

# Hell: A Biblical Case for Annihilation

Kris Duerksen – January, 2021

Before I get started, I would like to clarify that while the Hell debate is important, it is not a salvation issue, nor will it be a membership issue in our church, nor is it an issue over which Christians should break fellowship. This is a topic about which Christians are free to disagree. It is also a topic that has troubled countless people over the centuries, from both inside and outside of the Church. Ultimately, the thing that matters most is: “What does the Bible teach about Hell?”

**A. Though I used to hold to the common evangelical view that Hell is the place where those who reject Jesus are sent to suffer Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT), I have come to believe what is historically known as the Annihilationist (or Conditionalist) position that Hell is the place of final destruction for those who reject Jesus (Mt 10:28).** I have come to see the Scriptures teaching it as a place of *execution*, not a place of ongoing, everlasting *torment*.

I do not judge those who hold to the ECT view, as I myself held that view for most of my life.

Having said that, the Annihilationist position has become dear to me personally because it takes seriously the many passages of Scripture that describe what we as people deserve for our sins. It has also helped me to see more clearly God’s justice and mercy, and reconciled various contradictions I previously wrestled with in Scripture.

**B. A brief history of how I came to see the Biblical teaching on Hell in a new light:**

In early 2017, while I was an Executive pastor, several people who held to the Annihilationist view asked if they would still be able to join the church as members.

I was the one first tasked with meeting separately with these ‘Annihilationists’ (also known as Conditionalists) and interviewing them about their beliefs. Initially I assumed that their beliefs would be easily refuted and not supported by Scripture, but was surprised to find the opposite; they had a vast wealth of Scripture to support their view, and genuinely desired to stay true to the teaching of the Bible.

I presented my findings to the staff leadership team at the time, and after praying about it together as a group, we decided that this view of Hell was legitimately biblical and that we could happily accept such people into membership.

This started me off on a lengthy process of deep reading, study, and reflection that led to me changing my personal view about Hell in 2019.

**C. History: Early Church Fathers held different views about Hell.** Before Augustine in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the early church fathers held a variety of positions on Hell, including various forms of universalism, eternal conscious torment, and annihilationism.<sup>1</sup> Augustine strongly favored the ECT view, and being the influential

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of respected Early Church Fathers who held to Annihilationism/Conditional Immortality include Ignatius (died 108 AD), Justin Martyr (died 165 AD), Irenaeus (died 202 AD), and Arnobius (died 330 AD). [See: St. Ignatius: *Epistle to the Magnesians*, chapter 5: “Death is the fate of all such” – <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0105.htm>; Justin Martyr:

author he was, it became the predominant view in the church.

In the 1600s annihilationism experienced a resurgence, gaining traction in the 1800s, and finally, in recent decades, the debate has been rekindled with a growing number of respected evangelical scholars and authors either changing their view on Hell<sup>2</sup> or stating that Annihilationism is a legitimate view within evangelical orthodoxy.<sup>3</sup>

Locally known and respected scholars like Dr. Terry Tiessen<sup>4</sup> (not to be confused with Dr. Arden Thiessen) have moved over to the Annihilationist view.

Other highly respected evangelical theologians who hold to the Annihilationist view include, but are not limited to: John Stott (deceased), John Stackhouse, John Wenham (deceased), Michael Green, Gregory Boyd, Richard Swinburne, Richard Bauckham, Preston Sprinkle, and Clark Pinnock.<sup>5</sup>

#### **D. Five reasons why I have come to believe the Bible teaches Annihilation in Hell, not Eternal Conscious Torment.**

##### **1. A large majority of Scripture passages teach the punishment for sinners to be *death* and/or *destruction*, not eternal conscious suffering.**

If we momentarily put aside our preconceived ideas about Hell as a place of eternal conscious torment and just read what the Bible actually says, we find an overwhelming number of passages which speak of the end of the wicked in terms of annihilation, destruction, and death.

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*Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 5 “The Soul is Not In Its Own Nature Immortal” – <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html>; Irenaeus: “It is the Father of all who imparts continuance for ever and ever on those who are saved . . . [who] shall receive also length of days for ever and ever. But he who shall reject it . . . deprives himself of [the privilege of] continuance for ever and ever . . . shall justly not receive from Him length of days for ever and ever.” – For a full exploration of Irenaeus’s Conditionalist view of Hell see: <http://rethinkingHell.com/2012/11/03/deprived-of-continuance-irenaeus-the-conditionalist/> (Jan 28, 2021).]

