "all men" to mean anything less than what it says. Call me crazy, but I think God really meant what He said - namely, He wants me to pray for everyone and He wants all men to be saved! This is only one example, but there were plenty of other examples throughout where it appears that Chan and Sprinkle offer a weak interpretation designed to match their theology rather than to take the passage at face value. But, all that aside, I still agree with most of their rebuttals of Bell's book and think that this book would have value if used specifically as a rebuttal to Bell's book. I just don't think it has much value as a stand-alone book on hell. BTW, to be clear, I am a big fan of Chan and very much liked *Forgotten God* and *Crazy Love*, so please do not mistake me for a "hater!" :-)

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