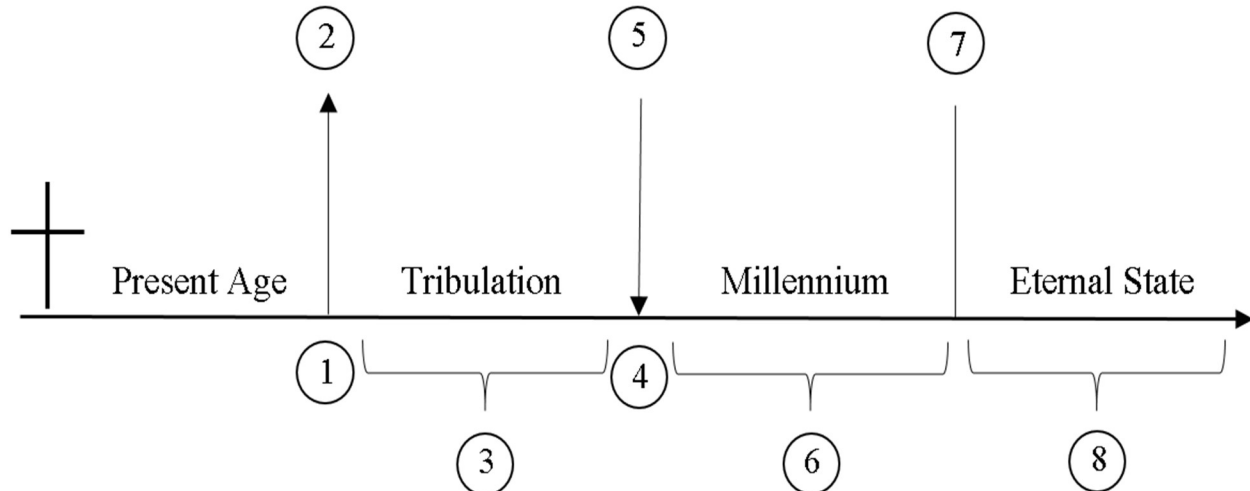


Entrust Eschatology Aberrant Views on Hell & Eternal Punishment 5/2/24

Eschatology timeline



1. The Imminent Rapture of the Church
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ
3. The Seventieth Week of Daniel
4. The Divine Restoration of Israel
5. The Second Coming of Christ
6. The Millennial Reign of Christ
7. **The Final Judgment of Unbelievers**
8. The Final State of Eternity

Aberrant Views on Hell

- There is a sense in which it is understandable that individuals would seek for differing views of hell than what Scripture teaches: the eternality of hell is uncomfortable.
- Nevertheless, we must be faithful to God's word.

I. Universalism

A. Universalism Defined

UNIVERSALISM: The view that every human being will eventually come to enjoy everlasting spiritual salvation.

3 Forms of Universalism:

1. Pluralistic Salvation

- All paths lead to God.
- Every religion leads to salvation.
- One does not need to believe in Christ.
- Everyone will be saved in his own way.

2. Postmortem Salvation

- Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.
- After death, God will continue to evangelize the lost until they repent and believe in Christ.
- Through this process, everyone will ultimately believe and be saved.

3. Purgatorial Salvation

- Some people will die and go to hell for a period of time.
- During this time, the individual is purged of his sin, conformed to the divine likeness, and made ready for heaven.
- At this point, the individual is welcomed into heaven.
- Others believe that unbelievers spend this time in hell being exposed to postmortem evangelism.
- Either way, hell does exist and will be temporarily occupied by some, but it will eventually be empty, since all will be saved in the end.

B. Universalism Defended

1. The Argument (perhaps, AKA the “emotional argument”)

RESPONSE:

- Focuses on the love of God to the exclusion of his justice, holiness, and righteousness

(i.e. His corresponding hatred of evil, as Charnock put it)
- Hell is part of God’s solution to evil b/c it is part of his victory over evil (a local pastor once said “to hell with suicide”)

2. The Biblical Argument

- a. God desires the salvation of all people. (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
- b. All people will indeed be saved. (John 12:32; Acts 3:21; Rom 5:18; 11:32; 1 Cor 15:22-28; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 1:10; Phil 2:9-11; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2)
- c. Some will be saved after death (1 Pet 3:18-20).

RESPONSE: See below, “C. Universalism Refuted”

C. Universalism Refuted

1. The Lack of Biblical Support

2. The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ

- a. Only One Way (John 14:6)

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

b. Only One Name (Acts 4:12)

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

c. Only One Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all."

d. Only One Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

3. The Need for Pre-mortem Evangelism (Rom 10:14-15a)

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent?"

