

Eternal Conscious Torment vs Annihilation 010

Colossians 1:20

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Let's take our Bibles this morning and open them to the Book of Colossians 1:20. We are coming near the end, believe it or not of this study. (I know you do not believe me when I say that. I do not have a lot of credibility left in that area anyway.) But we are coming near the end, Lord willing, of this study that we are doing on Annihilationism versus eternal conscious torment.

What you are starting to see become popularized within Christendom is a combination of two doctrines: Conditional immortality, meaning the soul was never created to live forever and people do not become immortal until they trust Christ; and that paves the way into Annihilationism (the second view of this combination), which says that unbelievers when they die go into hell or Hades for a season, but they do not stay there forever because they explode or disappear or cease to exist.

So, these are ideas that have been lurking in the shadows. But as of December 2025, Kirk Cameron signed on, so to speak, to these ideas. Then they started to become very, very popular. I wanted you to at least know what this whole thing is about.

It does not help when key conservative influencers like Eric Metaxas run interference for Kirk Cameron. Metaxas tweets here,

"Anybody who thinks my friend Kirk Cameron is a heretic is a heretic."¹

(He is responding to something Kirk Cameron said in the wake of this controversy, something along the lines of, "People think I am a heretic because I am open to Annihilationism.")

We started this study with Point Number Two. After introducing the controversy by taking you through the the main Scriptures that I know of that not only teach that hell is forever, but that unbelievers will be there forever, we went into four arguments that are broader theological, philosophical arguments for hell being forever and the people being there forever—unbelievers, that is.

One of the things you have to understand about false teaching is that it never would get off the ground if they did not have Scriptures that they appealed to. Everybody quotes the Bible. The devil quotes the Bible, right? Just because you are quoting the Bible does not mean you are quoting it accurately.

So, the Annihilationist and conditional immortality advocates have all these verses that they use: 'second death' (Rev. 20:14), 'destroy' (Rev. 11:18), 'destruction' (2 Thess. 1:9), 'burning up' (Matt. 3:12), 'eternal results' (Rev. 14:11), 'perdition' (2 Pet. 3:7),

¹ <https://x.com/ericmetaxas/status/2016251973931069605>

'better to have never been born' (Mark 14:21), 'wicked perishing' (2 Pet. 3:9), 'blotted out of existence' (Heb. 9:25-26), 'life activity suspended in death' (Eccles. 9:10).

We walked through all of those, and I tried to show you that the Annihilationists were not using those verses correctly. From there, we went into trying to answer their broader theological, philosophical arguments that they use.

There are five of them that we have covered. We are now at Point F and then we just have Point G and Point H, which I hope we can get through today to finish this particular section.

One of the arguments that they use is that the Bible says in the end all things will be reconciled to God. If all things are going to be reconciled to God, then how could God allow evil people to exist forever in any state? They have to be annihilated at some point. One of their favorites is the Book of Colossians, where I had you open up to.

Colossians 1:20 says,

"and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

So, everything is going to be reconciled to God in the end: that is the endgame. How can you have these people living in a state of rebellion against God in hell? The Annihilationists take that to mean those people in hell have to stop existing. How would we answer that? With all of these points, I am trying to give you what I think are the best answers.

Here is what I think is a very good answer.

Continuous existence of the unsaved means all things were not reconciled, thus calling for the unsaved to be annihilated—that is their argument. The response is that Colossians 1:20 is not teaching that all things will be reconciled to God without exception. It is rather a statement that all things will be reconciled to God without distinction.

You are saying, "What? What are you talking about?"

Give me a moment to unpack it, and I think you will see what I mean. "All things will be reconciled to God" (paraphrase, Colossians 1:20) does not mean that every single thing that has ever existed will be reconciled to God. All types of things will be reconciled to God; all kinds of things will be reconciled to God, but not everything.

Here is Doctor Arnold Fruchtenbaum responding to their use of Colossians 1:20. He says this,

"Colossians 1:20, where it states that 'all things are reconciled.'"²

² Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 710, 714-16

Now he is giving their argument, even though obviously he is not promoting their belief.