<sup>2</sup> The New York Times wrote an article about this in 2014, entitled *Tormented in the Afterlife, but not Forever: Conditionalism Gains Ground*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/11/us/tormented-in-the-afterlife-but-not-forever-conditionalism-gains-ground.html? r=0>; The Christian Post wrote an article about this in 2016, entitled *Will the Traditional Christian Belief of Eternal Hell Be Minority View soon?* <https://www.christianpost.com/news/will-the-traditional-christian-belief-of-eternal-hell-be-minority-view-soon.html>; National Geographic posted an article about this phenomenon among Evangelicals as well, entitled *The Campaign to Eliminate Hell* <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/05/160513-theology-Hell-history-christianity/>. In addition, a number of surveys have been conducted among evangelicals to show that Annihilationism/Conditionalism is a growing movement (Evangelical Alliance; Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (2000). “Conclusions and Recommendations”. In Hilborn, David (ed.). *The Nature of Hell*. London: Paternoster Publishing. pp. 130–5).

<sup>3</sup> Chris Date has a pretty extensive list of Early Church Fathers, important historical figures, and contemporary scholars who were/are Annihilationists on his website <http://rethinkingHell.com/explore/> (scroll to the bottom of the page). See also: *Which noted scholars hold to Conditionalism?*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itSt00tNt04&ab\\_channel=oneminuteapologist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itSt00tNt04&ab_channel=oneminuteapologist);

<sup>4</sup> Tiessen, Terry – “How will God finally punish unrepentant sinners? Part 1: My journey in quest of an answer.” (<https://www.thoughtstheological.com/how-will-god-finally-punish-unrepentant-sinners-part-1-my-journey-in-quest-of-an-answer/>, Jan 28, 2021). See also Tiessen’s more recent essay on his formal adoption of Annihilationism: <https://www.thoughtstheological.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Stage-5-excerpt.pdf> (Jan 28, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Again, see Chris Date’s list: <http://rethinkingHell.com/explore/> (scroll to bottom of the article).

◇ The New Testament:

Romans 6:23: The “wages of sin is *death*,” not eternal conscious torment.

The Gospel of John: One of the main themes of this entire book is the contrast of *life* in Jesus vs. *death* apart from Him. John 3:16, one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture, states, “whoever believes in Him shall *not perish* but have eternal life.” Note again that the word is ‘perish,’ not ‘suffer eternal conscious torment.’ Jesus repeats this contrast in John 10:28, “I give them [His followers] eternal life, and they will never *perish*, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

Elsewhere, Jesus speaks of the ‘destruction’ of the wicked (Matt 7:13; 10:28). James teaches that God alone is able to both ‘save and destroy’ (Jam 4:12). And Peter teaches that ‘destruction’ awaits false teachers (2 Pet 2:3). Moreover, all who are ‘enemies of the cross’ have ‘destruction’ as their final end (Phil 3:18-19; see also 2 Pet 3:7).<sup>6</sup>

Consider also those New Testament passages that speak of the fate of the wicked in terms of being consumed by fire. When something is consumed by fire it is burnt up and destroyed. Hebrews 10:27 depict the wicked being ‘consumed’ by fire, and in Matthew 7:19 and John 15:6 Jesus compares the fate of the wicked with branches that are burned up (see also Heb 6:8).<sup>7</sup> One has to have a previous bias about torment in Hell being forever in order to interpret ‘consumed’ and ‘burned’ in these passages to mean ‘kept alive forever and ever.’

◇ The entire Old Testament is full of this theme as well, that the end of the wicked is death and/or destruction. Here is just a small sampling:

In Deuteronomy 29:20 God promises that those who refuse God’s covenant will have their names ‘blotted out from under heaven.’

In the Psalms, evil brings death to the wicked (Ps 34:21). Psalm 37 contrasts the righteous who will live forever (37:27-29) with the wicked who will be ‘cut off . . . be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there’ (Ps 37:9-10, see also verse 2). Later in that same chapter David says that the ‘transgressors shall altogether be destroyed’ (37:38). Psalm 69:28 records David’s prayer that the wicked be ‘blotted out of the book of the living,’ and elsewhere David states that God’s plan for those ‘who do evil’ is to ‘cut off the memory of them from the earth (Ps 34:16). Clearly the Psalmist saw the end of the wicked being death and destruction.<sup>8</sup>

Proverbs continues this theme saying that those who hate the Lord ‘love death’ (8:36), and that when the ‘tempest’ of God’s judgment passes, ‘the wicked are *no more*’ (10:25; see also 12:7). Finally, chapter 24 states ‘[F]or the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out’ (24:20). All of this is the language of annihilation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I took this group of passages and excerpts, with only minor changes, from Gregory Boyd’s excellent article, *The Case for Annihilationism* – <https://reknew.org/2008/01/the-case-for-annihilationism/> (01/29/2021).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The prophets agree that the end of the wicked is annihilation: Isaiah 1:28-31 promises that sinners will be ‘destroyed together’ and ‘consumed.’ Nahum says that in the judgment the wicked will be ‘consumed like stubble fully dried’ (Nah 1:10). Malachi describes God’s day of judgment ‘burning like an oven’ when ‘all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble;’ the judgment will ‘burn them up’ (Mal 4:1).<sup>10</sup>

And the list could go on and on: in the Garden of Eden God does not tell Adam & Eve that the consequence of their disobedience will be eternal conscious suffering, rather He says, “In the day you eat of it, you will surely *die*” (Gen 2:17). Then He sends them out from the Garden and puts a guard at the Tree of Life so that they cannot eat from the tree and continue living (Gen 3:22-24). The punishment and consequence of sin is not eternal torment, but death and destruction.

