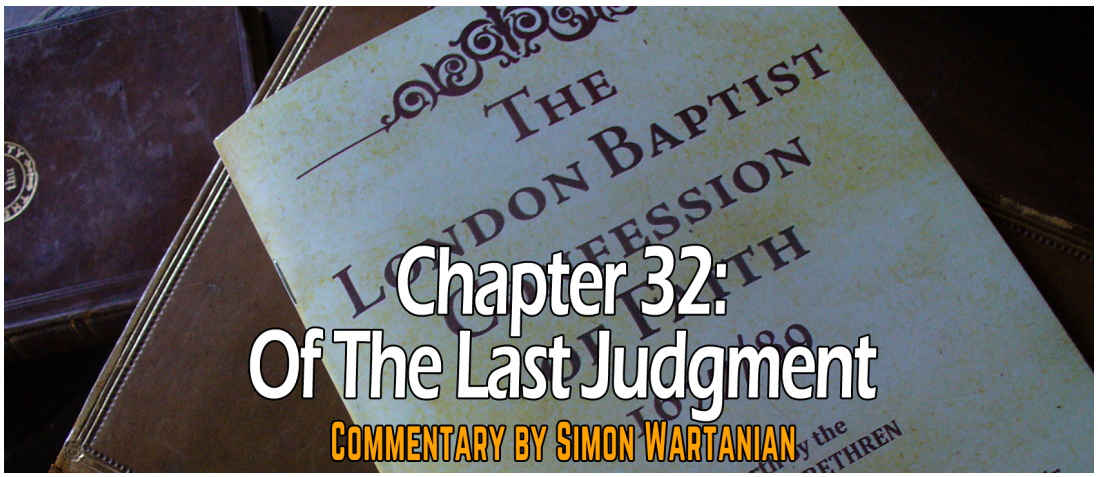
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 32: Of the Last Judgment - Commentary

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Chapter 32: Of the Last Judgment

Now we come to the last chapter of the Confession, which deals with the last day, particularly, the Last Judgment. Is there a Day of Judgment? How will we be judged? Will believers be judged? Will angels also be judged? What is the relation of works to the judgment? What is Hell? Is it never-ending torment or annihilation? Who is the one who torments? How is God's glory manifested in Heaven and Hell?

§1 All Persons That Have Lived Upon The Earth Shall Appear Before The Tribunal Of Christ

1. God hath appointed **a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness,** by Jesus Christ; to whom **all power and judgment is given of the Father; 1** in which day, not only the **apostate angels** shall be judged, **2** but likewise **all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, 3** to **give an account** of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to **receive according to what they have done** in the body, whether good or evil. **4**
    1. John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31[1]
    2. 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6
    3. Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 2:6-16; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2 Peter 3:1-13; Rev. 20:11-15
    4. 2 Cor. 5:10, 1 Cor. 4:5, Matt. 12:36

God has determined and **appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ** (Acts 17:30-31), Who has **all power and judgment...given** to Him by **the Father** (John 5:22). It is certain that this day will come because God has determined and appointed it. On this day, not only **the apostate angels** (Jude 6; 1 Cor. 6:3) but also **all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ** (2 Cor. 5:10). Even Christians will have to appear before **the tribunal of Christ**. What is the reason for their appearance? It is **to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds** (Matt. 12:36) and to be rewarded **according to what they have done...whether good or evil** (e.g., Rev. 20:11-15). God will reward us or take rewards away according to the works which we have done in the body. All our good works have been washed away by the blood of Christ and rewarded by grace. But there will be some who will lose rewards because of their works. The wicked will be condemned by their works because they demonstrate their nature as fallen and wicked.

The Day of Judgment is not the day that will determine the destinies of men; their destinies were fixed at the time they died (Heb 9:27; **see here**). We deny the doctrine of soul-sleep, the righteous pass from this life into the Intermediate State in bliss, while the wicked go into misery upon their deaths. But what is then the difference between what the wicked and righteous experience now in the Intermediate State and what they will experience after the Day of Judgment? Well for one, they were already judged at death and their judgment was *private* (Heb 9:27), but the Day of Judgment is *public* in which the secrets of men will be disclosed. Second, the joy and also the misery of men in the Intermediate State is *bodiless.* Their bodies lie rotting in the grave, while their souls are in places of peace or anguish. At the Day of Judgment, all the dead will be resurrected, their souls uniting with their bodies, and then come to appear before the throne of God. The difference then is that their everlasting punishment or their everlasting bliss is in body *and* soul, while in the Intermediate State it is in the soul alone. Moreover, the wicked will then be *publicly condemned* before the world, and the righteous *publicly rewarded* before the world, and all heaven will bless and praise God for His righteousness.