"If there is a continuous existence of the unsaved in eternal punishment, it would mean that 'all things' were not reconciled; but if all things are reconciled, it means there is an elimination and annihilation of the unbelieving element..."³

A little bit later, he says,

"they [that is the Annihilationists] also use Colossians 1:20, which speaks about 'all things being reconciled.' But in that context..."⁴

Here comes the answer.

"...the 'all things' does not mean 'all things without exception;' rather, it means 'all things without distinction.' All kinds of things will be reconciled, but not all things as such..."⁵

Fruchtenbaum is going on now, and he is rehearsing their argument.

"The...additional argument is found in Hebrews 2:16, which points out that God did not provide salvation for fallen angels. How is that relevant? Part of the teaching of the annihilationists is based upon the theological argument and the scriptural argument that the Bible promises that 'all things will be reconciled to God' (Col. 1:20). But the fact is that the 'all things' here does not mean 'all things without exception;' rather, all kinds of things will be reconciled to God, but not every one of every kind."⁶

We could put it like this: the angels will be reconciled to God as a group—but does that mean all the angels? What about the fallen angels? They are not reconciled to God. So, Colossians 1:20 should not be taken as some kind of universal statement that every single creature will be reconciled to God.

Some human beings will be reconciled to God. Of genders: women will be reconciled to God, but not every woman. Of genders, males will be reconciled to God, but not every male. Of the angelic realm, the good angels are reconciled to God, but not every angel; because Lucifer was a fallen angel and he is not reconciled to God.

You cannot take Colossians 1:20 and turn it into the idea that in the end everything is reconciled to God—which would mean therefore that evil has to be annihilated and unbelievers cannot exist anymore—because the verse is not saying that every thing is reconciled to God, but that everything from every category is reconciled to God.

Fruchtenbaum says,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

"According to Hebrews 2:16, salvation was not provided for fallen angels, so fallen angels will never be reconciled to God, and yet they continue to be eternal beings. The fact that there is no reconciliation for fallen angels shows that the Colossians passage cannot be used to teach that all things without exception are going to be reconciled by means of the annihilation of the evil ones. It simply cannot mean that."⁷

Let me give you an example of something that in the end is not reconciled to God yet it has to continue forever in a state of punishment: that is the devil. Notice Matthew 25:41. This is the famous Sheep and Goat Judgment.

It says,

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire...' (Matthew 25:41).

Do you see the word 'eternal' there?

"...fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;" (Matthew 25:41).

Does the devil—because all things have to be reconciled to God—go into the eternal fire and then at some point disappear? No, because he was originally created as a high-ranking angel. Ezekiel 28:12-17 describes him as a guardian cherub. Now, he is still an angel, but he is, today, a fallen angel.

I can tell you very clearly that when he goes into hell, he is not going to stop existing. I know that because of that passage,

"...the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;" (Matthew 25:41).

An eternal fire is not prepared for someone that is only going to be there for a weekend trip. Beyond that, we know that angels do not die. Did you know that? There is clear Scripture on that. You will find it in Luke 20:35-36. Jesus here is interacting with the Sadducees, and in the process He makes an interesting comment about angels, which contributes some wonderful information to our doctrine of angels.

Jesus says, in Luke 20:35-36,

"but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36).

⁷ Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 710, 714-16

So, if the Annihilationist is right, that in the end all things will be reconciled to God, you have no category for what to do with Lucifer and his rebellion, because he is an angel and he lasts forever.

Obviously, when Colossians 1:20 says that in the end all things will be reconciled to God, it is not saying everything is reconciled to God; it is saying members of every category will be reconciled to God. But it is not to be taken as a statement that every creature that God has ever made will be reconciled to God.

I know a lot of this sounds esoteric and philosophical, but these are the kinds of things that the Annihilationist uses. I wanted to at least bring some of these to your attention.

Point G is another big theological and philosophical argument that the Annihilationist uses: they say eternal punishment—which is what we believe here at Sugar Land Bible Church; that is why we are involved in missions, because we do not want people to go to this place of eternal damnation—but the Annihilationists say eternal punishment is contrary to the universal nature of God's victory.

