

Eternal Conscious Torment vs Annihilationism 001

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...They have a couple days of exhibits and things for different ministries set up. Since my daughter, of course, is homeschooled, we were involved in that—and a lot of our kids that attend this church are homeschooled—so we get invited to that convention every year. This was two years ago, three years ago. They flew in Kirk Cameron as the graduation speaker. He gets up in front of everybody and says a lot of good things. But then he starts badmouthing the Pre-trib Rapture and he says, “Now, you kids out there. Don't just wait around for a rapture.” As if that is the main point of teaching concerning the Rapture, that we're just waiting around. I say to myself, “Well, that is a change. Here is a guy from the *Left Behind* movies, trashing the Rapture.” I am thinking, is he going to give back all the money he made in the *Left Behind* movies now that he is not ‘Left Behind’ theology anymore? Then I just started to notice the things that would pop up on my social media. He started to move into replacement theology. When Ted Cruz came out in an interview with Tucker Carlson, trying to stand up for the Jewish people based on the Bible—“I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you” (Genesis 12:3)—I noticed that Kirk Cameron came out with a video trying to say that Ted Cruz was taking the Bible out of context.

So I started to notice him moving into what we would call Replacement Theology. Then there was another video I saw of him recently where he was trying to argue that the beast of Revelation 13 is not the future Antichrist: the beast is Nero. That caught my attention because that was my master's thesis. I was trying to argue against the position that the beast is Nero. I was saying the beast is not Nero, that at the end of the first century, A.D. 64, the beast is a future Antichrist. I thought that my master's thesis would just go into the library and collect dust and no one would care about it. Then all of a sudden, here's Kirk Cameron in the popular world, arguing for the very thing that I was trying to refute in that master's thesis. He didn't mention my name. He probably does not know anything about me or my topic on that, but I found that interesting. Kirk Cameron has just kept moving, almost in a direction that is unstable, to the point that now he came out and he said that hell is not forever. He started to endorse something that I knew was floating around out there called conditional immortality—Annihilationism. All of a sudden, he started to articulate that.

I said, “Well, that is not good, because now we are not just dealing with prophetic type issues that good people can agree to disagree on.” Now he is moving into the point where he does not think hell is forever. I think now he has pushed the envelope so far that he is moving into something that I do not think is even orthodox Christianity. That is why I wanted to do this series on Annihilationism versus Eternal Torment, because we are living in a time period where influencers, people that people pay attention to because of their popularity, are now moving what we would call the Overton Window. If you know what the Overton Window is, it's a figure of speech: of concepts or thoughts that are considered acceptable and open for discussion. That's what the Overton Window is. So there has been this concerted effort to move the Overton window more

and more to the side of non-literal interpretation. What you are starting to see now is these influencers and people of popularity—you can put in there people like Candace Owens, Tucker Carlson. There's a guy named John Rich, who is saying now that the Pre-Trib Rapture is an Illuminati conspiracy. All these arguments that I used to hear from kooks and crackpots and academics that no one even heard of are now being espoused by mainstream conservative influencers.

People think, "Well, Kirk Cameron is on TV, so he must be right,"—that sort of mentality. So the latest thing that he has moved into is wanting to open up a discussion related to Annihilation versus Eternal Torment. As we look at this subject of Annihilation versus Eternal Torment, here is an outline that we are going to follow. First, I want to define the terms. What is this whole discussion of conditional immortality, Annihilation versus Eternal Torment? What do we even mean by those expressions? Let's start with a definition.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, who does not espouse those views, has a section in his book "The Footsteps of the Messiah" where he critiques those views. Before he does his critique, he gives a definition of what these people represent and what they are teaching. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says,

"Conditional immortality means that the soul is not inherently immortal—"¹

When God created people, He did not create people to last and live forever, which is very different from what we teach. We teach that God has put eternity into the hearts of men, Ecclesiastes 3:11. Every single human being will be alive somewhere—a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, a million years from now, a billion years from now—because we are made in God's image. God is eternal.