Finally, the words of Gregory Boyd here are profound: “We must remember the repeated teaching of the Old Testament that while God’s anger endures for a moment, his love endures forever (Ps 30:5; eg. 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ps 100:5; 103:9-10; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1-4, 29; 136:10-26). Is this consistent with the traditional teaching about Hell that God’s love and anger are equally eternal?”<sup>11</sup>

Proponents of the Eternal Conscious Torment view must change the common sense definitions of words like ‘death’ and ‘destruction’ in these many passages to mean something quite different; that the wicked are in fact *kept alive* to suffer never-ending torment, separated from God.

**Question: But aren’t human souls eternal? Doesn’t every human being live forever and ever?** This is the question at the crux of the whole matter. The assumption that the human soul is eternal has become so deeply ingrained in Christian thought that it is no longer questioned. The eternity of the soul is accepted just like the fact of gravity. However, this assumption is rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, not Scripture, and is the key reason why the Eternal Conscious Torment view of Hell has been the predominant view of Christians over the past 1500 years since Augustine.

**2. The Bible teaches that immortality is a gift given only to the redeemed.** Consider the following passages:

- a) **‘God alone has immortality’** – 1 Timothy 6:16. Human beings are not naturally immortal, only God is immortal in Himself (see also 1 Tim 1:17). In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve needed to eat from the Tree of Life in order to “live forever” (Gen 3:22), and the book of Revelation gives the picture of a Tree of Life in eternity as well, available only to the saved (Rev 2:7; 22:2; 14-15).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Note: I am not saying that in the New Heavens and Earth we will all literally need to eat from a particular tree in order to live forever. It is probable that the ‘tree of life’ in Revelation is symbolic of the fact that the source of eternal life will always be outside of ourselves, provided by God.

b) **Immortality (never-ending life) is a gift only given to those who choose Jesus.** Consider the following passages:

John 3:15-16 <sup>15</sup> [T]hat whoever believes in him may have *eternal life*. <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him *should not perish* but have *eternal life*.”

John 6:58 “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will *live forever*.”

John 10:27-28 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I *give* them *eternal life*, and they will never perish . . .

John 17:2 “[S]ince you [the Father] have given him [Jesus] authority over all flesh, to *give eternal life* to all whom you have given him.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is *death*, but the *free gift* of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2 Timothy 1:10 “[A]nd which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished *death* and *brought life and immortality* through the gospel . . .”

1 John 5:11 “And this is the testimony, that God *gave us eternal life*, and this life is in his Son.”

Romans 2:7 The apostle Paul exhorts us to ‘*seek immortality*.’

This is the teaching of the entire New Testament! (See also: 6:50; 8:51; 11:26; 1 Cor 15:42, 50-54; Gal 6:8; 1 Pet 1:23)

c) **The human soul is not indestructible.** The ancient Greeks thought the soul was indestructible, and their thinking has deeply influenced Christian thought. In contrast to Greek thinking, however, Jesus specifically stated that God is to be feared exactly because He can ‘*destroy both body and soul* in Hell’ (Mt 10:28).

3. **New Testament descriptions of eternal punishment and fire, along with smoke that rises forever and ever, do not describe a situation of never-ending conscious torment like most modern readers assume. Instead, these passages draw on Old Testament prophetic language that described the utter destruction of God’s enemies.**

For example, take Revelation 14:9-11, the most important eternal conscious torment passage in Scripture. <sup>9</sup> . . . “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup> he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

Several things should be said briefly about this passage:

- Many Christians automatically take the time frame ‘forever and ever’ literally in this passage, but not the descriptions of ‘torment’ in ‘fire and sulfur.’ One of the most popular descriptions of Hell in Christian circles today is that it simply represents ‘separation from God.’ This fails the consistency test. If Revelation 14:9-11 literally teaches that Hell lasts ‘forever and ever,’ then it also literally teaches that Hell is physical fire and brimstone and that people will literally keep burning there forever.
- Secondly, what many modern readers fail to realize is that this passage is quoting from the Old Testament, a judgment on the Old Testament nation of Edom, found in Isaiah 34:8-10: <sup>8</sup> *For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.* <sup>9</sup> *And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch.* <sup>10</sup> *Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.*