The Day Of Judgment

There is a Day of Judgment, fixed by God's decree that it should come to pass, in which all people that have ever lived will come and stand before Him to give an account of their words, thoughts, and deeds. This is a day that should rightly awaken fear and awe. For some it will be terrible, for others it will be joyous and victorious. The Confession here borrows much from biblical passages to form its statement in paragraph 1. The first passage which it alludes to is Acts 17:31. We read:

> Acts 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **he commands all people everywhere to repent**, 31 because he has fixed **a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness** by **a man whom he has appointed**; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Christ The Judge

There was a time when God let the nations go their way, but now that the Christ has come and suffered for all kinds of men, the people of God are no longer confined to a single nation (cf. Rev. 5:9). In accordance with the Savior's words, the gospel is to be preached to all nations (Matt 28:18-19; Acts 1:8). Therefore, as the gospel goes out to these nations, they are to respond to it positively, otherwise, they have no way of peace with God. God's command to everyone is "to repent", i.e., turn back from sin and turn toward Him (**see here**). The motivation given for people to repent is because there is a Day of Judgment coming. This Day is "fixed" and the One Who fixed it is God Himself who will expose the works of the wicked on the last day and give each man according to their works. Although God is said to be the judge, yet this judgment is by the "man whom he has appointed", the Lord Jesus Christ. In **John 5:22-23** we read, "The Father judges no one, but **has given all judgment to the Son**, 23 that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." It is the Father's desire that everyone may honor the Son just as they honor Him. In other words, that all may honor the Son as divine. Therefore, being truly and everlastingly deity, He is the One appointed by the Father's authority to be the Judge of the World. On the Last Day, the Father will judge no one, but the Son, as divine and as the perfect image of the Father, will act on behalf of Him and judge every man according to their works. **John 5:27** likewise says that the Father "has **given him authority to execute** judgment, because he is the Son of Man." **Acts 10:42** says that "he is the one **appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead**." **2 Timothy 4:2** says also the same. Paul says in **Romans 2:16** that "**God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus**." **2 Corinthians 5:10** says that "we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." **Matthew 25:31ff** likewise records Christ as the One separating the sheep and the goats in the Final Judgment. When we read passages which speak about God being the Judge, that is absolutely true, because Christ is God and the Father wants all to honor the Son just like they honor the Father. Therefore, He has given the Son the authority to execute judgment.

All Men

Returning to our passage in Acts 17:31, we see the subjects of this judgment being the *world.* Scripture teaches that both believers and unbelievers will appear before God in the Last Judgment. This is evident from Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 7:21-23; 12:36-37; 25:31ff; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:6-16; 14:10-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 11:18; 21:11-15. Sometimes Scripture is so explicit that it refers to believers having to stand before the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Ps. 50:4-6). Other times, the Scriptures warns of the judgment against the wicked (Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7), but they both will stand before the throne of God on the last day, that is what Scripture teaches. Not only men but angels also will come into the Judgment (Matt. 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Cor. 2:4; Jude 1:6).

Angels

The Confession states that even the apostate angels will be judged. This is a Day of Judgment not only for men but also for angels. This is obviously based on Scripture. In **Matthew 8:29**, we read the demon speaking about a time in which he, along with his companions, will be tormented. In **Jude 1:6**, we read that "the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority", God "has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day". In **2 Peter 2:4**, says that "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment". There is a time at which these angels will have to stand before the throne of Christ to be judged and condemned. Finally, **1 Corinthians 6:3** says, "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" There are a lot of questions and speculations about this passage and the idea. Who are meant by the angels? Are good angels also included? Then this would probably be the only passage where good angels are subjects of judgment. Are they fallen angels? Then this will agree with other passages (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6), therefore, it seems to me that the passage is speaking of fallen angels. But I cannot be dogmatic because generally the word "angel" is used positively. In other places where it means fallen angels, the context makes that clear (2 Pet. 2:4 "angels when they sinned"; Jude 1:6 "angels who did not stay within their own position"). Therefore, it seems that the New Testament is not clear whether good angels will be subjects for the judgment, although I doubt that they will be. What is clear is that fallen angels surely will subjects of the Last Judgment.

What is the nature of this judgment? There are a lot of questions about this, but there are also a lot of speculation as Scripture does not seem to say how exactly the saints will judge angels. Most seem to think that this judgment will consist in approving the judgments of God made against the fallen angels and the wicked.

At The Parousia

The Bible also teaches that the Last Judgment will take place at the coming of Christ, on the last day, that is the only time indication that the Bible gives (Matt. 24:36). **2 Thessalonians 1:5-10** tells us that we will be granted relief "when the **Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven** with his mighty angels" (v. 7), but He will not be granting relief to everyone. Rather, the Holy Spirit says that He will be revealed "**in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God** and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (v. 8), through which they will suffer "**eternal destruction**" (v. 9), and that will happen "when he comes **on that day to be glorified in his saints**" (v. 10). Notice that on a singular day and with the same singular Parousia of Christ, two opposite things happen: His coming brings joy and relief to His people, but it also brings eternal destruction and misery to those who do not know the gospel of our God. This is the Final Judgment at the Second Coming of our Lord. **1 Corinthians 4:5** connects the time of judgment with the coming of Christ saying, "Therefore do not pronounce **judgment before the time, before the Lord comes**, who will **bring to light the things now hidden** in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." The time for judgment is *after* the Lord comes, and when the Lord comes He will bring to light the things now hidden. **John 12:48** says that the judgment will take place "**on the last day**." **Matthew 25:31ff** begins with the coming of the Lord in glory before going into the Final Judgment. The Day of the Lord is often connected with judgment, which is the day on which Christ will return (**see here for more**). There is a day and an hour fixed by God for the revelation of His perfect justice, which will certainly come and men should live with the knowledge of that. If they are outside of Christ, they have no hope, but if they are in Christ they will have *confidence* on that awesome day (1 John 4:17).