When God fashioned man, He made him, and her, humanity eternal as well. What they are saying here is, "No, that is not true. People are not created to last forever. The only people that will last forever are believers. They are given the gift of immortality, lasting forever at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. Everyone who is not a Christian has never been given that gift."

So, since they are not designed to last forever, that leads to annihilation. Kirk Cameron is not denying the existence of hell with this view, but what he is saying is that there are people, or unbelievers, that will go into hell. They will experience conscious torment in hell up to a point.

The really bad people like Hitler will be in hell a lot longer than your average atheist. But if an unbeliever dies without Christ, they are not inherently immortal. They go into hell and at different junctures they will simply be annihilated, meaning there is a point at which they will cease to exist.

Fruchtenbaum says:

¹ Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 707-8

"Conditional immortality means the soul is not inherently immortal; immortality is not part of the makeup of the soul. Rather, immortality is a gift for the saved only—"2

See that? The reason I evangelize people and the reason you should evangelize people is that you are dealing with someone that has an eternal soul, and you understand that they are going to be alive somewhere forever. What Kirk Cameron is saying here is that that isn't true.

If the person you are evangelizing dies without Christ, they may go into hell, but they are going to be in hell temporarily because they were never given the gift of immortality at the point of conversion.

"Rather, immortality is a gift for the saved only. So at death, the unbeliever simply becomes non-existent and only the believer continues to exist—"3

Now, I would tweak that a little bit. Kirk Cameron, with this view, is not saying that at death the unbeliever becomes non-existent. What he is saying is that they will go into hell, but they will not be in hell forever. Now, that view—conditional immortality—is fused together with Annihilationism.

What is that? We have two things operating here. We've got number one: conditional immortality, which I just tried to explain. They are fusing that together with Annihilationism. So what is Annihilationism?

"What Annihilationism says is this: the unsaved soul is annihilated after a period of temporary punishment."4

They will go into hell and they will stay there depending on how bad they were, but there comes a point where they will not eternally suffer. They'll just disappear.

God can do that because He never gave them the gift of immortality. The gift of immortality only goes to the believer. God never created people to be immortal.

They are taking conditional immortality and Annihilationism, and they are merging them together.

"What Annihilationism says is this: the unsaved soul is annihilated after a temporary period of punishment. These people do believe that the unsaved soul goes to hell, but not for eternity, only temporarily—"5

When Arnold says "these people," he is talking about those that espouse this: the Kirk Camerons of the world.

² Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 707-8

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid

So when they are cornered on this and they are asked, "Do you believe in hell?" They are able to hide behind this excuse. "Yeah, we believe in hell." If you don't know enough to keep asking questions, you'll be satisfied with it. "Hey, all is fine. Kirk Cameron believes in hell."

The right question to ask is not "Do you believe in hell?" It is, "Do you believe in everlasting hell?" He denies that.

"These people believe that the unsaved soul goes to hell, but not for eternity, only temporarily. Eventually the unsaved soul is annihilated after suffering a duration of punishment."⁶

If I was functioning completely on my emotions, which is how people get pulled into this, I would love to believe something like that. I really would.

My brother was a student at Biola University back in the day, so I would go there to visit him; and there was a Jehovah's Witness that came onto campus, and he was trying to convince all of us who were there sitting in the dorm lobby that hell is not forever. It's just the common grave. You die. You go maybe to hell for a little while if you are a really bad person, but eventually you just disintegrate. At the time, I knew very little about the Bible. My emotions said to me, "I want to believe that because this whole idea of hell—I've never liked that idea." In fact, when I was in junior high school, a guy that I knew invited me to a Baptist camp. I think they were Southern Baptists.

These people got in front of us and, every single teaching they did at this camp, all they talked about was hell. They talked about hell all the time. It sure scared the hell out of me, I'll tell you that much. I thank God that I was sitting there listening to this, because I would hear all these people older than myself talking about hell and the reality of hell.

I really did not know the Bible—hardly anything about the Bible. But I knew that hell existed and I did not want to go. So when the time came for me to hear the gospel of grace, I took the opportunity because I did not, and I do not, want to go to hell. Hell is a terrible place.