What they are saying is that God's victory in the end is described in such a way that evil cannot even exist in the universe anymore. It can't even have a place; can't even have a foothold anywhere. So, in their minds, that means that God has to take all unbelievers and annihilate them—as if they never existed at all.

So, let me show you some of the verses that they use, because like all heresies, the Bible is appealed to. That is how people get sucked into this kind of stuff, because on the surface it looks very Biblical. They are using verses and it is appealing to my emotions.

I think I shared with you that when I was a young Christian, I had a Jehovah's Witness (they believe the same kind of thing about annihilation) talk to me, and he actually convinced me that annihilation is a true doctrine.

He was using verses, and I did not really know at that time a lot about the Bible, so emotionally I wanted to believe what he was saying. Because who in the world wants to believe in eternal damnation? If you are going to give me an out from eternal conscious torment, I will take it.

Verses are always appealed to. So let me show you a few of them. 1 Corinthians 15:26: this is a description of God's final victory in the end.

It says,

"The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Then go down to 1 Corinthians 15:28,

"When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

So, how can God, in the end, be all in all when there are rebels in the universe under His wrath? Apparently those rebels under His wrath have to disappear.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:19, which says,

"namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthian 5:19).

God has set things up so that the world is going to be reconciled to Himself, which is similar to the argument they are using in Colossians 1:20. How could you move off into eternity and have these unbelievers in existence? They have to be annihilated or else this verse cannot mean what it says, according to the Annihilationist.

Another popular passage is over in Ephesians 1:10. Again, all of these are under the category of the ultimate victory of God.

It says,

"with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him" (Ephesians 1:10).

So, everything's going to be summed up. Jesus is going to have the final victory. We are moving into the Eternal State, which is a perfect existence. It is as if sin never entered the picture, so how could you have this lake of fire somewhere where people are in existence? You cannot have that according to the Annihilationist.

Then, if you just flip over, to Philippians 2:10. This passage you probably know well.

It says,

"so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:10).

The Annihilationist will say, "What about unbelievers that never bowed the knee to Jesus? What about unbelievers that will not bow the knee to Jesus? What about unbelievers who lived this life hating Jesus and went into the next life hating Jesus? There is no head bowing and knee bending."

So, obviously, what happened to that group of people? Well, they went out of existence, because they had souls that are just like the animals: the Hebrew word 'nepesh' (נֶפֶשׁ) describes both animals and human beings. The Greek word 'psyche' (ψυχή) describes both animals and human beings. So, just like animals do not live forever, these unbelievers are not going to live forever either.

Again, it is not really a specific exegetical argument they are using; it is this broader theological, philosophical reasoning.

Doctor Norman Geisler summarizes what the Annihilationists are doing here,

"While the annihilationist disagrees with the universalist contention that all will be saved..."⁸

Those are two different belief systems that you probably should be aware of. There is the annihilationist, who believes that the unbelievers stop existing at some point. Then there is the universalist. The universalist is saying something similar, but it is not exactly the same. The universalist is saying, "You know what? Everybody's going to become a Christian in the end."

Both of those views are convenient tools to escape this very uncomfortable reality of eternal damnation.

So Geisler correctly says here,

"While the annihilationist disagrees with the universalist contention that all will be saved; nonetheless, he concurs that the passages describing God's universal victory over evil demand that there be no evil left in the universe. For example, in the end everyone will bow the knee to Christ (Phil. 2:10); the world will be reconciled to Christ (2 Cor. 5:19); all will be 'in Christ' (Eph. 1:10 NKJV); death and sin will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26); and everyone will be subject to Christ (v. 15:28). Even though universalism's interpretation of these texts is incorrect..."⁹

We know that not everybody's going to be saved. We know not everybody's going to be saved because of Revelation 20:11-15. It describes people in that passage whose name is not found written in the book of life, and they are cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.

So, how could a universalist argue that everyone in the end gets saved? I would love for everyone in the end to get saved, but Jesus talked about that, did He not? A narrow road that leads to life and a broad road that leads to destruction (paraphrase, Matthew 7:13-14).