4. The Certainty of Divine Judgment (Heb 9:27)

a. Hebrews 9:27

"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

b. Revelation 20:11-15

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small,

standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

5. The Permanence of Divine Punishment

a. The Impassability of the Chasm (Luke 16:26)

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us" (cf. Rev 21:25-27).

b. The Endlessness of the Punishment (Matt 25:41, 46)

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.... 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'"

c. The Final Abode of the Wicked (Rev 21:7-8)

"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

II. Annihilationism

A. Introduction to Annihilationism

1. The Definition of Annihilationism

The most popular form of annihilationism among professing evangelicals is known as “Conditionalism” or “Conditional Immortality,” which asserts that:

- God has created all human beings only potentially immortal.
- Only believers participate in the divine nature and receive immortality.
- Unbelievers never receive this capacity to live forever.
- Therefore, unbelievers ultimately cease to exist rather than being punished forever.

2. The Rise of Annihilationism

- The Influence of Clark Pinnock
- The Influence of John Stott
- The Influence of Edward Fudge

B. The Case for Annihilationism

1. The Appeal to Biblical Terminology

According to annihilationists, the biblical terminology for the judgment of the wicked is that of death and utter destruction, not eternal torment.

- The Verb “Perish” (ἀπόλλυμι), cf. John 3:16
- The Noun “Destruction” (ὄλεθρος), cf. 2 Thess 1:9

2 Thessalonians 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal **destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

RESPONSE:

- Annihilation is a *possible* meaning of “destruction,” but not the required meaning.
- One must also consider passages which feature the word “eternal” and “forever.”
- Some texts teach eternal life for the believer and eternal punishment for the unbeliever:

Matthew 25:46 “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

- A symmetry exists in the words and concepts. Why are some ready to accept “eternal” for heaven but not for hell?

2. The Appeal to Human Mortality

According to annihilationists, the doctrine of eternal punishment is the result of an unbiblical merger between Christian theology and the Greek idea of the soul’s immortality. Annihilationists believe that:

- God alone inherently possesses immortality
- Believers alone receive immortality at conversion.
 - The human soul was not created with a natural capacity to live forever.
 - This capacity is received only when one believes in Jesus Christ and receives eternal life (i.e., immortality is “conditional”).
 - Therefore, the souls of unbelievers remain mortal and their experience in hell cannot be endless.
 - The influence of the Greek notion of the soul’s immortality is what led to the unbiblical doctrine of eternal punishment.

RESPONSE:

- At the resurrection of the wicked (Dan 12:1-2; John 5:28-29, Acts 24:15), the physical bodies of unbelievers become derivatively immortal as well, and they are then punished body and soul forever in the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).
- That Greeks may have held to the soul's immortality is irrelevant to the argument; it is a strawman of sorts.
- Regardless of a belief held by contemporaries to biblical writers, one must examine the text of Scripture to discern doctrine. Doing so reveals that hell is, in fact, eternal.

Also significant:

"I do not believe in the traditional view of hell because I accept the immortality of human beings, but the other way around. I believe in the immortality of human beings because the Bible clearly teaches everlasting damnation for the wicked and everlasting life for the righteous" (Robert Peterson, *Hell on Trial*).

3. The Appeal to Divine Justice

According to most annihilationists, the doctrine of everlasting punishment is inconsistent with the justice and love of God as revealed in Scripture.

- a. John Stott: "I question whether 'eternal conscious torment' is compatible with the biblical revelation of divine justice, unless perhaps (as has been argued) the impenitence of the lost also continues throughout eternity."
- b. Edward Fudge: "Scripture nowhere suggests that God is an eternal torturer. It never says that the damned will writhe in ceaseless torment or that the glories of heaven will forever be blighted by the screams from hell. The idea of conscious everlasting torment was a grievous mistake, a horrible error, a gross slander against the heavenly Father, whose character we truly see in the life of Jesus of Nazareth."
- c. Clark Pinnock: "I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed."

“There is a powerful moral revulsion against the traditional doctrine of the nature of hell.

“The nature of God is revealed in Jesus Christ and shown to be boundlessly merciful. God loves the whole world. His heart is to invite sinners to festive meal (Matt. 8:11). He is a forgiving and loving Father toward them (Luke 15:11-32), not a cruel and sadistic torturer as the traditional view of hell would suggest.”

“Sending the wicked to everlasting torment would be to treat persons worse than they could deserve.”

A REVEALING ADMISSION:

“I am rejecting the traditional view of hell in part out of a sense of moral and theological revulsion to it. The idea that a conscious creature should have to undergo physical and mental torture through unending time is profoundly disturbing, and the thought that this is inflicted upon them by divine decree offends my conviction about God’s love. This is probably the primary reason why people question the tradition so vehemently in the first place. They are not first of all impressed by its lack of a good scriptural basis (that comes later) but are appalled by its awful moral implications” (Clark Pinnock).

C. The Case for Eternal Punishment (“ECT” Position: “Eternal Conscious Torment”)

The case for eternal punishment rests on the exegesis of several key passages that teach the everlasting torment of the wicked.