After sitting under that teaching, this Jehovah's Witness came in and said, "Hell does not last forever. You get annihilated." Emotionally, I was sucked in because that is what I wanted to believe. I did not have the theological grounding or footing to reject it. If we are going based on emotions, I love conditional immortality, Annihilationism.

But the question is, "Is that what the Bible teaches?" That's what we are going to look at here.

⁶ Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 707-8

Kirk Cameron has all of these followers on social media, and all of these people—if you look at the comments, it is so sad—are chiming in saying, "Yeah, you've got it right. This needs to be open for discussion and conversation."

What I am saying is, "Shut the door on this whole thing, because if this gets out into the open (which it apparently it already is) you will destroy modern day missions. You will absolutely destroy it because there really is not much of an incentive to translate the Bible into another language, to learn the dialect of a foreign culture, to share the gospel with people that have never heard it before, if they are just going to disintegrate after a point."

That is basically a definition of what conditional immortality, being tossed together with Annihilationism, is teaching. It is basically an emotion—based argument.

Who is teaching this? Norman Geisler, in his book 'Systematic Theology: Volume Four,' has a wonderful discussion of this. He gives the history of Annihilationism. Long before the Kirk Camerons of the world ever grabbed hold of this, this view was existing beneath the surface in the minds of a lot of people. It certainly is not a majority opinion, but you can find examples of it early on in church history.

Here is Norman Geisler's summation of this:

"Annihilationism was embraced by Arnobius (fl. fourth century) but did not become popular until the nineteenth century, when it was propagated by Congregationalist Edward White and then by Seventh—Day Adventist Le Roy Froom (1874-1970)—"⁷

Now that name, Le Roy Froom, I know, because I've got these four volumes by him in my library, and they are beautifully done, on the subject of eschatology, the end times, and what everybody believed about the end times during different sections of church history. You can see by reading through them where Amillennialism came from, where Postmillennialism came from, where Post-Tribulationism came from.

These volumes by Le Roy Froom are outstanding, but he was a Seventh-Day Adventist. His scholarship on church history is really good, but he is coming from the angle of a Seventh-Day Adventist. Seventh-Day Adventists embrace this Annihilationist, conditional immortality perspective.

For example, there's a guy that comes on TV. His show is named 'Amazing Facts.' His name is Doug Batchelor. Have you ever seen him on TV? Those of you that have not—blessed be your ignorance, as I like to say. He is very articulate and winsome. A lot of the things he says are true.

However, when he gets into eschatology, he is always down on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, like Kirk Cameron recently. If you listen to him long enough, he's going to try to

⁷ Geisler, N. L. (2005), *Systematic Theology Volume Four* pp. 390-391

sell you on this idea that hell does not last forever. If you are dealing with seventh day Adventists, they will come from this perspective as well.

Other proponents are the Jehovah's Witnesses. I already mentioned them: the fellow that came to the campus and almost sucked me into this emotionally. Jehovah's Witnesses are also Annihilationist.

Then Dr. Geisler mentions some other names that you may not have heard of:

"In the mid twentieth century, Harold Guillebaud (1882-1964) and Basil Atkinson (1895-?) defended conditionalism, and a few other evangelicals, such as John Wenham (b. 1913), John Stott, and Clark Pinnock (b. 1920) have embraced the view—"⁸

Do you recognize the name John Stott? John Stott is an evangelical scholar. John Stott has had some absolutely wonderful things to say about John's gospel, but when you are reading John Stott, you have to understand that when it comes to the subject of hell, he is going to move into this conditional immortality Annihilationist's perspective.

Here is the one that most recently hit home in my life. Clark Pinnock, another who has embraced the view. Clark Pinnock was pushing all of this stuff when I was in seminary at a big academic meeting where evangelicals meet called the Evangelical Theological Society. Clark Pinnock, at the Evangelical Theological Society as a minority opinion, was pushing Annihilationism. He was also pushing Open theism.

