

C. Why do Annihilationists claim hell is not eternal?

Eternal punishment for a few earthly sins doesn't seem to make sense.

It just does not make sense to say that a God of love will torture people for ever for sins done in the context of a finite life ... It makes no sense to suppose that, alongside the new creation, tucked away in some corner of it, there exists a lake of fire with souls burning ceaselessly in it. — Clark Pinnock

An eternal hell would mean God had not achieved complete victory over evil.

The eternal existence of the impenitent in hell would be hard to reconcile with the promises of God's final victory over evil. — Edwards and Stott, Essentials.

There should be a time when people have suffered enough to pay for their sin.

The idea that a conscious creature should have to undergo physical and mental torture through unending time is profoundly disturbing,... — Clark Pinnock, The Conditional View

The punishment of eternal hell doesn't fit the crime of earthly sin.

But unending torment would be the kind of utterly pointless and wasted suffering which could never lead to anything good beyond it. Furthermore, it would amount to inflicting infinite suffering upon those who have committed finite sins. It would go far beyond an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There would be a serious disproportion between sins committed in time and the suffering experienced forever. — Pinnock, The Destruction of the Impenitent

1. The amount of time spent committing a crime does not determine the amount of time punished for the crime.
2. God alone can determine the true nature of our sin and the proper punishment for our sin.
3. In hell, we have no reason to believe that sin will cease.

Application

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? Romans 9:22–24 (ESV)



Hell – Is There A Way Out?

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1. The Bible says hell is eternal and without escape.

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire... It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' Mark 9:43–48 (ESV)

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.' Matthew 25:41, 46 (ESV)

And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. Revelation 14:11 (ESV)

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might... 2 Thessalonians 1:9 (ESV)

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

2. Universalists claim everyone will eventually escape hell and go to heaven.

Hollywood Universalism — Everyone dies and goes straight to heaven.

Liberal Universalism — Those in hell will eventually pay for their sin and graduate to heaven.

God will not rest until all of creation, including Satan, is reconciled to him, until there is no creature who cannot return his look of love with a joyful

response of love. I cannot believe that God wants punishment to go on interminably any more than does a loving parent. The entire purpose of punishment is to teach, and it lasts only as long as is needed for the lesson.”

— Madame L’Engle, *The Irrational Season*

A. What is the history of universalism?

Man—every man without exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ and ... with man, with each man without any exception whatever, Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it. — John Paul II

B. What verses are used to support universalism?

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.
John 12:32 (NIV84)

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:25 (ESV)

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Acts 3:19–21 (ESV)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1–2 (ESV)

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:12 (ESV)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:22 (ESV)

...that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:19 (ESV)

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:19–20 (ESV)

C. Where does universalism go theologically wrong?

- If universalism was true, we could save ourselves.
- If universalism was true, Jesus would need to change what he said on the cross.

3. Annihilationists claim people will escape hell by ceasing to exist instead of suffering eternally.

Secular Annihilationism — When people die, they cease to exist.

Theological Annihilationism — Either shortly after being sent to hell, or some time in the future, those in hell will be burned up and cease to exist.

Conditional Immortality is another name for Theological Annihilationism.

A. What is the history of annihilationism?

I believe that endless torment is a hideous and unscriptural doctrine which has been a terrible burden on the mind of the church for many centuries and a terrible blot on her presentation of the Gospel. I should indeed be happy, if before I die, I could help in sweeping it away. — John Wenham, *Facing Hell*.

I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment. — Edwards and Stott, *Evangelical Essentials*

B. Are human beings essentially mortal?

..he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15–16 (ESV)

- There is a difference between essential immortality and endowed immortality.

...and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Matthew 25:46 (ESV)