Question: Is the land of Edom (modern day Jordan) still burning today? Is the smoke continually rising forever and ever? No. ‘Unquenchable fire,’ and smoke that rises ‘forever,’ is figurative Old Testament language that simply means a place or person will be utterly destroyed, never to return. This interpretation is confirmed by a passage from Revelation 19:

*“Hallelujah!  
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,  
<sup>2</sup> for his judgments are true and just;  
for he has judged the great prostitute  
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,  
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”  
<sup>3</sup> Once more they cried out,  
“Hallelujah!  
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”*

In this passage John is prophesying the end of the Harlot Babylon city (see chapter 18). Are we meant to understand that this great city will continually burn and stink for the rest of eternity after Jesus remakes the new heavens and new earth? No, “For in a single hour your judgment has come,” and “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more” (Rev 18:10; 21). This is yet another example of Old Testament prophetic language indicating utter destruction.

**Jude 1:7 ‘Eternal fire’ = utter destruction (see also Matt 18:7-8 and 2 Pet 2:6).** Consider also Jude: <sup>7</sup> *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.* This passage specifically states that Sodom and Gomorrah underwent a punishment of ‘eternal fire’ – but are Sodom and Gomorrah still burning today? No. They were burned up and utterly consumed thousands of years ago. Importantly, Jude here links what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah back then to the fate of those who reject Jesus today by saying that what happened to them ‘serve[s] as an example’ to us. This is Annihilationism.

**Q: What about Jesus's statement that the wicked will be sent into 'eternal punishment' (Matt 25:41-46)?**

**A: The *consequences* of annihilation are indeed 'eternal,' not the *act of punishing* itself.**

Proponents of Eternal Conscious Torment view eternal life as parallel to eternal punishment, in that both are experienced *consciously* for a never-ending amount of time. But it is exactly here that we must pay attention to the qualitative differences between life and death; life is something that is experienced consciously, but death is not. The final death promised to those consigned to Hell is every bit as eternal as the life promised to those in Heaven because it is *permanent*; there is no coming back from it. Ever.

This fits well with a number of passages in Scripture where the word 'eternal' speaks of the *consequences* of an action, not that the action itself continues forever. Consider the following four examples:

- a) Hebrews 6:2 speaks of 'eternal judgment,' yet no one argues that God will spend all of eternity judging us. There will be *one* judgment, and the *consequences* of that judgment will last forever.
- b) Hebrews 9:12 states that Jesus has 'secured for us an eternal redemption.' Does that mean the act of redeeming us on the cross must last forever? No, He has already secured it. Earlier in that same verse it says that Jesus entered '*once* for all' into the 'holy places' by means of 'his own blood.' In other words, Jesus's *one* action on the cross has ongoing eternal *consequences*. He doesn't need to stay on the cross forever in order to keep redeeming us.
- c) Likewise, Hebrews 5:9 speaks of 'eternal salvation,' meaning that that the *consequences* of Jesus's saving act on the cross last forever, not that the action of being on the cross must continue forever.
- d) 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says that the wicked will suffer the punishment of 'eternal destruction,' which suffering happens 'when He comes, on that Day.' The act of destruction is not something that can go on forever, else the thing would not suffer destruction on that day. Once something is destroyed, it is destroyed. This is annihilation.
- e) Also, in Matthew 25:46 only one group of people get eternal life. What is the only punishment that lasts forever, but does not require living forever? The answer is annihilation.

Some people may here worry, "But if eternal punishment doesn't mean the *punishment* lasts forever, perhaps eternal life doesn't mean the *life* lasts forever?" Let me repeat: the punishment of death *does* last forever because it is final and permanent. Both life and punishment are eternal in this passage, but one is experienced consciously, while the other is not.

#### **4. Jesus's death on the cross makes more sense in the Annihilationist view of Hell than the Eternal Conscious Torment view.**

As Christians, we all agree that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. So, what penalty did he pay? Did he go to Hell to suffer conscious torment for our sins? No! Jesus *died* for our sins. And that's the point; He died to save us from death of every kind – the death of the body (Matt 10:28; 1 Cor 15:51-55), the death of the spirit (Eph 2:1), and the 'second death' (Rev 20:6; 14). Without Jesus, we

would not preserve our life (Ps 22:29).

5. **Lastly, Annihilationism best explains the biblical hope that “death” will be no more.**

The great hope of the New Testament writers was that in the future, after the Resurrection, sin and death would be ‘no more’ (Rev 21:4). Paul writes that death itself will be ‘destroyed’ and ‘swallowed up in victory’ (1 Cor 15:26, 54-55). How can these statements be true if billions of people continue to live in rebellion towards God in a place called Hell for eternity? If ‘death’ really means ‘separation from God,’ as proponents of Eternal Conscious Torment insist, then death is never destroyed since billions of people continue to live in separation from God forever in Hell.