Open theism was really the hot topic when I was going through seminary. Open theism is the idea that God does not know everything, that what God knows is the possibilities.

As an example, I've got this red tie on. This is not my only tie. I've got a bunch of them. According to an open theist, when I woke up this morning and was trying to make a decision concerning what tie I would wear, God did not know which one I would pick. He did know all of the possible ties and colors that I could select from, but it was not until I actually picked it that God knew I would pick this tie. That is what you call the openness of God.

Who would teach something like that? Well, sometimes if you get into the history of these people, you start to figure out why they are teaching this. In his case, something really terrible happened to a friend or family member. It was a murder or a rape or something awful. So Clark Pinnock said, "How could God have known about that and not stopped it?" His solution is not that God gives us a doctrine of suffering and that God allows all kinds of things to happen in our lives for some purpose higher than ourselves. He did not move into the doctrine of suffering. What he said is, "God did not stop it because God did not know it would happen. Because if God knew it would happen, he would have stopped it."

Do you see what's happening with Clark Pinnock? It's very emotional. Is this not what Satan did with Eve? Genesis 3, when he started a discussion with her. It was an appeal

⁸ Geisler, N. L. (2005), *Systematic Theology Volume Four* pp. 390-391

to her emotions—and emotions are real; God gave us emotions, but Satan would love for you to live your life and develop your theology based on your emotions rather than what He said.

Pinnock is interesting because he not only believes in conditional immortality Annihilationism as an evangelical, but he also believes in the openness of God. This is taking place within the Evangelical Theological Society movement. This is not the Jehovah's Witnesses teaching this, although they do teach Annihilationism. This is one of our own.

When Norman Geisler, now with the Lord, got wind of this, he left the Evangelical Theological Society. He said, "You guys, by tolerating this stuff, have moved so far away from what we would call evangelical Christianity that it is not evangelical Christianity anymore. I withdraw my membership." A lot of people criticized him for that because the other camp said, "You need to be a voice of truth within this society." But these things really bothered Norman Geisler. He departed from the Evangelical Theological Society because of it.

We are living in a time period where the movement that God raised up to fight liberalism—that's where Evangelical Christianity came from; beginning with 'The Fundamentals of the Faith' written in the 1920s, maybe earlier; names like R.A. Torrey, who was very influential in the founding of Biola University, Lewis Sperry Chafer, foundational in the founding of Dallas Seminary, people who were influenced by them like J. Vernon McGee, who you hear on the radio with 'Thru the Bible'. All of those guys are coming from a fundamentalist mindset, and they all came together to fight liberalism as it was coming from Europe into our schools and seminaries roughly around the 1920s.

The Fundamentalists lost. They could not keep control of what we would call the Seven Sisters. The Seven Sisters are the denominations that represent Christianity: Methodism, Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, etc. What started to happen within the Seven Sisters is there started to be these splits where people that were more conservative said, "We're not going to do this. Let's split off and form a Presbyterian church that's more conservative."

The other thing that started to happen is people started to leave the Seven Sisters and started to form what we would call independent Bible-teaching churches. Sugar Land Bible Church is that kind of a church. It is basically comprised of people that left the Seven Sisters because they felt that the theology was going south because liberalism was taking over everything.

As the saying goes, to the victor goes the spoils. It was a huge loss for the Fundamentalists. You lost control of denominations; you lost control of elder boards; you lost control of schools, massive libraries.

(I've done research over at Southern Methodist University, and they've got a school of theology there called the Perkins School of Theology—we used to joke around that it was really the Perkins School of Mythology because it was so, so liberal—but the library

was outstanding. They had every resource that you would ever want to get your fingertips on.)

So you lose control of libraries, you lose control of endowments, you lose control of money. Essentially what happened is people left the Seven Sisters, and they started independent Bible-teaching movements, Sugar Land Bible Church being in that tradition.

Fundamentalism, what we call evangelicalism, was starting to fight liberalism. What's happening in our day is that the very movement that God raised up to fight liberalism is now becoming liberal. See that? This is why Geisler left the Evangelical Theological Society towards the end of his life.