The Standard

God will judge the world by His own standard. He is His own standard. 1 Samuel 2:3 says that "the LORD is a God of knowledge, and **by him actions are weighed**." He is the standard that determines what is right and what is wrong. The Law which He has given us in the Ten Commandments—the moral law—is a reflection of His morally excellent character and the standard which we will be judged by. God is the Judge and He will do no one any wrong, for He is Just (Gen. 18:25). The Bible repeatedly declares that God is just and He will judge the world by righteousness (e.g., Ps. 9:7-8; 96:10-13). He will not be bribed or be partial in His judgment (Rom. 2:9-11), but will give each man according to his works. No man outside of Christ can have any confidence of fulfilling God's righteous standard or coming anywhere near that perfect standard. Therefore, there is no peace for those outside of Christ. On the other hand, believers have confidence (1 John 4:17). The standard of judgment is the revealed will of God. There are several ways which we may know the revealed will of God. We have the will of God in 1) the law of nature, the moral law; 2) we have the revealed will of God in the Bible; and 3) we have the revealed will of God in the gospel. Each will be judged according to the measure of knowledge they have of the will of God. This is evident from such passages as Matthew 11:21-24; Luke 12:47-48; 20:47; 2 Corinthians 9:6. Luke 12:47 explicitly speaks about the Master's will. With the knowledge that we have of God's will, with that also we will be judged. This does not mean that people who have not heard the gospel will not be judged, that would be contrary to the argument of Romans 1:18-32. But rather, the standard of judgment is the Law of God and the knowledge that we had of His will. This is why the apostle Paul is harsher against Jews in Romans 2 than he was against the Gentiles in chapter 1. The reason is that the Jews have the oracles of God and they know with certainty what God approves and what He disapproves because God has spoken in Holy Writ. On the other hand, the Gentiles do not have a special revelation of God, but they only have the general revelation of God in the created world. This does not excuse them because the apostle says very clearly that they knew God

and that's why their without an excuse (Rom 1:20). Yet Scripture makes clear that their final condition will be a bit different than those who had a wider knowledge of God's will. This does not mean that they will not go to Hell, but rather, their torment will be "lighter" than those who receive a "severe beating" (Matt. 11:21-24). A person who has gone to church for a long time, heard the faithful preaching of God's Word, heard the gospel proclaimed and he denied it, will receive a severe beating, while a man living in the jungles of Africa will likewise be condemned, but his condition will be "lighter" in comparison to that rejector of the gospel. This is no basis to ignore foreign missions or ignore sharing the gospel with people who are un-churched or do not know much about God and the Bible. They will be judged and they will be in torment, it does not matter if their condition will be "lighter" in comparison to others. They still need saving. They need the gospel to escape the righteous judgment of God.

According To Works

The most difficult aspect of the judgment is the fact that we are judged by our works. That this is the case is evident from several biblical passages in both testaments, such as: Job 34:11; Psalm 62:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19; Matthew 16:27; 25:34-46; John 5:28-29; Romans 2:6; 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 4:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 6:8; Colossians 3:25; 2 Timothy 4:14; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:23; 20:12; 22:12. Does this mean that we are justified by our works? Not at all. Scripture is clear that *salvation* and *justification* are by grace through faith (e.g., Eph. 2:8-9, **see also here**). Not only that, but our works are explicitly excluded from any part in salvation and justification (Rom. 3:28; 4:6; Gal. 2:16).

Therefore, how should we understand these two biblical truths? For those who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the option cannot be that Paul or the other authors of Scripture are contradicting themselves, rather, it is what it is. The Bible teaches that we are justified by faith apart from our works, yet in the future, at the Last Judgment, we will be judged according to our works. Our works done in the body will determine either our eternal rewards or our eternal misery. The Lord Jesus teaches us that we will have to give an account even for our words (Matt. 12:36-37). Thoughts are also included. All wickedness gets born in the heart and starts from there until it gives birth to the deeds. Lust, which is something mental (i.e., not an external act as adultery is), is declared by our Lord to be a violation of the Law (Matt. 5:27-29). By this, we learn that not only our works and words but our thoughts also will be liable to judgment. Oh sinner, flee to Christ!