The Annihilationist view of Hell is thoroughly biblical. Not only does it have a huge number of passages in its favor, it also fits perfectly with the overall storyline of the Bible: (1) The Garden of Eden – death is the result of sin; (2) The Cross – Jesus dies for our sins; (3) Finally – death will be no more (Rev 21:4).

### **Final thoughts, objections, and questions.**

1. **Objection: “But many people won’t get saved if there isn’t eternal conscious torment to scare them.”** This is one of the first and most common objections many ECT Christians raise when they first hear of Annihilationism. It is a flawed argument, however, for a number of reasons:

- a. First, our doctrine of Hell should only be determined by what the Bible actually says, not how scared we think people need to be in order to receive the Gospel. If our doctrine of Hell is determined simply by scare factor, why not imagine greater and greater horrors and apply those to Hell? Medieval Christians did actually do this!<sup>13</sup>
- b. The only passage in Scripture that explicitly commands people to fear Hell has annihilation in view! Jesus said, “*fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell.*” Apparently Jesus thought destruction in Hell was scary enough. This would also explain why Hebrews 2:15 teaches us that Jesus frees us from the fear of *death*.
- c. Many non-Christians today reject Christianity specifically because ECT strikes them as immoral, and they want no part of a God like that. It might just be that if Christians preached the biblical view of Annihilation *more* people would get saved, not less.
- d. Lastly, the biblical evangelists did not use fear-of-Hell in their evangelistic preaching. Read the book of Acts, the book of the Early Church’s initial evangelistic explosion; there is a lot of ‘repent and be saved,’ but no descriptions of Hell as horrifying, eternal, conscious torment. In fact, as I showed earlier in this paper, the message of the New Testament is that human beings have a choice between life and *death* as a result of the Gospel, not life and *never-ending torment*. The biblical evangelists considered the promise of eternal life, forgiveness

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<sup>13</sup> See Dante’s *Inferno* and lots of medieval Christian art.



from sins, and salvation from death to be all the motivation a person needs to receive the Gospel.

**2. Question: What about the Bible's many descriptions of 'weeping & gnashing of teeth?'**<sup>14</sup> (See Matt 8:12; 13:42; 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28).

The first thing to understand is that the biblical phrase 'gnashing of teeth' should not be associated with feelings of pain like most modern readers assume, rather, it should be associated with feelings of anger and/or hate. For example, why did the Sanhedrin 'gnash their teeth' at Stephen before stoning him? (Acts 7:54; see also Job 16:9; Ps 35:16; 112:10).<sup>15</sup> The connotation is that the wicked will hate God when they are sent to Hell, not be repentant.

More importantly, however, the references to weeping and gnashing of teeth do not prove eternal torment because none of the references indicate that the weeping and gnashing of teeth will continue for eternity. Annihilationists agree that there will be a time of agony, regret, horror, and hatred ('gnashing of teeth') on the Day of Judgment, after the wicked are sentenced to Hell and then cast into the fire.

Luke 13:28 paints the following picture: "In *that place* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out."

What is 'that place'? That place is the scene of judgment. The weeping and gnashing of teeth in this passage is said to occur when those Jews who have rejected Jesus see their forefathers – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – standing in the place of the saved, while they themselves are cast out.

Matthew 13:42 describes the following: "[A]nd throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Proponents of ECT take this to mean that Hell goes on forever. But nothing in the passage states that it goes on forever, only that there is weeping and gnashing of teeth as people are 'gathered' to the place where the fire is (v. 41) and as they are 'thrown' into it and burned up. Annihilationists agree that the day of judgment will be an awful time with weeping and gnashing of teeth as people are sentenced to death and then cast into the fires of Hell. But their torment does not go on for all of eternity.

**3. Question: What about Mark 9:48 where Jesus states that Hell is the place 'where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'**

What most readers miss here is that Jesus is quoting a passage from the Old Testament, Isaiah 66:24. Isaiah 66:15-24 is a prophecy about the day of Judgment when God returns to earth. Here is verse 24:

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<sup>14</sup> For an excellent article that specifically goes through each 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' passage see Joseph Dear's article *Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth Do Not Indicate Eternal Torment* on the Rethinking Hell website (<http://rethinkingHell.com/2018/11/28/weeping-and-gnashing-of-teeth-do-not-indicate-eternal-torment/>).

<sup>15</sup> Even ECT theologians like R.C. Sproul agree that gnashing of teeth means anger/hatred – R.C. Sproul "The Place of God's Disfavor," Ligonier Ministries, April 3, 2011, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/place-gods-disfavor/>.

*“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”*

Notice *what* these worms that don't die are eating, and *what* the fire that cannot be quenched is burning: *dead bodies*. This is an Annihilation passage. People aren't alive forever to experience this judgment, they are destroyed.

Why say that the worms eating these dead bodies 'shall not die' and the fire burning these bodies 'shall not be quenched'? It's Old Testament prophetic hyperbole: a fire that cannot be quenched simply means the fire will burn until the stuff it is burning is utterly consumed. And the worm 'not dying' means the worms will accomplish their task of totally consuming the bodies.