It'd be one thing if this was just coming from the Jehovah's Witnesses; who cares about them? (I say that facetiously, but that is a cult.) They do not believe in the Trinity. They have their own version of the Bible.

It's one thing when a teaching comes from them—that's on the outside. What's happening with people like Clark Pinnock and popular influencers like Kirk Cameron is that now it is coming from within.

I was not planning on going there, but if you could just turn to Acts 20:29 Paul is warning about what would happen to the church once the apostles started to die off. It's a wonderful talk he gives here to the elders at Ephesus. He is at an area called Troas, wrapping up his third missionary journey.

He says in Acts 20:29:

"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves—" (Acts 20:29-30)

Those are the Clark Pinnocks. Those are the Kirk Camerons. That's not an external attack; that's an internal attack.

"From among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things—" (Acts 20:30)

What kind of perverse things? Well, conditional immortality, Annihilationism. Weird stuff like that.

"To draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert—" (Acts 20:31)

Christian, are you on the alert? Are you aware of these trends? Paul says, "Pay attention."

Is Paul serious about the subject matter?

"Remembering that night and day—" (Acts 20:31)

That's a long sermon series right there. "I was talking to you about this night and day!"

"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

In other words, I warned you nonstop about this for three years—night and day, night and day, night and day—to the point where I emotionally opened my heart and I started to emote. I started to cry because I knew this was coming.

What you see here is not an external attack, theologically. This is something coming from within. You can go to the Evangelical Theological Society. You can sit under people like Clark Pinnock who are teaching in this area of Annihilationism—exactly the same stuff you get from 'The Kingdom of the Cults.' You can get the star of the 'Left Behind' series teaching the exact same stuff, related to Annihilationism, that you get from 'The Kingdom of the Cults.' That is an attack that comes from the inside.

You can see that this view has always existed. People have believed it and taught it. It is an appeal to the emotions. It's like a whale under the ocean. You don't even know the whale's there. All of a sudden, it comes up and you can see it and there it is.

That's what is happening. There's this giant blimp underneath the ocean that has now surfaced, and it has surfaced this month because of the influence of Kirk Cameron.

Where am I getting this from? This is from something called 'Protestia':

'Kirk Cameron Denies Eternal Conscious Torment, Is Now An Annihilationist?'

Here's another one:

'Kirk Cameron reveals—'

By the way, look at the date: December 6th. This is pretty recent. The view has always been there. He just popularized it.

'Kirk Cameron reveals that he no longer believes in "eternal conscious torment" for the wicked, which he suggests is "cruel and unusual punishment."'

So that you don't think I'm misrepresenting Kirk Cameron, I want to read you his exact words. This is from the podcast in which he made this disclosure.

Appearing with his son on Episode 86 of 'The Kirk Cameron Show,' he said:.

"The Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, never talks about the eternality—immortality—of the wicked souls. The only ones who have

immortal souls are those who are granted eternal life. And that's only believers—"9

See, these are his words, not mine.

"Jesus died so that we could have eternal life. But do the wicked have eternal life in hell? And if they do, why does the Old Testament describe the fate of the wicked in the opposite terms?"10

What opposite terms? Hang with me in this series, and you are going to learn every one of them and how to refute it.

"For example, the Old Testament describes the fate of the wicked with three words: 'death,' 'perish,' and 'destroy.' The soul that sins: it shall die...it will perish, it will be destroyed—which is like the ending of life, not the ongoing life forever in punishment..."

He continues:

"When you look at God's judgment upon individuals—or on nations, cities, empires—He says, 'They're gone.' Like, the symbolism is scorched earth—destroyed, gone—and their name is remembered no more. You know, the jackals and the owls will come and inhabit their land...and they're not coming back. It's, like, forever. Which really is a better description of dying, of perishing—not being granted eternal life so that you can be tormented forever...That doesn't seem to fit...11We give someone lethal injection. We do it humanely. Humanely...We can't have cruel and unusual punishments for people—but an eternal conscious torment? That would, by definition—in human terms—be considered cruel and unusual punishment...Does God not have a merciful and compassionate way to mete out His justice?"12

I've heard this speech before from the Jehovah's Witness—going back to my visiting my brother in the 1980s at Biola University—and when he started to say all of this stuff, he brought me in hook, line, and sinker because emotionally I want to believe that.