We saw above that God will judge us according to the light of the knowledge of His will which we possessed. We noted that Scripture speaks of "light" and "severe" beating to describe the degrees of punishment (Luke 12:47-48; 20:47; Matt. 11:21-24). There are also rewards for the righteous. In the Parable of the Ten Minas, the Lord Jesus gives the one servant who had made "ten minas more…authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:16-17). Then comes the one who had made "five minas" and he receives authority "over five cities" (Luke 19:18-19). On the other hand, there comes a wicked servant who is cast where he belongs, for he certainly did not belong to the Lord (Luke 19:20-27). We see in Jesus' teaching that rewards will also be different in Heaven. Believers will be rewarded according to their works done in faith. John Gill beautifully comments on the words "Lord, your mina" (v. 16), saying:

> This servant owns, that the gifts he had were Christ's; he calls them, "thy pound"; and therefore did not glory in them as his own attainments, or, as if he had received them not; and ascribes the great increase, not to himself, but to the pound itself; to the gifts of Christ, as they were his, and as used by his grace and strength, and as blessed, and owned by him, to these purposes.[2]

The rewards that the Lord will render His people are gracious because even our best works are stained with sin and therefore, do not merit any reward (Isa. 64:6). Yet because of His great love and grace, He will reward the works which He Himself, through His Spirit, worked in us, as though they were perfect because they're washed with the blood of the Lamb. With the Last Judgment, our eternal destiny is not at stake as we said at the beginning of the section. The Last Judgment is the *public vindication* of God's justice. God will show that the people whom He has chosen and whom He has redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, have the works which demonstrate that they belong to Him. On the other hand, the wicked with their wickedness demonstrate that they're far away from God.

In thinking about the Judgment, Christians should not doubt that they will be vindicated by God. This is so because they are in Christ. In Christ, they are justified and vindicated before the justice of God. The basis of their salvation is in Christ alone, and even the rewards which they will receive at the Final Judgment are the rewards of works which His Spirit has worked in us (Phil. 2:11-12). But there must be a sense of awe and of solemnity when thinking about the Day of Judgment because we will have to give an account. We should want to be like Paul and together with him say, "we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:9-10). Thinking about the Day of Judgment makes us think about what is it we're actually doing, it makes us evaluate our works. We do not want to *displease* God, but to *please* Him. Paul states that the purpose of us all appearing before Christ is "so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor. 5:10). The wicked will be paid back for their wickedness (Col. 3:25), and the righteous will be paid back for their righteousness (Eph. 6:8).

The reason that Christians should not dread the Day of Judgment is because Christ said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24). We must understand these words to mean that the believer does not come under condemnation and judgment, and not to mean that believers will not appear at the Last Judgment. The confidence of believers on the Day of Judgment and their lack of dread thereof, is based on their faith in the Christ of God. Romans 8:1 declares plainly that “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Therefore, every believer can have 100% confidence that God will not reject them or sentence them to Hell, if they had sincerely believed on Christ and turned from their sin toward God. John says:

> 1 John 4:16-18 So we have come to know and to **believe the love that God has for us**. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may **have confidence for the day of judgment**, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but **perfect love casts out fear**. For **fear has to do with punishment**, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

Since we know that God loves us, His people, therefore, we should have no fear of the judgment, but rather we should have “confidence for the day of judgment”. John Calvin noted on v. 17, saying:

> It is, however, an invaluable benefit, that we can dare boldly to stand before God. By nature, indeed, we dread the presence of God, and that justly; for, as he is the Judge of the world, and our sins hold us guilty, death and hell must come to our minds whenever we think of God. Hence is that dread which I have mentioned, which makes men shun God as much as they can. But John says that the faithful do not fear, when mention is made to them of the last judgment, but that on the contrary they go to God’s tribunal confidently and cheerfully, because they are assured of his paternal love. Every one, then, has made so much proficiency in faith, as he is well prepared in his mind to look forward to the day of judgment.[3]

This “confidence” and “boldness” which we have for the Day of Judgment, a day naturally to be dreaded, especially when we know how sinful we are, is based only upon the love of God demonstrated for us in the cross. We do not fear the Day of Judgment, because, says John, fear has to do with punishment and in that scheme, love does not work. John taught us that our sins were washed away by the blood of Christ, and therefore, the punishment for sins was was delivered to God (1 John 1:7-2:2). Therefore, Christians have nothing to dread. The wicked, Scripture declares, “will not stand in the judgment” (Ps. 1:5). Their position and their condition at the Last Judgment is utterly different. The wicked will be in pain and will be in full dread of the everlasting judgment ahead of them, while the righteous have nothing to fear. John Gill notes on 1 John 4:17:

> the future judgment, which, though it will be very awful and solemn, Christ the Judge will appear with great majesty and glory, and all men will stand before him, and the books will be opened, and the judgment will proceed with great strictness and justice, and will issue in the everlasting perdition of devils and wicked men, yet the saints will have boldness in it: while evil men and devils tremble at the thoughts of it now, they [the saints] rejoice and are glad; they love it, look for it, long for it, and hasten to it; and will stand fearless, and without the least dread, while others will flee to the rocks, and into the holes of the earth; and they will use freedom of speech with Christ, as the word here signifies; they will sing his new song, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to him, and express their praises of him, and love to him, then and to all eternity...[2]

Then there is the question related to the bad works of believers: will they be judged? Will they be brought into judgment? It seems to me that they will, in fact, be brought into judgment (1 Cor. 4:5). 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 speaks about our works being revealed on the Day of Christ’s coming and our works tested by fire. The passage, though, clearly states that this has nothing to do with our salvation (“though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire”). Well, how does this then fit with the general attitude of boldness and confidence which the believer should have? I believe the resolution to this problem is that these works will be revealed as forgiven works. Our sins and our shortcomings will be revealed as forgiven, and thus will not be condemned. Paul says:

> 1 Cor. 4:5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will **disclose the purposes of the heart**. Then **each one will receive his commendation from God**.

