14526 - Paradise and Hell exist and they will abide so long as Allah wills them to abide

the question

Do Paradise and Hell exist at present? Or have they not been created yet?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah are agreed that Paradise and Hell are two created things that exist at present. None of them doubt that because of the volume of evidence from the Quran and Sunnah which indicates that.

From the Quran:

Allah says (interpretation of the meanings):

"[Paradise] prepared for Al-Muttaqoon (the pious)" [Aal 'Imraan 3:133]

"Race with one another in hastening towards forgiveness from your Lord (Allah), and Paradise the width whereof is as the width of the heaven and the earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers"[al-Hadeed 57:21]

"And indeed he (Muhammad) saw him [Jibreel (Gabriel)] at a second descent (i.e. another time).

Near Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (a lote tree of the utmost boundary over the seventh heaven beyond which none can pass).

Near it is the Paradise of Abode"[al-Najm 53:13-15]

Allah says concerning Hell (interpretation of the meaning):

“prepared for the disbelievers”[al-Baqarah 2:24]

The word prepared indicates that they exist at present.

From the Sunnah:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw Sidrat al-Muntaha (a lote tree of the utmost boundary over the seventh heaven beyond which none can pass), by which he saw the Paradise of Abode, as it says in Saheeh al-Bukhaari (336) and Saheeh Muslim (237) who narrated the hadeeth of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) which tells the story of the Isra’ (Prophet’s Night Journey). At the end of this hadeeth it says: “Jibraa’eel took me until we reached Sidrat al-Muntaha, which was covered with colours, I do not know what they are. Then I entered Paradise and saw that its domes were pearls and its soil was musk.”

In al-Bukhaari (1290) and Muslim (5111) it is narrated from the hadeeth of ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When any one of you dies, he is shown his place morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise, then he is one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of Hell, then he is one of the people of Hell, and he is told, ‘This is your abode until Allah raises you on the Day of Resurrection.”

According to the lengthy hadeeth of al-Baraa’ ibn ‘Aazib, “A voice will call out from heaven, ‘My slave spoke the truth, so provide him with furnishings from Paradise and open for him a door to Paradise so that its fragrant breeze may reach him.’” This is a saheeh hadeeth which was classed as such by Ibn al-Qayyim in Tahdheeb al-Sunan (4/337) and by al-Albaani in Ahkaam al-Janaa’iz (59).

In Saheeh al-Bukhaari (993) and Saheeh Muslim (1512), it is narrated that ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The sun was eclipsed at the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)… and he said: ‘I saw Paradise and I reached out for a bunch of its fruits. If I had managed to take it you would have eaten from it for as long as the earth remains. And I saw Hell, and I have never seen anything more terrifying than it…”

In Saheeh Muslim (646) it is narrated from the hadeeth of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “By the One is Whose hand is my soul, if you had seen what I have seen, you would laugh little and weep much.” They said, “What have you seen, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, “I have seen Paradise and Hell.”

In Sunan al-Tirmidhi (2483) and elsewhere it is narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When Allah created Paradise and Hell, he sent Jibreel to Paradise and said, ‘Look at it and at what I have prepared for its people therein.’ So he went and looked at it and at what Allah had prepared for its people therein. Then he went back to Him and said, ‘By Your Glory, no one will hear of it but he will enter it.’ Then He commanded that it should be surrounded with difficult things. Then He said, ‘Go back and look at what I have prepared for its people therein.’ He went back and saw that it was surrounded with difficult things. He came back and said, ‘By Your Glory, I am afraid that no one will enter it.’ Allah said, ‘Go and look at Hell and see what I have prepared for its people therein.’ [He saw it] with parts of it consuming other parts. He came back and said, ‘By Your Glory, no one who hears of it will enter it.’ So Allah commanded that it should be surrounded with desires. Then he said, ‘Go back to it.’ So he went back, then he said, ‘By Your Glory, I am afraid that no one will be saved from it and that all will enter it.’” Al-Tirmidhi said: this is a saheeh hasan hadeeth. Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath (6/320): its isnaad is qawiy (strong).

And there are very many ahaadeeth on this topic. In his Saheeh, al-Bukhaari wrote a chapter entitled Baab ma jaa’a fi Sifat al-Jannah wa annaha makhlooqah (Chapter on what was narrated concerning the description of Paradise and the fact that it has already been created), in which he listed ahaadeeth, such as the one quoted above, which say that Allah shows the dead person his place in Paradise or Hell after he has been placed in his grave.

All that remains for a person to do is to strive his utmost in worshipping his Lord and refraining from disobeying Him, in the hope that He may attain the victory of being admitted to Paradise and being saved from the painful torment. And Allah knows best.

See Sharh al-‘Aqeedah al-Tahhaawiyyah by Imam Ibn Abi’l-‘Izz al-Hanafi, 1/475; al-Jannah wa’l-

Naar by Shaykh ‘Umar al-Ashqar, 13-18. [Translator’s note: the latter book is available in English under the title Paradise and Hell].