And if during the Sheep and Goat Judgment, Jesus talks about those on His left (the goats who are cast into Hades) and those on His right (the sheep who enter the millennial kingdom in their glorified bodies), you have to rewrite all of these passages to come up with this universalist idea.

Geisler says,

"Even though universalism's interpretation of these texts is incorrect, they do indicate that sin will be completely defeated, which conditionalists insist cannot occur unless all sinners are destroyed."¹⁰

⁸ Geisler, N.L. *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things*, 406-07

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Geisler, N.L. *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things*, 406-07

In the end, not everyone gets saved. Universalism says that everyone gets saved in the end. Annihilationists say that everyone in the end will not get saved, but they are going to cease to exist at a certain point. They are not going to be in eternal retribution because their soul, even though they are made in God's image—God is forever; so are we.

From the point you were brought into existence, you were designed to live forever—that is what the Annihilationist is denying. It is really a discussion about anthropology, the doctrine of man. The Annihilationist has a very different doctrine of man than the Bible promotes.

Universalism says that in the end, everyone gets saved. Conditional immortality, Annihilationism, says that in the end, not everyone will be saved.

"Well, then, how do you explain all of these verses describing God's final victory over everything?"

"Well, the unbelievers just go out of existence at some point," says the Annihilationist.

Geisler is summarizing Le Roy Froom and some of these others that are promoting this idea.

What is the answer to this? All of those verses that I went through, if you look at their context, are being misused. Let me give you Geisler's summary first,

"The annihilationist conclusion does not follow from these 'universal victory passages.' Some only refer to the fact that salvation is universally possible (e.g., Rom. 5:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:19)..."¹¹

That is what 2 Corinthians 5:19 is saying. It is saying that because of Christ's death for the world, the entire world is savable. That is why we evangelize every person, because the whole human race is savable. It is not a statement that they are saved, because they are not saved until they trust in the provision of Christ.

That is what 2 Corinthians 5:19 is saying. It is not saying that in the end, God gains a victory of such a level that the unbelievers stop existing. The Annihilationists are abusing 2 Corinthians 5:19.

How else are they abusing these passages?

"...Christ's death for all means salvation is universal in extent but limited in application, since not all will believe."¹²

You cannot take 2 Corinthians 5:19 and make it sound like everyone will be saved. That is not what the verse is saying. The verse is saying that the possibility of everyone being saved exists. This is why you guys have heard me react to five-point Calvinism and Jay

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Adams, who is known in the counseling world and has actually had a lot of good things to say in the counseling world.

But Adams says in his seminal book, 'Competent to Counsel,' that as a counselor he does not tell the person that he is counseling that Christ died for them because he does not know if they are one of the elect or not. Now, that is in print; that is not a misspeaking on a podcast. That is in print, and I have given you that quote several times.

Well, I will tell you something, Mr. Adams. I tell every person that I run into that Christ died for them, and they can go to heaven if they want to receive God's provision. I do not play this game of saying, "Well, you know, I really cannot share the gospel with that person over there because I do not know if they are one of the elect," because I do not embrace five-point Calvinism.

So, 2 Corinthians 5:19 is a repudiation of five-point Calvinism. 2 Corinthians 5:19 is not saying that in the end, everyone is going to get saved. It does not say that in the end evil does not exist somewhere in the universe. It is just saying that salvation is available for every human being.

This is what we call a belief in universal atonement: Christ laid down His life for the entire world. It is as simple as John 3:16. You have to be a theologian to mess this up.

"For God so loved the elect"—John 3:16 does not say that.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

That is what 2 Corinthians 5:19 is saying: it is not a statement that in the end everyone gets saved—contrary to universalism—and it is not a statement that evil has to stop existing in hell for God to have the final victory.

Geisler says,

"Other passages do not refer to the salvation of all but the subjugation of all (e.g., Phil. 2:10)..."¹³

That is how to handle Philippians 2:10. Philippians 2:10 says,

"so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth," (Philippians 2:10).

That is not a statement that somehow rebels go out of existence. What it is a statement about is their subjugation. They are separated, and it is almost like they are grudgingly complying with who Jesus is. It is not a statement about their cessation of existence.

