

## Eternal Conscious Torment vs Annihilation 004

Ecclesiastes 3:11

January 18, 2026

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Good morning, everybody. Let us take our Bibles and open them to James 3:9. I am surprised you guys keep coming back to this class, given what we are talking about here: Annihilationism versus eternal torment.

The first thing we did in this mini-series we are doing is that we introduced the controversy. The controversy is that there is something that has been under the radar for a while, but recently it has been floating around.

It is the idea that when unsaved people go to hell, they are not going to be there forever. They are kind of going to disintegrate. That is called Annihilationism. The reason they believe unbelievers are going to disintegrate is because of a belief called conditional immortality, which is the idea that unsaved people are not eternal.

The only people that are eternal are believers. So, God did not create people to last forever. How do people live forever? They have to become believers.

If you are an unbeliever, then you do not have immortality. What will happen to the unbelievers? Well, they will go into hell for a period of time, and then they will just disappear. That is the belief called Annihilation.

It is almost like unbelievers never existed at all once they are annihilated. These two views are riding shotgun with each other.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes these views as follows—he is not promoting them; he is critiquing them:

"Conditional immortality means the soul is not inherently immortal; immortality is not part of the make-up of the soul. 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..."<sup>1</sup>

That view runs in tandem with Annihilation.

"...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. Eventually the unsaved soul is annihilated after suffering a duration of punishment."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 707-8

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

I knew this view was out there, and nobody really took it seriously. I never really took it seriously. It did not seem to be very popular, but lo and behold, here comes Kirk Cameron—he is on TV, so he must know something about the Bible, right?—and he has millions and millions of followers and subscribers and all that.

All of a sudden, on December 6th, 2025—I read to you the quote—he comes out favoring this view and everybody is jumping on board with it.

This news source says:

"Kirk Cameron Denies 'Eternal Conscious Torment,' Is Now An Annihilationist?"<sup>3</sup>

I went and listened to his podcast and, indeed, this is what he is promoting. Then he got a lot of pushback because of it—rightfully so—and he backed off and said, "Well, you know, let us just talk about it."

Which to me means, when people want to do that, they want to move what is called the Overton window. The Overton window is the range of accepted viewpoints. Whenever people want to move things one direction or the other—they want to change the conversation, and they want to take things that used to not be discussed and let them be discussed so that we would move closer to their view; even if we do not adopt all of it, they want us to move closer to their view—and so they move the Overton window.

Now this is within the range of acceptable opinions that are being discussed. It is called the Hegelian Dialectic, if you are familiar with that. Thesis, antithesis. Then, "Well, here is the thesis, here is the antithesis."

And the two come together as a synthesis. So the synthesis just moved things over, did it not? One bad idea. Let us refute the bad idea with a synthesis. So we just move the window.

See that? All you have to do to move the window again is come up with another bad idea. Another thesis-antithesis. Let us make everybody happy. Let us go into the middle. We will call that synthesis.

I just took the window and moved it over here. Then you do this over and over again, and this is how you end up with terrible theology. It is how you end up with Marxism and all kinds of things that we disagree with.

So, whenever someone says, "Well, I am not sure if I believe it—"

Even though Kirk Cameron said he believed it initially, until everybody started dog-piling on him, including Ray Comfort, his life-long—almost partner—in ministry.

Kirk said, "Well, I do not believe it. I just want to talk about it."

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<sup>3</sup> <https://protestia.com/2025/12/06/kirk-cameron-denies-eternal-conscious-torment-is-now-an-annihilationist>

This, to me, is just as dangerous because it is a movement of the Overton Window. Now this is within the range of accepted views. So now we have to think about this. Is this true? Are people conditionally immortal? if they never become believers, do they go into hell, not being immortal, and therefore dissolve at a certain period of time? That is what he is promoting.

After we went over that in the last two lessons, this is our fourth lesson. I gave you the strongest texts that I know of that talk about how hell is eternal. It is not just hell that is eternal, but the people in hell are also forever.