There is also the connotation of shame here. In ancient times, victorious armies sometimes left their enemies' bodies unburied as a sign of contempt. For corpses to be publicly exposed to the elements was a great disgrace (see 1 Sam 31:11-13 and 2 Sam 21:10).<sup>16</sup> Thus, the picture that their worm does not die speaks to the idea that the shame of God's enemies never goes away. They themselves are dead, but their shame lives on forever (see Dan 12:2).

#### 4. **Question: What about the parable of the rich man in torment? (Luke 16:19-31)**

*<sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. – Luke 16:22-23 (ESV)*

This parable is often taken as proof of the ECT view of Hell because there is a state of ongoing torment and consciousness. There are two serious problems with this view however.

First, this passage explicitly states its setting as *Hades*, not Hell (see verse 23 above). In Scripture Hades is the in-between place where people go while they wait for Judgment Day, while Hell is the final place where the wicked are cast *after* Judgment Day.<sup>17</sup> Revelation itself confirms this difference when it says that both 'Death and *Hades*' will be thrown into Hell ('lake of fire') *after* the final Judgment (Rev 20:14). Another point from Luke 16 which confirms that the setting of this parable is Hades, not Hell, is the fact that the rich man asks Abraham to warn his brothers so that they don't face the same fate as himself. Such a thing would not be possible after the Final Judgment (Rev 20).

Secondly, even if this parable referred to Hell instead of Hades, we should be careful about what we take literally because it is a *parable*. Parables are fictional stories meant to illustrate specific theological points. The context of this particular parable is that Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees for their hypocritical attitudes about wealth, their lack of concern for the poor, and their refusal to

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<sup>16</sup> Peterson, R.; Fudge, E. Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue (p. 132). Intervarsity Press. Quoted by Chris Date in his article: *Their Worm Does Not Die: Annihilation and Mark 9:48* (<http://rethinkingHell.com/2012/07/17/their-worm-does-not-die-annihilation-and-mark-948/>).

<sup>17</sup> Note: In John 5:28-29, Jesus explicitly says that the lost will be resurrected to judgment. Thus, people are resurrected out of Hades. Meanwhile, in Matthew 10:28, Jesus says that in the end the lost will have *both* their body and soul destroyed in Hell.

believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The details of Hades are incidental to making those points.

5. **Question: What about Revelation 20:10-15 “. . . and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever”?**

*<sup>10</sup> and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. . . .<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.<sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. – Revelation 20:10, 14-15*

Like Revelation 14:10-11, this passage seems to many to be an open-and-shut case for ECT. Except for the fact that taking this passage literally is almost impossible to do with any kind of consistency.

First of all, verse 14 states that ‘Death and Hades’ get thrown into this lake of fire. Are ‘Death and Hades’ going to be tormented forever and ever too? Clearly this passage is figurative. These are not concrete entities that can be tormented with fire. Furthermore, Christians have debated the meaning of the ‘beast’ and the ‘false prophet’ throughout Church history. Some Christians interpret the ‘beast’ to be representative of a final political Antichrist empire; many of those same Christians interpret the ‘false prophet’ to be a last-days false religion (disclaimer: I’m not saying I agree with these views). Other symbolic interpretations abound. Historically a large majority of Christians have interpreted these entities in very symbolic ways, not as individual people who could be tormented with fire and sulfur.

What then does this passage mean? It means that Death, Hades, evil kingdoms, false religions, and wicked people will all be destroyed after the final judgment. This makes perfect sense and, unlike ECT, can be applied consistently to all the characters in the passage. This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that the book of Revelation elsewhere draws on Old Testament prophetic language about unending fires and torment to speak of the final destruction of the wicked (discussed earlier in this paper, see the section on Revelation 14:10-11).

Finally, we should take note of the fact that this passage interprets its own symbols: the lake of fire is called ‘the second death’ (see verse 14 above). In other words, the symbols of torment and unending fire once again point to death. This is Annihilationism.

6. **Note: Those Christians who take Hell to be a place that is consciously experienced forever, because of literal interpretations of Revelation 14:10-11 and Revelation 20:10-15, need to take the physically burning with ‘fire and sulfur’ literally too.** The truth is, many Christians today who think they take the Bible literally on Hell because they believe ECT are not consistent with their literalism. They take the ‘forever’ part literally but not the part about physically burning with ‘fire and sulfur.’ Many ECT Christians today, when asked to describe Hell, will describe a vague sort of place where people are separated from God eternally, a place where there is a total of absence of good, but not actual flames tormenting people’s flesh forever without end. That description, however, of a place of separation from God flies in the face of what Revelation 14 actually describes when it says that the wicked are tormented “in *the presence* of the holy angels and in the *presence* of the Lamb” (Rev 14:10). The idea

of Hell as a place of separation from God, a place with an absence of good comes from the thinking of C.S. Lewis, not Scripture.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, Christians who believe that Hell is ECT need to be consistent and imagine it to be a place where people with physical bodies are being kept alive by God in literal fire and sulfur to experience the ongoing horror of physically burning flesh forever and ever without end.