¹³ Geisler, N.L. *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things*, 406-07

Then Geisler says,

"...while others apply to believers and not unbelievers (e.g., Eph. 1:10)."¹⁴

That is how he is handling Ephesians 1:10. When you look at Ephesians 1:10 in context, it is a statement about Christians. It is not even talking about the fate of the unsaved at all. Anybody can take Bible verses and string them together.

That is typically the way it works. They, like a chain gang, chain all these verses together and you are supposed to look at them all really fast. It is horizontal, when God says, "I want to be understood vertically."

You do not understand God by looking across the spectrum at a bunch of verses without first understanding what each verse is saying in its own context. Because if you do not learn that discipline, then you are going to get deceived by a lot of people, because anybody can take the Bible and string a bunch of verses together to make it sound any way you want it to sound.

For example, Judas went out and hanged himself (paraphrase, Matthew 27:5), so go thou and do likewise (paraphrase, Luke 10:37); and what you do, do quickly (paraphrase, John 13:27). All right, are you guys ready for the mass suicide we are going to do today?

You just have to understand that the devil is twisting the Bible constantly because he is the father of lies. You have the tools to discern correct use of Scripture and incorrect use of Scripture.

Ephesians 1:10 is really just a statement about the saved; that is the context of it.

Then Geisler goes on and says,

"Some texts [that the conditional annihilationist is using] do speak of the unilateral defeat of all death (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:26); this is fulfilled in the resurrection of all persons, saved and unsaved (cf. John 5:29; Rev. 20:4-5)."¹⁵

So, how do you handle 1 Corinthians 15:26? Well, it is talking about the total resurrection package. When the total resurrection package happens for saved and unsaved people—because unsaved people are going to be resurrected too; that is a big thing to learn—they will be in a resurrected body that will not ever go out of existence.

This is why personal evangelism is such a big deal, and what people do with Christ now is such a big deal. They will be in a resurrected body which, like the angels, will never go out of existence. Their body will never die in that sense.

That is how to handle 1 Corinthians 15:26.

¹⁴ Geisler, N.L. *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things*, 406-07

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Geisler says,

"Some texts do speak of the unilateral defeat of all death (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:26); this is fulfilled in the resurrection of all persons, saved and unsaved (c.f. John 5:29; Rev. 20:4-5). The other verses that speak of God's triumph over all evil [watch this very carefully] teach the separation, not the annihilation, of all evil (e.g., Matt. 13:41-42; 25:31-41)."¹⁶

That is how God gains victory over evil: He separates it. Can we use the word 'quarantine'?

Geisler uses the word 'quarantine.' God quarantines evil. He keeps it under His wrath. That is how He wins. It is not a statement that evil stops existing.

Geisler says,

"The other verses that speak of God's triumph over all evil teach the separation, not the annihilation, of all evil (e.g., Matt. 13:41-42; 25:31-41)."¹⁷

Yes, we are moving into a new heavens and new earth where evil will not get the upper hand ever, but that is not to say that evil does not exist somewhere under God's separated, quarantined wrath forever. You can believe that and not take one millimeter away from God's final victory. You do not have to move into annihilationism to protect God's final victory.

Geisler says,

"The other verses that speak of God's triumph over all evil teach the separation, not the annihilation, of all evil (e.g., Matt. 13:41-42; 25:31-41). As has been repeatedly demonstrated, no passage speaks of the annihilation of evil beings: Evil is defeated by everlasting imprisonment and quarantine. Once again, for God to annihilate His image..."¹⁸

Which is what we are; that is what makes us different than the animals. That is why just saying, "Well, we are just like the animals," because the Hebrew word 'nepesh' (נֶפֶשׁ) is used for both humans and animals, and the Greek word 'psyche' (ψυχή) is used for both humans and animals does not work. Just because two things are similar does not mean they are the same.

There are many similarities between us and monkeys. The evolutionists have gone hoarse trying to explain all these similarities between us and the monkeys. Yes, there are points of similarity, but does anyone want to talk about the differences?

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

There are many similarities between my wife and me, but I will tell you one thing: there are many differences too. One difference is gender: she is female, I am male. Just because there are similarities between her and me does not mean we are one and the same.