But when you become a disciple of Christ, you start to learn that *"as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways."* Isaiah 55:9. There are some things in the Bible that I do not necessarily have to agree with, but I accept it because it comes from a source higher than myself. How I feel about a particular subject, or how I feel about a particular topic is irrelevant.

⁹ The Kirk Cameron Show Ep. 86, *Are We Wrong About Hell?* [Are We Wrong About Hell? | The Kirk Cameron Show Ep 86](#), Timestamp 16:21-16:39

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The Kirk Cameron Show Ep. 86, *Are We Wrong About Hell?* [Are We Wrong About Hell? | The Kirk Cameron Show Ep 86](#), Timestamp 18:47-19:25

¹² Ibid. Timestamp 26:11-26:31

I may have a particular view about the Atlantic Ocean, but whether I like it or not it is still there. I may have a particular view about the law of gravity. I may say, the law of gravity is very restrictive, and it is an impingement upon my personal freedom. So I am going to go out today and violate the law of gravity by getting on top of this building and throwing myself off of it. But the law of gravity does not care about my personal opinions. It is there whether I like it or not.

Kirk Cameron continues—listen to this language:

"So my position, as it stands today—" ¹³

When Kirk Cameron said this, what happened is that he started to get blowback. Thank God for it.

All the major ministries: Answers in Genesis—even the guy that Kirk Cameron teams up with, Ray Comfort, who is a Lordship salvation guy (I call him Ray Discomfort). Even Ray Comfort—and Kirk Cameron made Ray Comfort popular—started to push back.

What Kirk Cameron then started to say is, "Well, I really did not say what you think I said." But when you read his language here—when he came out with this—he says, "This is my view."

Now, what he's doing is, "Let's just have a conversation. Let's have a discussion." Anybody who wants to move the Overton window, the realm of accepted possibilities, always wants to have a conversation. I do not think we should be having a conversation. I think we should be saying, "Thus saith the Lord," and I will show you why in this series.

"So my position as it stands today...I used to hold the position of conscious eternal torment because that's just what I was taught by people that I love and trust." ¹⁴

In other words, "Hey, there is no biblical basis for eternal conscious torment. I just believed it because everybody told me it was true."

"I've learned that there are other positions."

Yeah, Kirk, there are a lot of other positions on everything. Virgin birth, deity of Christ—you name it, there are other positions. The issue is not, "Are there other positions?" The issue is, "Is it Biblical?"

"I've learned that there are other positions, and a very robust argument can be made for conditionalism or Annihilationism, as Edward Fudge posits here." ¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. Timestamp 35:43

¹⁴ The Kirk Cameron Show Ep. 86, *Are We Wrong About Hell?*

[Are We Wrong About Hell? | The Kirk Cameron Show Ep 86](#), Timestamp 35:43, 35:51-36:00

¹⁵ Ibid. Timestamp 36:00-36:08

What a name for a guy that he's quoting to develop this view. Edward Fudge? Sounds like Fudge is fudging the data a little bit.

"It fits the character of God, in my understanding, more than the...eternal conscious torment position, because it brings in the mercy of God together with the justice of God. It doesn't leave judgment out. It is just, but it also fits with the Old Testament picture of the fate of the wicked—which is to be...destroyed, it is to die, and it is to perish—not live forever in an eternal barbecue."¹⁶

Boy, does the Bible use that expression: 'eternal barbecue?' See, what they do here is called 'poisoning the well.' They assign to you some verbiage or some language that you have never articulated to try to make the eternal conscious torment position seem ridiculous. It's just as ridiculous as an eternal barbecue.