I think Annihilationism offers a much more biblical and consistent interpretation in that people who are cast into Hell are burned up and destroyed.

7. **Question: Are there levels of torment?** Some Christians are bothered by Annihilationism because it feels to them that there cannot be varying levels of punishment meted out to people. In reality, however, Annihilationism does not exclude levels of punishment as a possibility: some Annihilationists believe that people will experience differing amounts of time in the Hell-fire before being burned up based on passages like Luke 12:47-48. Others disagree. The Bible does not give us clear teaching on this matter.
8. **Eternal conscious torment is not consistent with God's justice and mercy.** A punishment can only be considered just if it is proportional to ('fits') the crime that was committed (Ex 21:23-25; Ps 62:12). For example, we would not consider the death penalty to be a just punishment for offences like speeding or shoplifting because it is too severe. By the same logic, how can it be considered just for God to punish people in Hell *infinitely* when human sin is *finite*, committed during the finite period of one's short lifetime here on earth? What crimes committed during the 70 or 80 years of one's life on earth could ever deserve agonizing never-ending torment that continues for billions and trillions of years without end? Such disproportionate punishment cannot be reconciled with the many passages of Scripture that describe God as just and merciful (Ezra 9:13; Job 34:10-12; Ps 103:10).
9. **Question: Are we honestly meant to rejoice in heaven at the horrific and ongoing torment of billions of people (including friends and loved ones)?** If the ECT view of Hell is correct, then for all of eternity in Heaven we believers are expected to rejoice even as billions of people scream in ongoing, never-ending torment. Some of those people will no doubt be friends and loved ones. Is that the kind of God we serve? The Scriptural answer is a resounding no. Our God loves His enemies and prays for those who persecute Him (Matt 5:44-48). He forgives unrepentant sinners even as they torture Him (Lk 23:34). Truly, the Psalmist said it best (see also Mic 7:18):

*For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.* – Psalm 30:5 (ESV)

**Conclusion: Hell is real and awful, but it is the place where those who reject Jesus are destroyed, not a place of ongoing eternal conscious torment.**

As I mentioned at the onset, a person's view about Hell is not something Christians should break fellowship over and it will not be a membership issue in the church I lead. It does, however, have important implications

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cslewis.com/heaven-and-Hell-as-idea-and-image-in-c-s-lewis/> (02/05/2021) Incidentally, C.S. Lewis elsewhere dabbled with Annihilationism, see his book 'The Problem of Pain,' ch. 8, par 10).

for God's character, for how we think about His goodness and mercy, and for how we preach the Gospel.

**Further Reading/Learning:**

1. 1-hour video intro to Annihilationism on YouTube: Edward Fudge lecture: "The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Hell" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHUPpmbTOV4>, accessed 5/23/2019).
2. Fudge, Edward – Hell A Final Word: The Surprising Truths I Found in the Bible (189 pages).  
(If you want a thicker, fully comprehensive theological study of the entire Bible and what the Bible says about Hell, see Fudge's full treatise: The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.)
3. Fudge and Peterson – Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue.
4. Four Views on Hell (1<sup>st</sup> edition), by Zondervan, William Crockett editor (the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is also good).

## Appendix:

### All the Scripture Passages Cited in This Paper, in the Order They Appear (ESV).

#### **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### **John 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

#### **John 10:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

#### **Matthew 7:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

#### **Matthew 10:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

#### **James 4:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

#### **2 Peter 2:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

#### **Philippians 3:18-19 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

#### **2 Peter 3:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

#### **Hebrews 10:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

#### **Matthew 7:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**John 15:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

**Hebrews 6:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

**Deuteronomy 29:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> The Lord will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven.

**Psalms 34:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

**Psalms 37:27-29 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. <sup>28</sup> For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. <sup>29</sup> The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.

**Psalms 37:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

<sup>10</sup> In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.

**Psalms 37:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

**Psalms 37:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off.

**Psalms 69:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

**Psalms 34:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

**Proverbs 8:36 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.”

**Proverbs 10:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.

**Proverbs 12:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup>The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

**Proverbs 24:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup>for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

**Isaiah 1:28-31 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup>But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed. <sup>29</sup>For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.

<sup>30</sup>For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. <sup>31</sup>And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.

**Nahum 1:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup>For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried.