I have two cars in my garage, and boy, they sure look a lot alike. They both have an engine and seat belts and a steering wheel and an ignition and this and that. But it is a total logical error to say that those two are the same. They are two different vehicles.

So, yes, there are similarities between us and the animals, but there is a big difference: we bear God's image, and they do not. When God created you—and your creation happened at the point of conception—you were designed to live forever because you are an image bearer of God and God lives forever.

That, by the way, is one of the reasons you have volition. God has volition and freedom to choose, and so do you.

Geisler says,

"Once again, for God to annihilate His image in fallen beings would not be a victory but a defeat, an attack of God upon Himself."¹⁹

See, for God to allow people in an unbelieving state to go out of existence would be for Him to deny how He created them to be at the beginning. Geisler's point here is that these verses are all taken out of context.

By the way, a little excursus, if I may. Geisler talks about the resurrection of all persons, saved and unsaved. Do you believe that? Jesus believed it.

Jesus says,

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

The Scripture is very clear that there is a resurrection of both saved and unsaved. Paul talked about it in the Book of Acts. Acts 24:14-15,

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:14-15).

¹⁹ Geisler, N.L. *Systematic theology, volume four: church, last things*, 406-07

Everyone is placed in a resurrected body. It is just that unsaved people experience God's wrath forever in that resurrected body, while saved people experience eternal bliss with God in a resurrected body—but everybody's getting resurrected.

Daniel 12:2 is one of the clearest Old Testament passages we have on the doctrine of resurrection. It says,

*"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"
(Daniel 12:2).*

We have pointed out that 'olam' (עולם) is used to describe both eternal life and eternal damnation. If you are going to play games with eternal damnation, saying it is not eternal, then what do you do with the fate of the saved? Is that not eternal as well? You cannot have it both ways, Annihilationist. You cannot switch your method of interpretation right in the middle of a verse, any more than you could change horses in midstream.

Now we get to the Book of Revelation, and we learn that there is a thousand years between those two resurrections. Did you know that?

Revelation 20:4-6 says,

"Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

Then a thousand years pass, and what happens? Everyone who is an unsaved person is summoned out of Hades, which is like a holding tank and is also a place of wrath (Luke 16:19-31).

Revelation 20:5 says,

*"The rest of the dead [that is unsaved people] did not come to life..."
(Revelation 20:5).*

Do you see the same verb there? 'Zao' (ζάω) is used for 'life' for the righteous, and 'zao' is used for damnation. You cannot have it both ways. These Annihilationists all believe in eternal life, but they do not believe in eternal damnation. That is the most inconsistent reading of the Bible you can come up with.

The problem there is that they are not teaching their people Bible-reading skills. They are stringing a bunch of verses along together, most of them lifted out of context to support a preexisting narrative—it is result-oriented.

"We are going to teach the doctrine of Annihilationism, and we are going to string a bunch of verses together because we have already made up our mind what the Bible says."

That is what people do all the time. If you are really good at it, you can even get on the Supreme Court, because the Supreme Court does this all the time: they figure out what they want to do, and then they work backwards to come up with the evidence.

That is not how you solve or do anything. People that are really good in forensics will tell you this: that you do not develop a theory on the case too fast. You do not decide who the bad guy is too fast, because the tendency is to fall in love with your theory and then out of pride make the evidence fit your theory.

You want to let the data come in and then build who the bad guy is from the evidence up. That is how you do forensics, and that is how you do Bible study. If you will not do it that way, then you are just twisting the Scripture.

"The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5).

Now, when it says 'first,' it does not mean the first resurrection ever, because that would rule out Jesus' resurrection. It is the first in a sequence: first, the saved are resurrected at the beginning of the thousand years, and last, the unsaved are resurrected. 'First' does not mean first ever; and last—not here, but elsewhere—does not mean last ever.

If my wife says to me, "First, I want you to take the trash out. Last, I want you to pick up the laundry."

So I say to myself, "Well, this is the first time I have ever taken the trash out—which actually, in my case might be true." And, "Oh, good! Last, you want me to pick up the laundry? Oh, I guess you are saying this is the last time I will ever have to pick up the laundry."