As they go into hell—forever—they do not disappear. They do not explode. They do not get annihilated. It is the ETC (Eternal Conscious Torment) position: they are in a place of eternal conscious torment.

I gave you those texts. Today, I would like to give you some theological arguments. These are more broad-pictures: Why hell and humanity in hell forever are theologically true.

Then, next week, I will start letting their side talk. I will give you the arguments that they use. They have arguments. They have Bible verses, but you know what? Everybody has Bible verses. If you watch the prosperity gospel teachers on TV—I watch them not because I believe what they are saying, but because I am an opposition research guy—they use all kinds of verses.

They quote the Bible, those guys—those prosperity preachers, more than your average mainstream Evangelical church quotes the Bible, but they use it incorrectly.

The devil himself quotes the Bible. The issue is not who is quoting the Bible. The issue is if they are using the Bible correctly.

Next week, we will look at Point Number Four: answering their Biblical arguments. We will move into their theological arguments today.

With all of that being said, what are some theological reasons why the eternal conscious torment viewpoint is correct?

Reason one: Annihilationism underestimates the severity of sin.

The moment you move into annihilation, you are taking sin and making it less serious than what it really is.

What is sin? Sin is an offense or a trespass against an eternal, holy God. That is what sin is. It is very grave. It is very severe, because sin is a rebellion against an eternal God. Because sin offends a holy and eternal God, it becomes mandatory that people suffer eternally for sin.

If sin is an eternal offense against an eternal God, then it mandates an eternal consequence. So, for people to say it does not mandate an eternal consequence is to take the whole issue of the gravity of sin and the seriousness of sin and shrink it.

Something that has helped me understand this, because it is a big concept to try to wrap your head around, is this: If sin and its penalty are not as bad as the Bible says they are, then why in the world did Jesus do what He did to fix the problem?

Jesus Christ, the eternally existent second Member of the Godhead who has enjoyed during His whole eternity privilege, why would He leave that place temporarily—not giving up His deity; of course He was deity all the way through His earthly life, but He gave up the prerogatives of deity. He never gave up the independent exercise, He never gave up the exercise of his privileges, He merely submitted those to God the Father.

He could have stopped the whole ordeal of the crucifixion had He wanted to, but He did not. He took His prerogatives—He never relinquished them, but He submitted them to the will of the Father. He said, "Not My will be done, but Thy will be done."

He did it to the point of the cross, which is horrific—when you study the crucifixion, it is just a horrific way to die.

The story of Christianity is how God, the second Member of the Trinity, did that for us. He absorbed the wrath, as an eternal Being, of a holy God in our place.

For Him to do that must mean that sin is pretty bad, right? What sin is must be horrific, or else this maximum price by the eternal existent second Member of the Trinity would not have to be paid.

That is the first thing that bothers me about Annihilationism. It takes the whole topic of sin, which is an offense against an eternal God, and shrinks it and makes it less than what the Bible portrays sin as.

A second reason, theologically, why I think the eternal conscious torment position is right is that the Annihilationist position contradicts humanity's nature. When you talk about human beings—Adam and Eve being the first—"us in Adam's race," what does that even mean?

Well, one of the things that it means is that we are made in the image of God, which is an amazing statement when you think about it. To my knowledge, we are the only creature that God ever made that bears His image. Certainly the animal kingdom does not. The earth does not bear God's image. Angels that are created higher than people do not even bear His image.

We bear His image. That is found right at the beginning of the Bible.

Genesis 1:26-28 says:

*"Then God said, 'Let us—' (Genesis 1:26)*

The 'Us' there is probably a latent reference to the Trinity of God, His triunity. We have to wait for the New Testament to get more development on that.

*"...Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them..." (Genesis 1:26-27).*

Notice that both genders have equal value as far as God is concerned, because they are both made in His image, although God does mandate that men and women play different roles. But having a different role is not a statement of an undervalue of somebody.