Although things hidden will come to light and the purposes of the heart will be disclosed, yet the fact remains that each

Christian will "receive his commendation from God." The KJV, HCSB, ISV say "praise." The word is ἔπαινος (*epainos*, G1868) which basically means "approbation, commendation, praise" and is used 11 times in the New Testament (Rom. 2:29; 13:3; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 8:18; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; Phil. 1:11; 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2:14). It is never used in a negative way. It is used of the government praising or commending the good done (Rom. 13:3; 1 Pet. 2:14); it is used of God (1 Cor. 4:5); it is said to be the purpose to which we were predestined (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14), and finally our faith will "be found to result in **praise** and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). Here, we have again confirmed what we learned from 1 John 4:17: believers have no need to dread the Day of Judgment. It is a day which will result in their praise, glory, and honor. They will receive their commendation, praise, and approbation from God, not condemnation. The point in looking to the uses of the word is to confirm that it is never used in relation to unbelievers, therefore, only believers will be commended. But if this is true then the way in which the judgment is described in 1 Corinthians 4:5 seems to imply that not all things revealed of believers were good. I mean, the language of bringing things to light and disclosing the purposes of the heart implies that there are some bad works/sins to be revealed. Still, Paul does not say that believers will be condemned because of their bad works, but rather, "each one", every believer, "will receive his commendation from God." Our works will be tested by fire and some will be consumed, with no harm to our eternal salvation, and these works will be revealed as forgiven. This seems for me to be the solution to the question of the believers' work and the Day of Judgment still being a day of joy, commendation, and confidence to the believer.

We're almost at the end of our discussion on the role of works in the Final Judgment and we did not treat the primal passage:

> Rom. 2:6-11 He will render to **each one according to his works**: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing **seek for glory and honor and immortality,** he will give **eternal life**; 8 but for those who are **self-seeking and do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness, there will be **wrath and fury.** 9 There will be tribulation and distress for **every human being who does evil**, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for **everyone who does good**, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For **God shows no partiality**.

It cannot be denied that what will follow in chapters 3-5 is the best discussion on justification by faith alone in the Bible, yet we clearly see the works principle here. We have already noted that there is no contradiction between these two doctrines. Indeed, if we see them as two separate doctrines and not one. Justification (salvation) is by faith alone which seals our fate for Heaven, but our rewards are according to our works. What Paul is teaching in Romans 2 is about the judgment of God Who will give to each man what they deserve. One may question, "how do the redeemed deserve eternal life?" That is a good question. The redeemed deserve eternal life because of their Substitute Who fulfilled all conditions and kept the whole Law of God for them. In Him, they are perfectly righteous and therefore, deserve every reward. Although they know that even their best works are stained with sin and deserve nothing but the wrath of God, yet this does not stop their belief that in Christ, they are righteous and therefore, the wrath of God is as far from them as the east is from the west.

The believers are described as those who seek "for glory and honor and immortality" (v. 7). The believer seeks the things of God and wants to be where God is and they are ones who do well. They are ones who perform good works in the sight of God, and are able, by His Spirit, to do that which is pleasing in His sight by faith. On the other hand, the wicked are said to be *not* seeking for glory and honor and immortality, but rather, "self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" and for them, there will be "wrath and fury" (v. 8). The wicked are described as those who are self-centered, seeking their pleasure alone and the things which are against God, Romans 1 speaks much to this effect. The description of the wicked is totally opposite to that of the righteous. While the righteous are described as those who are "well-doing", it is said of the wicked that they "do not obey the truth". But this is not all, for they must obey something, therefore, they "obey unrighteousness". Both groups demonstrate the condition of their hearts and of their relationship with God. The one who has been born of God, will seek the things of God, while the enemy of God, will remain an enemy unless changed by God into a friend. While the wicked will face "tribulation and distress" (v. 9), the righteous, on the other hand, will receive "glory and honor and peace" (v. 10). The wicked are described as those who do evil, while the righteous as those who do good and this is the basis for the statement that "God shows no partiality" (v. 11). This statement may function like a conclusion to vv. 6-10. Since God will judge everyone according to what they've done, rewarding the righteous and condemning the wicked, God thereby shows no favoritism toward Jew or Gentile (which is the reason that this passage was written). Since God judges both the Jew and the Gentile, including believers on the same basis, therefore, God shows no partiality. We must not separate the perfect righteousness of Christ from the evaluation of the believer's works by God. Without Christ, we are doomed. Since God has imputed Christ's righteousness, including His active obedience, to our account, therefore that perfect righteousness legally is ours and that is the only basis which we should have in thinking of the Day of Judgment with joy, confidence, and boldness. Through union with Christ, Christ's works for us could be counted as our own.