He goes on and he says:

"The classic verses that used to get me into eternal torment—you know, the punishment...everlasting punishment, everlasting destruction—fits beautifully with a destruction, punishment judgment that is irreversible and lasts forever—"¹⁷

I think he forgot a negation there. I'm trying to read exactly what he says.

"—that is, the eternalness of that punishment and that destruction."¹⁸

He's against that view. He's in favor of conditional immortality, Annihilationism.

Then he concludes by saying:

"So, that's where I am today."¹⁹

What he's saying is, "This is my new view." Well, then Ray Comfort pushed back, thankfully so. Answers in Genesis pushed back. Virtually every big Bible-oriented ministry I can think of, pushed back. Then all of a sudden Kirk Cameron said, "Well, I didn't really mean to say this was my view. What I'm really saying is I am considering this view. So let's create a roundtable of pastors and theologians, all representing the different perspectives. And let's have—using Kirk Cameron's words—let us have a robust conversation."

What's wrong with that? Well, what's wrong with it is that you are moving the Overton window. That is what's wrong with it. Any pastor that will sit down at the dialogue table is acknowledging that the guys across the table actually have something to say. See that? If you don't think they have anything to say, then why have dialogue with them? I get

¹⁶ Ibid. Timestamp 36:08-36:40

¹⁷ The Kirk Cameron Show Ep. 86, *Are We Wrong About Hell?*

[Are We Wrong About Hell? | The Kirk Cameron Show Ep 86](#), Timestamp 36:40-36:58

¹⁸ Ibid. Timestamp 36:58

¹⁹ Ibid.

people all the time that call here, and they want me to be on some podcast or some debate or some discussion, and I find out that they are rank heretics. One of them has said, "I'll even come to your church, in front of your people, and we can have a discussion."

I'm thinking to myself, "As long as I'm here and I am healthy, you will never get near this pulpit. I don't care if I have to put the chain link fence out here and the guard dogs and everything else," because John says, in 2 John 1:7-11:

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ—"

I will show you that this conditional immortality, Annihilationism, is something Jesus did not teach. He very aggressively taught the exact opposite.

"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting—" (2 John 1:9-10)

Why the house? Where did the early church meet? Houses. The early church did not have steeples and chapels and stained glass windows and meeting places. They met in people's homes.

If anyone comes to you with an alternate doctrine, do not let them into the church. Don't give them the pulpit. Don't let them pass out their literature in the hallway. Don't let them teach Sunday school. That's what John is saying, by the way, This is the love apostle talking like this. He talked more about the love of God than any other apostle, but love has a limit. We are to worship the Lord in spirit and truth.

Then verse 11:

"for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." (2 John 1:11)

"Hey, let me come to your church, and we'll have a debate in front of your people on a given doctrine." Well, if I were to allow that, then I would be participating in your evil doctrine, because I would be acknowledging that you actually have something to say. That is why there is this perpetual quest for debates and joint hearings.

The problem with that is that it is a rigged game before you even sit down to play, because the moment you sit down is the moment your actions communicate that the other side actually has something to say. I can see debates over things like when does the Gog-Magog war happen? Is that like a Pre-Trib event? Mid-Trib event? End of Tribulation event? There is a variety of opinions on that within our camp.

There you are debating something that there are honest disagreements of opinion on. Roundtable discussion on something like that is fine, but not with things that go so far that if they are true, Christianity does not exist anymore.

I did not bring the quote in, but there is a great quote by the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was a very influential expositor in England. In one of his books he talks about the foolishness of interfaith dialogue, and he says things like—and he was a medical doctor turned preacher—he says that you do not have dialogue about geometry with people that do not agree with the fundamentals of geometry. If you want to have a discussion about geometry, it does not do any good to talk about it with someone that does not agree with the maxims or the fundamentals upon which geometry rests. If you start to debate one of the pillars of geometry without which there is no geometry, then that is a total waste of your time.

That is what this interfaith dialogue mentality does. It comes from people who do not even agree with the pillars of Christianity anymore. So what is there to debate? What's there to discuss? What is there to discuss—any more than you would debate someone that does not agree with the basic tenets or principles of geometry? You certainly would not do it in a church where Paul in 1 Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the pillar of truth.