*"...God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:26-28).*

This is just a huge statement of our dignity as image-bearers of God—contrary to evolutionary teaching—this is what makes us higher than the animals. According to evolution, we are just an evolved animal, but the Bible says something very different.

It says we are different from animals because we bear His image. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, will say things like this.

Look at Matthew 6:26:

*"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:26)*

Compared to the birds, I am worth more. Why am I worth more? Because I am made in God's image. That is why.

Over in Matthew 12:12, the Pharisees are dog piling on Jesus because He healed someone on the Sabbath. "What a terrible thing to do. You broke our rules." Jesus says, "Well, you pull your own animal out of a ditch on the Sabbath. If you pull your own animal out of a ditch on the Sabbath, shouldn't I be able to heal someone on the Sabbath, since a human being is more valuable than an animal?"

He says that in Matthew 12:12:

*"How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12).*

Why is a man that Jesus healed more valuable than an animal being pulled out of the ditch on the Sabbath? Because the human being bears God's image, but the animal does not. That is how God created us.

Now, what does that mean, exactly? "Made in His image." Well, it means a lot of things. We share in some of—not all!—the attributes of God. There are certain attributes God shares with us. Those are called His communicable attributes.

There are other attributes God has that He does not share with us, which is fine, because otherwise He would not be God, right? He has to have some attributes of His own that we do not share in. Three of them that come to mind are the 'omnis': omniscience (all-knowing), omnipotence (all powerful), omnipresence (everywhere at once).

God does not share those attributes, but there are others we do share in. God has emotions; we have emotions. Listen to this one. God has volition; we have free will and volition to such an extent that you can spend your life rejecting God, even though He will, I think, go overboard trying to convict us.

You can spend your whole life rejecting God. As you will see from the next sermon today about Pharaoh, God respects the decision. If God did not respect the decision, He would be overriding how He manufactured us—in His image.

Part of our image-bearing status is not just emotions, it is not just volition. Another thing that comes to mind is that He is a ruler. In a certain sense, we rule things here. We are told at the dawn of creation that humanity is to subdue the animal kingdom and rule over it. That is an outworking of our image-bearing status.

Here is one of the things that we share with God: God is eternal, God is forever; so, we as image-bearers are eternal as well. Now, it is a little bit different in the sense that we have a beginning point. Our beginning point is at the point of conception.

God, on the other hand, has always existed. There is a big difference there: the creative Being—He is the Creator—He has always been in existence. We have not.

However, part of our image-bearing status is that from the moment of conception—and this is true of all people, whether they know Jesus or not—we are designed by God to live forever.

This is why Jesus is always talking about the soul, and the value of the soul.

Notice Matthew 16:26. Jesus says:

*"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).*

Why is Jesus always saying things like, "You could be the richest person in the world, but if you are not paying attention to your soul, you are not paying attention to something about you that is extremely valuable." Why would Jesus say that?

Well, it relates back to Genesis 1: that we are made in God's image—He lasts forever. We last forever as well.

Notice Luke 12:20. This is the rich man that was about to die in unbelief, and he had achieved the American Dream, this guy. He had all the money that he could spend. Jesus talks about this in Luke:

*"But God said to him—" (Luke 12:20)*

To the rich man.

*"...You fool! This very night your soul—" (Luke 12:20).*

In Greek, that is 'psyche.'

*"...This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" (Luke 12:20)*

Jesus is saying that you spent your whole life accumulating to the point where you pushed God out of your life, and you think you have succeeded, but you are actually a total fool because you have not paid attention to the part of you that is going to last forever.

This is why Jesus says this is how it is going to be for people that are not rich towards God. The reason He is making these statements is because when you die and go into the next life, as part of your image-bearing status you exist forever. You exist for eternity.

Give thought to where your soul is going to go now. That is what it means to be made in God's image.