§2 The Manifestation Of The Glory Of His Mercy And Of His Justice

2. The end of God's appointing this day, is for the **manifestation of the glory of his mercy**, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of **his justice,** in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient; **1** for then shall the **righteous go into everlasting life**, and receive that fulness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards, in the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be **cast aside into everlasting torments, and punished with everlasting destruction**, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. **2**
    1. Rom. 9:22-23
    2. Matt. 18:8; 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; Jude 6; Rev. 14:9-11; Luke 3:17; Mark 9:43, 48; Matt. 3:12; 5:26; 13:41-42; 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46

The end, purpose, and goal **of God's appointing this day** of judgment **is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy…and of His justice** (Rom. 9:22-23). How is **the glory of His mercy** manifested? …**in the eternal salvation of the elect** whom He has set free thanks to the perfect work of the Son on their behalf. **The righteous** shall **go into everlasting life** with the **everlasting rewards** which they shall **receive** and be **in the presence of the Lord** (Matt. 25:34, 46). Eternal bliss is the destiny of the righteous. But God will likewise manifest **the glory of…His justice** in the **eternal damnation of the reprobate…who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ** (2 Thess. 1:8-9), which is the only ground of right-standing with God. Since they only stand in their sinfulness with no covering from the Lord Jesus Christ, they stand naked for the unrestrained wrath of God. Therefore, they **shall be cast aside into everlasting torments, and punished with everlasting destruction** (e.g., 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Matt. 25:41, 46). Their terrible and fearful lot is to be punished for all eternity. It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). Although all of us deserve this punishment from God, yet no human mind can fathom the misery that is for the wicked and their lot. Many of us can sympathize with such a lot because we have not yet seen the fullness of God's righteousness and holiness as it is and compared sin with it. When we are in the presence of God, everlasting punishment will be the most reasonable thing to do with the wicked and we will praise God for it.

On the Day of Judgment, God's decree of election and reprobation will fully come to pass and be manifested. God has ordained all things which come to pass, including the salvation and damnation of people, for the glory of His holy Name (see **chapter 3**). He saves those who are not righteous and accepts them as righteous because of Jesus Christ to demonstrate His grace. At the same time, He leaves those who likewise are not righteous in their unrighteousness to demonstrate His justice and His wrath. The one group gets that which they do not deserve, the other gets that which they deserve. The center of the Day of Judgment is God, not man, as God will on that day vindicate His holiness and His justice. Jesus Christ will sit in judgment to vindicate the Name of the Triune God. The righteous, who are so because of *imputed* righteousness and not *inherit* righteousness, will be received into the New Heavens and New Earth, the home of righteousness and will be welcomed with the words: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Those are the ones of whom Christ said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Matt. 25:35-36). The righteous are shown to be righteous by their deeds. Their deeds testify to their righteousness. On the other hand, to the wicked He says, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). The wicked will share the same fate as the fallen angels in the eternal fire. The wicked are described as the opposite of the righteous: "For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me" (Matt. 25:42-43). They will be condemned and sent to Hell because of their lack of good works, which testifies to the fact that they're not believers. There are only two destinations which the Bible knows of, either one goes into the presence of God, or out of the presence of God. The conditions of these two places are antithetical. Now I want to focus more on Hell.

Hell

It is the common confession of Christianity (whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox) that the wicked will be tormented without end in Hell. In recent times, the attack upon the doctrine of Hell has become more popular. The doctrine is very hard to swallow and it is a doctrine with which we are not happy. We may try to imagine the idea of what it means for a person to suffer unceasingly in Hell, but we simply cannot. The doctrine is very hard and terrifying, but the reason that it has received the prominence it has in all strands of Christianity throughout history is because it was a doctrine often taught by our Lord. It has been commonly observed that the Lord Jesus spoke more about Hell than about Heaven, and therefore, it is important to listen to His words. Indeed, no other person is capable of explaining Hell than the One Who made it, and Who

really knows its nature. As we noted in **chapter 31**, the wicked at the present time go into Hades, which is Hell without the body, but after the Resurrection and the Judgment, the wicked will be sent to Hell in body and spirit. Therefore, technically speaking, Hell does not yet exist, but it will come after the Resurrection and Judgment (cf. Rev. 20:14). That being noted, we now move to consider what Scripture teaches us about Hell.

The Nature of Hell

Something that is directly connected with Hell is *fire.* Hell is described as a place in which fire burns the wicked (Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 18:9); a place in which the wicked are present both in body and soul (Matt. 10:28). In Mark 9:43, Hell is identified as "the unquenchable fire" (cf. Luke 3:17; Matt. 3:12). In other places, Hell is described although the name is not mentioned. John the Baptist said that Christ will burn the chaff "with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). It is said to be "the eternal fire" (Matt. 18:8; 25:41). Matthew 13:40 says that the "the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age." The judgment of the wicked in Hell will take place at the end of the age and it will be by fire. Hell is described as "the fiery furnace" (Matt. 13:42, 50). In Revelation 20:15, Hell is called "the lake of fire." It is described as a place in which the worm does not die (Mark 9:48). It is called "the outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and "the gloom of utter darkness" (Jude 1:13). The wicked are said to be "tormented with fire and sulfur" (Rev. 14:10; 19:20); weeping and gnashing their teeth (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28); and they "suffer the punishment of eternal destruction" (2 Thess. 1:9). Basically, it is a place of torment where the wicked will be in (e.g., Rev. 21:8).