1. The Undying Worm and Unquenchable Fire in Isaiah 66:24

“Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

a. The Timing of the Scene (65:17-66:24)

➤ “new heavens and a new earth” (65:17)

- “new heaven and new earth” (66:22)
- b. The Division of the People (66:22-24)
 - The Worshipers (22-23)
 - The Transgressors (24)
- c. The Imagery of the Battlefield (66:24a)
- d. The Duration of the Disgrace (66:24b)
 - “Their worm shall not die”
 - “Their fire shall not be quenched”
 - Quoted in Mark 9:48 in reference to hell

Mark 9:47–48 “If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.”
 - Indicates that hell is eternal

2. The “Everlasting Contempt” of Daniel 12:2

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

- a. The Timing of the Resurrections
 - Time Indicators in the Text
 - “at that time” (12:1a; cf. Dan 11:35-36, 40)
 - “time of distress as never occurred” (12:1b; cf. Mt 24:21)
 - Later Revelation in the Bible
 - John 5:28-29

- Acts 24:15
- Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15
- b. The Destinies of the Resurrected
 - “Everlasting Life” (12:2a)
 - “Everlasting Contempt” (12:2b)
- c. The Duration of the Destinies
 - The word (אֵלֶּם) olam often means “eternal,” but not always.
 - The intended nuance of meaning depends on the context in which the word is used.
 - What does the context indicate about the meaning of olam in Daniel 12:2? Similar to Matt 25:46, the same words translated “everlasting”/“eternal” are used in Dan 12:2. If we accept the idea that heaven is “eternal,” should we also accept that hell is “eternal”?

3. The “Eternal Fire” of Matthew 18:8 (cf. Matt 25:41; Jude 7)

“And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire.”

“...the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7)

a. Key Words: “the eternal fire”

b. Key Question:

Do the words “eternal fire” indicate an endless duration of punishment in hell?

- In the 74 occurrences of the adjective “eternal” in the NT, it always has the connotation of something that is unending or without time limitations.

- If the fire is eternal, the implication is that the punishment caused by the fire is also eternal.
- This is confirmed by the way Jesus twice sets up a contrast between being thrown into eternal fire and entering eternal life (vv. 8-9).

4. The “Eternal Punishment” of Matthew 25:46

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’”

a. Key Words: “eternal fire” and “eternal punishment”

b. Key Parallel:

The Wicked —————> Eternal Punishment

The Righteous —————> Eternal Life

5. The “Eternal Destruction” of 2 Thessalonians 1:9

“And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

a. Key Word: “destruction”

- This word can refer to “annihilation,” but it does not usually have this meaning.
- The intended nuance of meaning is dependent on the context in which the word is used.

b. Key Modifier: “eternal destruction”

- This is an unlikely way to refer to the obliteration of the wicked.
- If Paul simply meant “extinction,” why not just say “destruction” instead of “eternal destruction”?

c. Key Phrase: “away from the presence of the Lord”

- This penalty of eternal destruction will be paid “away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”
- The Greek preposition translated “away from” [ἀπό] indicates a separation from the presence of the Lord (Matt 7:23; Luke 13:27; cf. 1 Thess 4:17).
- This banishment from God’s presence excludes the idea that “eternal destruction” means extinction, for only those who exist can be banished (cf. Rev 21:7-8, 25-27; 22:14-15).

6. The Words “Forever and Ever” in Revelation 14:10-11

“He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

a. The Torment of the Wicked

- “He will drink of the wine of the wrath of God” (v. 10a)
- “He will be tormented with fire and brimstone” (v. 10b)

b. The Duration of the Torment

- “the smoke of their torment goes up forever & ever” (v. 11a)

Throughout the book of Revelation, the words “forever and ever” consistently refer to an endless duration:

- The eternal glory of God (1:6; 7:12)
- The eternal glory of the Lamb (5:13)
- The eternal existence of God (4:9-10; 10:6; 15:7)
- The eternal existence of Christ (1:18)
- The eternal reign of God (11:15)
- The eternal doom of the devil (20:10)
- The eternal reign of the saints (22:5)

ANNIHILATIONIST OBJECTION:

- Revelation 14:11 says that the smoke will go on forever and ever, not the torment.

RESPONSE:

- The metaphor indicates that the torment continues for the same duration as the rising of the smoke—“forever and ever.”
- “They have no rest day and night” (v. 11b; cf. Rev 4:8):

11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

7. The Words “Forever and Ever” in Revelation 20:10 (cf. 14-15)

“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Key Words: “tormented day and night forever and ever”

- “day and night” = no rest from the torment (unbroken continuity)
- “forever and ever” = no end to the torment (unending duration)

ANNIHILATIONIST OBJECTION:

- The beast and false prophet are not individuals, but rather symbols of hostility toward God.
- Because symbols cannot experience pain, Revelation 20:10 does not teach the eternal torment of individual people, but rather the ultimate destruction of all enmity toward God.

RESPONSE:

- References to the beast and false prophet throughout Revelation make it clear that they are individual beings rather than symbols of hostility (11:7; 13:1-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2,10,13; 17:3-17; 19:19-20; 20:4).
- The beast and false prophet are in the lake of fire alongside Satan, who is a personal being. Furthermore, Jesus taught that unbelievers are cast into “the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41).
- Most importantly, Revelation 20:10 clearly states that the beast and false prophet will be “tormented,” which indicates that they are individual beings who can experience pain rather than symbols of hostility that cannot experience pain.