**Malachi 4:1 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

**Genesis 2:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

**Genesis 3:22-24 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” <sup>23</sup>therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

**Psalms 30:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup>For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

**2 Chronicles 5:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord,  
“For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,”  
the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud,

**2 Chronicles 7:3 (ESV)**



<sup>3</sup> When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

**2 Chronicles 7:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the Lord that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry; opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.

**2 Chronicles 20:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

**Psalms 100:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

**Psalms 103:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

**Psalms 106:1 (ESV)**

<sup>106</sup> Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

**Psalms 107:1 (ESV)**

<sup>107</sup> Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

**Psalms 118:1-4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the Lord say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

**Psalms 118:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

**Psalms 136:10-26 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>11</sup> and brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>12</sup> with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>13</sup> to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>14</sup> and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>15</sup> but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>16</sup> to him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>17</sup> to him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>18</sup> and killed mighty kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>19</sup> Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
<sup>20</sup> and Og, king of Bashan, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
<sup>21</sup> and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
<sup>22</sup> a heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.  
<sup>23</sup> It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
<sup>24</sup> and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
<sup>25</sup> he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.  
<sup>26</sup> Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

### **1 Timothy 6:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

### **1 Timothy 1:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

### **Genesis 3:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—”

### **Revelation 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

### **Revelation 22:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

### **Revelation 22:14-15 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

### **John 3:15-16 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

### **John 6:58 (ESV)**

<sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread<sup>[a]</sup> the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

### **John 10:27-28 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

**John 17:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

**Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**2 Timothy 1:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

**1 John 5:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

**Romans 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

**John 6:50 (ESV)**

<sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

**John 8:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

**John 11:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

**1 Corinthians 15:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54 (ESV)**

<sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Galatians 6:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

**1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

**Matthew 10:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**Revelation 14:9-11 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup> he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

**Isaiah 34:8-10 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

<sup>9</sup> And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch.

<sup>10</sup> Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

**Revelation 19:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

<sup>2</sup> for his judgments are true and just;

for he has judged the great prostitute

who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

<sup>3</sup> Once more they cried out,

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

**Revelation 18:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

**Revelation 18:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

"So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

**Jude 7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

**Matthew 18:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! <sup>8</sup> And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.

## **2 Peter 2:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

## **Matthew 25:41-46 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## **Hebrews 6:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

## **Hebrews 9:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

## **Hebrews 5:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

## **2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, <sup>10</sup> when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

## **Matthew 25:46 (ESV)**

<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## **Matthew 10:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

## **1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must

put on immortality. <sup>54</sup>When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup>“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

### **Ephesians 2:1 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

### **Revelation 20:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

### **Revelation 20:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

### **Psalms 22:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
even the one who could not keep himself alive.

### **Revelation 21:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

### **1 Corinthians 15:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

### **1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (ESV)**

<sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

### **Revelation 21:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

### **Hebrews 2:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

### **Matthew 8:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

### **Matthew 13:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 13:50 (ESV)**

<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 22:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**Matthew 24:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 25:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**Luke 13:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

**Acts 7:54 (ESV)**

<sup>54</sup> Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.

**Job 16:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me;  
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.

**Psalms 35:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth.

**Psalms 112:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away;  
the desire of the wicked will perish!

**Luke 13:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

**Matthew 13:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 13:41 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,

**Mark 9:48 (ESV)**

<sup>48</sup> 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

**Isaiah 66:15-24 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> "For behold, the Lord will come in fire,  
and his chariots like the whirlwind,  
to render his anger in fury,  
and his rebuke with flames of fire.

<sup>16</sup> For by fire will the Lord enter into judgment,  
and by his sword, with all flesh;  
and those slain by the Lord shall be many.

<sup>17</sup> "Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> "For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, <sup>19</sup> and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup> And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> "For as the new heavens and the new earth  
that I make  
shall remain before me, says the Lord,  
so shall your offspring and your name remain.

<sup>23</sup> From new moon to new moon,  
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
all flesh shall come to worship before me,  
declares the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

**1 Samuel 31:11-13 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup> all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. <sup>13</sup> And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

**2 Samuel 21:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell upon them from the heavens. And she did not allow the birds of the air to come upon



them by day, or the beasts of the field by night.

### **Daniel 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

### **Luke 16:19-31 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. <sup>[a]</sup> The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup> And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

### **Revelation 20:10-15 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. <sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

### **Revelation 14:10-11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

### **Luke 12:47-48 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. <sup>48</sup> But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted

much, they will demand the more.

**Exodus 21:23-25 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, <sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

**Psalms 62:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

**Ezra 9:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this,

**Job 34:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> "Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding:

far be it from God that he should do wickedness,  
and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.

<sup>11</sup> For according to the work of a man he will repay him,  
and according to his ways he will make it befall him.

<sup>12</sup> Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,  
and the Almighty will not pervert justice.

**Psalms 103:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

**Matthew 5:44-48 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**Luke 23:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

**Micah 7:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

**Psalms 30:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.  
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.