Some think that the way in which Scripture speaks of Hell, as fire and outer darkness, is meant to be taken in a metaphorical way. I'm not sure, it may be so, but there are basically two groups who do this. One is the group which believes that saying that fire is metaphorical does not imply that Hell will be better than the traditional picture of Hell, rather, the reality is much stronger than the image. In other words, Hell is more terrible than you can imagine. Even if the worst thing that you can imagine is being tormented in fire forever, well, Hell is worse! The other camp tries to remove the idea of eternal suffering in body and soul. It may well be that the pictures of fire are meant to be taken in a metaphorical way, but this will not make Hell "less" endurable, but it will only make it *more* terrifying.

Endless Punishment

Now the question before us is simply, "How long will the suffering in Hell go on?" Historic Christianity has answered that question with "forever" until recent times when attempts have been made to teach that the wicked will not suffer eternal torment, but will be annihilated. Forms of Annihilationism have existed from the post-Reformation period. Basically, the wicked will not suffer conscious torment for all eternity as historic Christianity has taught, but they will cease to exist either after death or after the Final Judgment. Does Scripture support such an idea? Does Scripture teach that the suffering of the unrighteous will be momentary and not everlasting? We must look at passages that speak about the duration of the torments of Hell. The following is an attempt to show that the Bible teaches the unending punishment of the wicked. I do not intend it to be a refutation of Annihilationism, but more a positive case for the unending nature of hell-torments.

Matthew 25:41, 46

Matthew 25:46 is a clear passage that is often brought up against Annihilationism or any doctrine which denies the unending punishment of the unrighteous in Hell. The passage reads:

> And these will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**.

In this passage, we see the fate of the wicked and the fate of the righteous. Both are said to be eternal, but their conditions are totally opposite. One is said to be of life, the other of punishment. Those who disagree with the traditional doctrine of Hell often make the argument that the word "eternal" does not mean "without end" in every place, and with that we agree. But I believe that it is hard to maintain in this place that the nature of the punishment is not unending. The duration of both the condition of the righteous as well as the wicked is described with the same word—eternal. Notice that the passage does not merely describe eternity, but it describes the *conditions* of the sheep and the goats in eternity. One group goes "*into* eternal punishment," the other "*into* eternal life." We know that Christians will not be annihilated, but will forever live with God, therefore, since the condition of the righteous is that of unending life, it is unjustified to believe that the punishment of the wicked is not unending, just like the duration of eternal life. The natural implication of the language is that the duration is the same for both the righteous as well as the wicked, although the condition is radically different. Albert Barnes quotes John Owen saying:

> The original word - αἰώνιον aionion - is employed in the New Testament 66 times. Of these, in 51 instances it is used of the happiness of the righteous; in two, of God's existence; in six, of the church and the Messiah's kingdom; and in the remaining seven, of the future punishment of the wicked. If in these seven instances we attach to the word the

idea of limited duration, consistency requires that the same idea of limited duration should be given it in the 51 cases of its application to the future glory of the righteous, and the two instances of its application to God's existence, and the six eases of its appropriation to the future reign of the Messiah and the glory and perpetuity of the church. But no one will presume to deny that in these instances it denotes unlimited duration, and therefore, in accordance with the sound laws of interpretation and of language itself, the same sense of unlimited duration must be given it when used of future punishment - Owen, in loc.[4]

We know that this has been the common and plain understanding of these words throughout the ages of the church. If the condition of the righteous is one of unending life, the condition of the wicked should also be that of unending punishment.

Matthew 25:41 says, "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." The wicked meet the same fate as the devil and his angels. They share in his punishment, having been followers of his. The wicked go into "the eternal fire", in contrast, to the righteous He says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Again, the conditions are totally opposite and v. 46 makes clear that the duration is the same. Furthermore, in v. 41, the fire is said to be "the eternal fire". John Gill says that what "is meant, [is] the wrath of God; and the phrase expresses the intolerable fierceness of it, and its perpetual continuance; the sense of which, without intermission, will ever be felt in the conscience; and is the punishment of sense, the wicked will for ever endure"[2]. The fire itself is described in the same way and with the same word as the punishment is (cf. Matt 3:12; Mark 9:43; Luke 3:17). Therefore, both the fire as well as the punishment by that fire is everlasting. In this passage (vv. 41, 46), both the eternal fire and the eternal punishment are connected together. As Alan W. Gomes observes, "If suffering is lacking, so is punishment; punishment entails suffering. But suffering entails consciousness."[5] Therefore, it will not do to say that *only* the fire is described as eternal and unending, while the suffering itself is not. That is not the case. Both things are described in the same word. Both the fire which inflicts the punishment as well as the punishment itself are said to be eternal. Jonathan Edwards, who preached the famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God", noted against Annihilationism that "Scripture everywhere represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings. But a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure, and much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an extreme pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity than they did suffer from eternity."[6]