Now, you might be asking, "Well, wait a minute. Didn't man fall in Eden?"

Yes.

"Doesn't that change our status as image bearers of God?"

The answer is no.

Notice Genesis 9:6. This is post-Fall, post-Flood. God says this right after the Flood:

*"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).*

So, you will notice—long after the Fall, long after the Flood—humanity still bears God's image.

What did the Fall do? It effaced the image, but it did not erase it. Now, is this a New Testament truth? Yes. Look at James 3:9, which deals with taming the tongue.

I am glad none of you guys need a sermon on that. I need all the sermons I can get on that, to be honest with you. It is hard to curb that two-by-two slab of mucous membrane between the gums called the 'tongue.'

Why control the tongue? Why not just go around slandering people? Why not go on social media and say ugly things about people all day long? Well, James 3:9 tells us why.

Concerning the tongue, it says:

*"With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God" (James 3:9).*

Some translations say: "who have been made in the similitude of God" (James 3:9, KJV, NKJV).

Now, that is not even an Old Testament teaching anymore. This is the New Testament. The Fall is long behind us. The Flood is long behind us. The Tower of Babel incident is long behind us. Israel has been under the Mosaic legal system for 1500 years.

All of that time has passed, and you would think that something would change in people, making them less valuable, but that is not true. We still bear God's image. The image has been effaced, but it has never been erased.

Notice 1 Corinthians 11:7.

I give this to you with a little bit of concern because it gets into head coverings, which I do not want to deal with. But in the process of head coverings and church—I do want to deal with it, just not here, this would be a total rabbit trail—it says:

*"For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man" (1 Corinthians 11:7).*

Here we are now in the New Testament, Pauline epistles. The verse I read to you earlier is from James, which was probably the first book of the New Testament. Now Paul is reiterating the fact that we are image-bearers of God, and as image bearers of God, there is something very different about us. We are designed by God as human beings to last forever.

I believe that the Book of Ecclesiastes, in Ecclesiastes 3:11, makes reference to this. Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, says:

*"He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).*

You will notice that God says, there in the Book of Ecclesiastes through Solomon, that He has put eternity into our hearts.

The word for eternity there is 'olam,' which means 'forever.' That is a very strange statement to make if someone thinks that unsaved people at some point just disappear. This whole annihilationist mentality goes against how God manufactured us and designed us as image-bearers.

By the way, that same Hebrew word 'olam' is used of God.

Psalms 90:2:

*"Before the mountains were born, Or you gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting..." (Psalm 90:2).*

There is a repetition of 'olam.'

*"...Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2).*

Does God last forever? Yes. As his image bearers, we last forever as well. I have not always been, but from the point of the beginning of life—conception—I never cease to exist because God has put eternity into the hearts of men.

The same Hebrew word 'olam' is used of Jesus, prophetically, in Micah 5:2. (This is the great prophecy given 700 years in advance, detailing the birth of Christ.)

Micah writes:

*"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
From you One will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel.  
His goings forth are from long ago,  
From the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2).*

Eternity is going to be born in Bethlehem; that is what he is saying, and it is a statement of the coming Messiah. It is a statement of Jesus Himself, the eternally existent second Member of the Godhead.

When you see that exact same word used to describe people, you cannot say, "Well, God is forever, but people are not." That is a totally inconsistent way to read the Bible.

Here are the names of God that we have studied in the Book of Genesis. As we have moved through the Book of Genesis, we have seen that God has many names—to bring out different features of His character.

He is 'Elohim,' the God of power; 'Yahweh,' the God of relationship; 'El Roi'—'El' means 'God'—the God who sees, or the God who is aware; 'Jehovah Jireh,' the God that provides.

There is the 'God that Isaac feared,' communicating reverence. Then there is 'God, the God of Israel,' meaning that God is national over a particular nation that He created called Israel.

Notice what one of His names is: It is 'El'—God—'Olam'—eternal. He is the forever God. We see that spelled out in Genesis 21:33.