This is now what Kirk Cameron wants to do. He wants to have some roundtable discussion with people on why is hell forever or not. People have said, "Andy, you got to get in there, man." I do not want to get in there, because if I get in there, I am acknowledging that these guys actually have a legitimate opinion within Christendom. I do not think what they are doing is Christianity anymore.

With that introduction in mind, boy, we did not get very far today, did we?

Here is where this series is going to take us:

First, we're going to talk about the introduction of the controversy. We did that today. "What is this conditional immortality, annihilationism? Who's teaching it?"

Then, I am going to give you my best case: The Biblical arguments against annihilation. These are the verses that will cover. There are about ten of them, many of them coming from the lips of Christ himself, who said that not only is hell forever, but Christ-rejectors will be in hell in eternal conscious torment forever.

Then there are some theological arguments against annihilation. These do not come from specific texts. They come from the bigger category of theology, meaning God's justice is against annihilationism, God's Eternality itself is against annihilationism, etc.

Point two and point three are going to be my side of the argument in the sense that eternal conscious torment is a Biblical view.

Then we will get to point four. What you will see is that these Annihilationists have Bible verses. They've got a ton of them. In fact, if you listen—and I do not recommend you watch people like this, except if you are like me and you like doing opposition

research—watch the people like Kenneth Copeland on TV that teach the prosperity gospel. He has many Bible verses he uses. In fact, that guy uses more Bible verses than you get in most sermons today in most churches. Did you know that?

The issue is not if he's using the Bible—because the devil quoted the Bible to Jesus. Remember in the temptations of Matthew 4? The issue is, are you using the Bible rightly.

So, I will give you their side of the equation. They've got verses that they use to promote this Annihilationism, and they've got theological arguments that they use, and you've heard them. "How can a God of love put someone into an eternal hell?"—those kinds of arguments.

Then with point number six, we will move to the voice of church history. Church history is not inspired, as is the Scripture, but if I've got some view on something that only a few splinter groups have ever taught in church history, then maybe I should rethink my position because as you will see under point number six, there are some splinter groups that have taught this conditional immortality Annihilationism. The overwhelming voice of church history has always believed in eternal conscious torment for the unbelievers.

Then at the end, point seven will reach a conclusion. The conclusion will be that what has happened is these people are trying to make God in their image. God made man in His image, but the human tendency is to take God and make Him more warm and fuzzy. That's what is called a golden calf.

Humans have always done this. They've always tried to make God in our personal image. When you take one attribute of God like His love and you magnify it, and that is all you focus on, and you take another attribute like His justice and you shrink it, what do you have at the end of the day? You do not have the God of the Bible. That's what this excursion into Annihilationism is doing. That's what this excursion into open theism is doing.

We are told to worship the Lord in spirit and truth. John 4:24. If you ask Clark Pinnock, "Well then, how did Jesus know? If God does not know everything, then how did Jesus know that Peter would deny him three times? Jesus said, 'Peter, you are going to deny Me'—not twice, not four times, but exactly three.

"Hey, Clark, how did Jesus know that if God was just aware of the possibilities but did not know exactly what Peter would do?"

He will say something like, "Well, Jesus knew Peter's character so well that He knew what he would do under pressure, but He did not have an exhaustive foreknowledge that Peter would deny Jesus exactly three times."

What you have just done there, Clark, is taken an attribute of God, His omniscience and His foreknowledge, and you have shrunk it to something that would help you explain a tragedy that happened in your life related to a family member. You have been sucked in through emotions, and you have created a God in your own image, and it is not supposed to work that way.

God made us in His image. We're to come to the Scripture with fear and trepidation, not trying to rewrite it.

That will be the sort of conclusion that we reach at the end with Eternal Conscious Torment versus Annihilationism. Not exactly the happy, fuzzy thought of the day, but I think you guys will enjoy this series and it will equip you wherever God has you.