See, first and last are in sequence. This is the first resurrection—Greek word is 'anastasis' (ἀνάστασις).

"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death [that is the lake of fire] has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

So, there is a resurrection of the saved at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and a resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. It is just that there are three parts to the resurrection of the saved. There are two general resurrections: one for believers and the other for unbelievers.

The resurrection of the saved goes in three phases. That is why Paul analogizes it to Israel's harvest cycle. The first fruits come in, then the general harvest, then the gleanings. Paul says that is how the resurrection of the saved happens: Jesus is

resurrected first, and just like the initial harvest guaranteed the rest of the harvest, His resurrection guarantees everyone else's resurrection.

That is why everyone's going to get resurrected, because His resurrection started this chain. First, Jesus is resurrected. Then, we as Church-Age believers receive our resurrected bodies. If you die before that happens, do not sweat it—absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (paraphrase, 2 Corinthians 5:8)—you are just in heaven, awaiting your resurrected body.

But the Church Age—concerning this body of Christ that started on the day of Pentecost and will last until the Rapture—will continue, until the Rapture, its earthly mission. We get our resurrected bodies at the Rapture.

What about Old Testament saints who are not part of the church? What about people who are saved in the Tribulation after the Church Age is over?

Well, they are the gleanings and they get their resurrection body at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Then a thousand years pass, and after the end of that thousand years, the second resurrection happens for the unsaved.

The resurrection unto life (for believers) has three parts to it, but there are two basic resurrections at the end: saved and unsaved.

The last argument that the Annihilationist uses is this: How could heaven be heaven, if there are people somewhere in the universe suffering eternally under God's wrath? That is a great question: How could heaven be heaven when I know, number one, that I have friends and family members that are not there, and, number two, that they are under God's wrath? Wouldn't that detract from everything we know in the Bible about heaven being a place of joy?

So, the Annihilationist uses this and they say that heaven would not be heaven if we live forever in heaven with the understanding that our unsaved loved ones are eternally suffering. Therefore God has to, according to the Annihilationist, put those people out of existence because just the knowledge that they are out there somewhere in the universe suffering would destroy the joy of heaven.

I would say that once we get to heaven, a lot of the blinders are going to be taken off. This is my response, "A lot of the blinders are going to be taken off, and we are going to see things from a very different angle."

As Paul tells us, we see now dimly, darkly through a mirror, but then face to face (paraphrase, 1 Corinthians 13:12). I do not think that when you get to heaven you become omniscient. However, due to a lot of the hindrances and the noetic effects of sin, the way we look at things is tainted today. By the time you get to heaven and you are out of this corrupted body and you are in a resurrected body, you start to see things from God's angle.

I think you are going to say this, "What God is doing is right." The fact that these people are in damnation forever is actually a right thing. God made a right choice here when all

of the factors are considered. I know that seems a little harsh, but I think that is what is going to happen.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes,

"The eighth theological argument is that the righteous ones could not enjoy bliss knowing that others are continually in Hell. Those in Heaven will simply not be able to enjoy it if they know that there are others suffering continuously in Hell...the righteous could enjoy bliss only if they know that others are not suffering eternally; the righteous could not enjoy bliss knowing that others are continually suffering in Hell."²⁰

So, for heaven to be fully enjoyable, the Annihilationist says, God has to take the unsaved and put them out of existence.

But Fruchtenbaum says,

"But the answer here is that the righteous will enjoy the bliss of God's presence and will not be encumbered with the present perspective regarding what is inappropriate to Heaven's bliss."²¹

We have to understand how small we are in this universe. Talking to God and saying, "I do not agree with Your point of view"—it is laughable. Suddenly, in heaven, you are in a situation where the blinders are gone: the selfishness is gone, what psychologists call the narcissism is gone, the sin nature is gone, the weakness of the physical body is gone, the limitations on the mind—we only use a very small fraction of our minds—will be gone. There is a vast portion of our minds we do not even use, and I take that as part of Adam's sin, the effect on our thinking.