*"Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33).*

That is the first time God is described as 'El Olam' in Hebrew. He is the God that is forever.

So, you start to see what it means to be an image-bearer of God. One of the features of God is that He is eternal.

If that same Hebrew word 'olam' is applied to people, it does not make any sense to me how we as His image-bearers would not be eternal. Again, this is true of everybody. All human beings are eternal.

So, therefore, what profit does it do someone to gain the whole world if they are going to try to do that at the exclusion of eternal things—the exclusion of the soul? That is why Jesus calls people that do those kinds of things foolish, because they are not planning for eternity, and they should plan for eternity because they are going to be here forever.

This Annihilationist mentality ignores all of this teaching that I have just given here. I see that as another problem with Annihilationism.

A third problem with Annihilationism is that it denies degrees of punishment. Annihilationism is the Great Equalizer. Everybody, at a certain time, goes poof. They go out of existence. They all have the same fate.

The guy that tells a white lie has the exact same fate as someone who did mass genocide. They are both sins, but you would think that one would be punished more severely than the other. Well, Annihilationism basically says, "No, because everything is equal. Everybody goes out of existence at some point."

Yet the Bible teaches degrees of punishment in hell, just like it teaches degrees of reward in heaven. We spent a lot of time yesterday dealing with that in the Rapture Seminar.

The Bible teaches degrees of punishment in hell, and Annihilationism denies degrees of punishment in hell because it equalizes everything. The guy that tells a white lie disappears, just like the guy that performs a mass genocide.

Where does the Bible teach this: different degrees of punishment in hell? Notice Luke 12:47-48.

Luke 12:47-48 says:

*"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of flogging, will receive but few—"*  
(Luke 12:47-48)

He goes on, and He says:

*"...From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more" (Luke 12:47-48).*

One guy is beaten with a few blows. One guy is beaten with many blows. Why is that? Because the guy that is beaten with a few blows had less information to act on. So, he is held to a lower degree of accountability. The guy beaten with many blows had more information to act on. So he is held to an even higher standard.

This whole idea of degrees of punishment in hell is lost because Annihilation makes it equalize everything.

One of the strongest passages on differing degrees of punishment in hell is over in Matthew 11:20-24.

Matthew 11:20-24:

*"Then He—" (Matthew 11:20)*

That is Jesus.

*"...began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable...' (Matthew 11:20-22)*

You should underline the words 'more tolerable.'

*"...it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:22).*

He talks about four cities that are moving off into judgment. Two of them are New Testament cities: Chorazin and Bethsaida. Two of them are Old Testament cities: Tyre and Sidon. All four cities are moving into judgment.

Yet the New Testament—everybody is going to be punished, but the New Testament cities are punished more severely. Why is that? Because they saw something that the Old Testament cities never saw.

The New Testament cities saw the incarnate Son of God. They heard his teachings. They saw his miracles, and they rejected Him. The Old Testament cities did not have that privilege. All four cities are moving off into judgment, but the New Testament cities, because they had a higher threshold of knowledge, are going to be, throughout the ages, punished more severely.

That is what He means by 'more tolerable.' See that? Very clearly, you have hell and you have differing degrees of hell. To whom much is given, much is expected.

God keeps a perfect record of human behavior. The ones that know the most and reject it are the ones that are punished most severely. How can you be punished more severely if everyone just disappears, and we are all equal in that sense?

Matthew 11 continues on. As if those four cities were not enough of an example, He gives even more examples.

If you look at Matthew 11:23, He says:

*"And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom—" (Matthew 11:23).*

Sodom is a terrible place, right? Genesis 19.

*"...for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you" (Matthew 11:23-24).*

Here we have a New Testament city: Capernaum, and an Old Testament city: Sodom. Both cities are moving into judgment, but the New Testament city, Capernaum, is going to be punished more severely.