The Bible talks over and over again about the mind becoming darkened (Ephesians 4:18; Romans 1:21; 2 Corinthians 4:4). So, when we are trying to analyze something like this, you have to understand that we are doing it from a very limited point of view.

Well, in heaven, you are in a situation where those blinders are gone. Not that you are omniscient, but any limitation on your thinking is taken away. So, you are in heaven and you are saying, "What is happening is right. These people, they turned down the offer of a lifetime: Jesus bled in their place and they wouldn't receive it."

So, what is heaven going to be like? Well, here we are talking about the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22: describing the Eternal State.

John describes it as follows,

"and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

²⁰ Fruchtenbaum, A. *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 709, 711-12

²¹ *Ibid.*

"Yeah, but what about the tears that I am shedding because of people I know are suffering eternally somewhere? What about the mourning that I would experience because of that? What about the crying that I would go through if I think about that? What about the pain emotionally that I go through when I think about that?"

In some way, somehow, in the working of God, tears, mourning, crying, and pain are gone. You are not in heaven just grieving that this eternal retribution is occurring. That issue is not fixed (heaven wouldn't be heaven with sorrow) with Annihilationism either, because with Annihilationism you are enjoying heaven and someone you love is not there. That is going to cause crying, mourning, and pain too even if you buy into the fact that they stop existing. It is interesting that they pose this issue, but they do not solve it completely either.

What is the Eternal State going to be like? Well, you can recognize something not just based on what is there, but also on what is not there. What is not there? Satan is not there. He is in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10); the sea is not there (Revelation 21:1).

Revelation 21:4: death, crying, and pain are not there. The sun is not there (Revelation 22:5). No need for our luminaries if the Son is there, the Light of the World illuminating everything. Since the moon reflects the light of the sun, the moon is not there either (Revelation 21:23).

The temple is not there (Revelation 21:22). Now, in Israel's history there were four temples. The first one was built by Solomon, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; the second one was built by the returnees from the Babylonian Exile, destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70; the third one is coming (there is a lot of talk about it in Israel today), that is the Antichrist's temple that he will desecrate at the midpoint of the Tribulation. That one will be destroyed in the seventh bowl judgment with the greatest earthquake in human history.

During the thousand-year Millennial Kingdom, Ezekiel 40-48 talks about a fourth temple that the Shekinah Glory of God will enter with animal sacrifices that look backward to what Christ did and act as memorials, reminding us that in a world where death is limited, Jesus did something to get us to that place.

It would be easy to forget that, wouldn't it, in a world where death is limited? But by the time you get to the last two chapters of the Bible, there is no more temple because Jesus is there. There is no night there because there is no sun and moon.

Evil is not in the Eternal State (Revelation 21:27). The curse is not there (Revelation 22:3).

What is normal for God? The first two chapters of the Bible are normal. Genesis 1-2, before sin entered the picture. What is normal for God? The last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21-22, after sin is completely done away with. Any evil, if it exists, is under quarantine, imprisonment, judgment.

That is what is normal. Everything else in between is abnormal. Did you know that between Genesis 3, the Fall of man, right up to the dissolving of this world and universe

by fire—everything in between those two points is abnormal? Things are not the way they were supposed to be.

The evolutionist is telling our children that what has been happening today has always been going on for billions of years. Do you understand how someone who sucks in that propaganda is despairing of life?

Our message is so different. We say that what is happening today is a complete and total abnormality. You are going to get witnessing opportunities and someone is going to say, "Your God is a God of love, and I have a relative that just died of cancer." You have to have an answer and you have one.

Your answer is that what is happening today with cancer or drive-by shootings or people getting hit in crosswalks or crime or whatever is an abnormality, God never designed it this way. It was the free will of His creatures that brought this chaos into existence. God has designed a plan: that everything is going to be restored to what it was originally intended to be, and the price that He paid to get the ball moving was the death of His own Son.

There is your answer, and you tell them, "You can be involved in the right side of history by trusting in what Jesus did."

So, in heaven, you are living in this environment where all these things are gone. Your faculties are restored to what they are supposed to be. There is no sorrow over who is not there or who is suffering. It is, "This is right. This is the way God designed it."