Why is that? Because Capernaum saw something that Sodom never saw. Sodom never saw the incarnate Son of God in their presence. They never directly heard His teachings. They never saw his miracles.

So, both cities are going to be judged for unbelief, but the New Testament cities are going to receive a stricter judgment because they had more and they knew more, and they turned it down. Sodom turned God down, but not with the threshold of knowledge that the New Testament cities had.

When He makes these statements: 'more tolerable,' 'more bearable'—that does not fit with Annihilation, which equalizes everyone.

Look at the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation 20:11-15—a terrible judgment at the end of the age.

It says this:

*"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. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, before the throne..." (Revelation 20:11-12)*

Now, look at this very carefully. You have to look at Revelation 20:12 and Revelation 20:13 very carefully.

*"...I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened..." (Revelation 20:12).*

Now, is 'books,' the noun, singular or plural there? It's plural. Many books to be contrasted with a book. Let us keep reading here.

*"...and the books were opened; and another book was opened..."  
(Revelation 20:12).*

Now, that second use of the noun 'book'—is that singular or plural? That is singular. So, I have a book and I have got a bunch of books. That is interesting. The second book is a big deal because the second book is the Book of Life.

The Book of Life is the most important book you can ever get your name in, because it is a record, I believe, of all people that are redeemed because they have placed their personal faith in Christ. The moment you place your personal faith in Christ, your name gets in a book.

It is a book of believers, a book of the redeemed. It is like what Jesus said when He sent the disciples out in Luke 10 to offer the kingdom to Israel, and He empowered them for the task, and they were so proud of themselves: "Lord, even the demons are in submission to us."

And Jesus says, "Do not rejoice that the demons are in submission to you. Rejoice that your name is recorded in heaven. That is what you ought to be happy about."

That Book of Life is a big deal, and I want the entries in there to get bigger. That is why we give the gospel here every week and send out missionaries, etc.

So Revelation 20:12 says:

*"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. 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. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire..." (Revelation 20:12-14).*

Now we get an awareness of what the 'book'—singular—is about in verse 15.

*"...And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).*

Okay, I get it. I trust Christ, I get my name in the book of life, and I am not going into the lake of fire.

As this final judgment is occurring, the Great White Throne Judgment—it is only for unbelievers—the Lord is looking at people, and as their name is not in the book, they are thrown into the lake of fire.

Well, if that is true, what are the books for? If there are no degrees of punishment, you do not need books. You just need a book, the book of life. If you are not in that book, you go into the lake of fire.

But there is another record here, of the deeds of people. What I think those deeds are is that they are sins that you have to pay for for all of eternity, which is terrible. That would be a terrible fate to wish on anybody, because the Bible says if you do not get Jesus, you get Moses.

Moses is the law giver. If you will not take Jesus as the One who kept the law in your place and died for our infractions of the law, then someone has to pay—you are going to pay. See that?

So, the books determine degrees of punishment in hell. This is why the guy that commits genocide is punished more severely than the guy that tells a white lie. If that were not true, there would be no need for the books, because the books are consulted after it is determined that someone is not in the book of life.

That becomes another Scripture—that you can use to explain this idea of differing degrees of punishment in hell.

This is why I do not think Annihilationism is right, because it just equalizes everyone. Everyone disappears. Adolf Hitler disappears, just like a guy that took a paperclip home from work.

What is this problem with Annihilation? I am not just giving you texts here. I am giving you some big theological reasons why Annihilationism is a problem.

Reason one: It underestimates sin's severity; it makes sin less than it is: it is an offense against an eternal, holy God.

Reason two: It contradicts our nature as image-bearers that last forever, whether we are saved or not.

Reason three: it ignores what I think is a clear Biblical teaching, which is degrees of punishment in hell.

The last reason I will give you here is reason four: it seeks to escape sin's consequences.

Humanity has always wanted to get out of the consequences of sin. We do not want to think sin is that big of a deal. Once we figure out it is a big deal, we want to get out of the consequences.

Who wants to bear severe consequences? I do not. But even in the natural world, you get greater consequences—do you not—depending on the severity of the crime?

There are misdemeanors, there are felonies—and humanity just does not like those consequences.

This is as old as Eden. Genesis 2:16-17. (This is what God said before the Fall.)

It says:

*"The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).*

Now, is there anything unclear about that? It is actually the easiest job description ever. Do whatever you want; just do not eat from the tree that is in the center of the garden: the tree of knowledge—if you eat from it, you will die.

What does Satan say to them? One chapter later:

*"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!" (Genesis 3:4).*

But wait! God said you would.

Satan says, "No, you will not."

God says that it is bad.

Satan says, "Ah, it is not that bad."

God says, "There is a consequence."

Satan says, "No consequence."

That is part of our makeup. That is part of who we are. We do not like the idea of the consequences of sin. So, we try to take the consequences—which are eternal—and shrink them to make them less than they are.

So, Annihilationism, to be honest with you, is something that I personally would love to believe is true because I am a sinner and I am guilty. Emotionally, I like the idea of Annihilationism. But the reason I like it is because I am on the guilty side of the ledger as part of Adam's fallen race.

This is the genesis of other ideas that people have, like universalism. Rob Bell of the Emergent Church wrote a book and the title of the book is 'Love Wins.'

Basically, the premise of the book is that when it is all said and done, love wins and everyone goes into heaven. The only problem with this book is it flatly contradicts the Bible. Everyone does not go into heaven. In fact, the Bible is very clear that not everyone will go into heaven. You do not have to be a Bible scholar to see that. You just have to know a few verses. Matthew 25:46: Sheep and Goat Judgment.

*"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).*

Universalism, then, must not be true.

Matthew 7:13-14:

*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).*

How could Rob Bell write a book called Love Wins and flatly contradict the Bible? The answer is: he wants to believe in universalism because he wants to escape the consequences of sin and make sin less than it is. That is, in my opinion, what Annihilation grows out of.

What are some theological arguments against Annihilation?

One: It underestimates sin's severity.

Two: It contradicts how we are manufactured as image-bearers.

Three: It denies degrees of punishment.

Four: It seeks to escape sin's consequences. It is right out of Eden where God says, "This is going to happen," and we instead believe a lie that says, "This will not happen."

Next week, we will answer the Biblical arguments that Annihilationists use. They say things like, "Well, it says 'destroy.' Doesn't that mean you disappear?"

Then they have a lot of theological arguments that they use: In other words, how can God be the winner in history if there are still people in this universe that are rebellious in hell? They say that denies God's victory because God has to blot out evil, not allow it to exist somewhere in hell—those kinds of arguments.

I will show you that this Annihilationist viewpoint is not the mainstream opinion.

Under Point Number Six, there are councils that have condemned Annihilationism as heretical.

Then, Point Number Seven will reach the conclusion.

Why are we getting into this? Well, if you throw a wet blanket—pardon the pun—on hell, then there is no incentive for missions. It takes the urgency of missionary work and causes it to disappear.

We are going to have a Missions Moment today. Why do we support missionaries? Why would someone go to the trouble of being a missionary—learning another culture and language? Why would we translate the Bible into some other dialect so people can read it for themselves if they are just going to disappear at some point?

Do you see that? Part of the reason people like Annihilationism is that it gives them an excuse as to why they are not more missions-minded and evangelistic. You know, if I do not share my faith with the waitress at lunch today, it is really no big deal because she is just going to disappear anyway at some point.

But, if I see her as she is—an image-bearer of God who is going to be alive somewhere a million years from now, a billion years from now, a trillion years from now—I guess I should share my faith with her. You destroy evangelism and missions when you move into this Annihilationist perspective. That is why it really has gotten under my skin a little bit—a lot, really—why Kirk Cameron is moving in this direction.