Their Worm Does Not Die And Weeping

The Lord Jesus speaks about the worm not dying in the fire, which He borrows from Isaiah 66:24. The Lord Jesus describes Hell as a place "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48). Even the worm, which is so fragile, will not die in the unquenchable fire, i.e., it will not cease to exist, how much more the wicked? The worm will always have something to feast on. The Pulpit Commentary says: "The metaphor is very striking as well as awful. Ordinarily the worm feeds upon the disorganized body, and then dies. The fire consumes the fuel, and then itself expires. But here the worm never dies; the fire never goes out."[7] Robert A. Peterson says that the Lord Jesus "points to the activity of worms and fire in this life to teach figuratively about the life to come. All maggots die when they consume their prey and exhaust their fuel. All fires go out when they run their course and exhaust their fuel. Jesus says that the worms and fires of hell, by contrast, will never run out of fuel; the worm of the wicked is undying and the fire of hell is not quenched. That is, hell knows no end."[8]

The condition of those in Hell is also described as those weeping and gnashing their teeth (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). The first expresses their pains and sorrows, and the second their rage and anger because of these pains. This is the experience of those in Hell. It is not the experience of annihilation, but of continued pain in the place where the fire does not go out (Mark 9:43). These verses indicate that their continued existence is that of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Charles J. Ellicott notes on Matthew 8:12 that 'Both words in the Greek have the emphasis of the article, "*the* weeping" *par excellence*...In their literal meaning they express that intensest form of human anguish in which it ceases to be articulate. The latter word, or rather the cognate verb, is used also to express rage (Act. 7:54). Their spiritual meaning we naturally connect with the misery of those who are excluded from the joy and blessedness of the completed kingdom, and that is, doubtless, what they ultimately point to.'[9] Albert Barnes likewise writes on the same passage: "The image expresses the fact that the wicked who are lost will be shut out from the light of heaven, and from peace, and joy, and hope; will weep in hopeless grief, and will gnash their teeth in indignation against God, and complain against his justice. What a striking image of future woe! Go to a damp, dark, solitary, and squalid dungeon; see a miserable and enraged victim; add to his sufferings the idea of eternity, and then remember that this, after all, is but an image, a faint image, of hell!"[4]

Revelation 14:9-11

Rev. 14:9-11 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will **drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger**, and he will be **tormented with fire and sulfur** in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the **smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever**, and **they have no rest, day or night**, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its

name."

In Revelation 14:9-11, the worshipers of the Beast (i.e., unbelievers) are described as the ones who will "drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger" (v. 10). In other words, they will experience the fierce and unrestrained wrath of God Almighty! This wrath will be revealed in their being "tormented with fire and sulfur" (v. 10). As to the duration of their torment, it is said that "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever" and "they have no rest, day or night" (v. 11). The smoke, which is the result of their torment by fire, is said to go up "forever and ever." The idea of everlasting and never-ending smoke-rising is clearly communicated. At this point, some will want to say, "see, only the smoke of their torments is said to be 'forever and ever.'" Meaning, only the *result* of their annihilation goes up forever and ever, and that means that they are not being punished without end. But this ignores the rest of the passage, which says the same thing in different words. "they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name" (v. 11). From what will the worshipers of the beast not have rest? The answer obviously lies in the previous verse—their torment. They will have no rest from their torment. But if they're annihilated, they will indeed have "rest," which denies what the passage asserts. Furthermore, by no means is the rising of the smoke forever and ever an indication that the punishment is not forever. Saying that smoke rises forever and ever and they have no rest is the same thing here. Both ideas convey unending punishment. What we must not forget is also the fact that the passage says "the smoke of their *torment*" and not "the smoke of their *destruction*", which would have been more consistent with the Annihilationist doctrine. Their torment presupposes their *consciousness* because only things that are endued with consciousness can be tormented. Therefore, the smoke of their *conscious torment* is what is rising without end, and this also means that their torment is never-ending. The great Revelation commentator, G. K. Beale, notes:

> There is no justification in not identifying the fate of those in 14:10-11 with that of their Satanic representatives in 19:20 and 20:10. The fact that the ungodly are thrown into the same "lake of fire" as their Satanic leaders further confirms this (so 20:15). In addition, the word **torment** (Greek *basanismos,* verb *basanizo*) in 14:10-11 is used nowhere in Revelation or biblical literature in the sense of annihilation of existence. Without exception it refers in Revelation to conscious suffering on the part of people (9:5; 11:10; 12:2; 18:7, 10, 15; 20:10; so also Matt. 4:24 ["pains" in NASB]; 8:6, 29; 18:34; Mark 5:7; 6:48 ["straining" in NASB]; Luke 8:28; 16:23, 28; 2 Pet. 2:8). The word group occurs approximately one hundred times in the LXX, always referring to conscious suffering. Therefore, the genitive phrase **the smoke of their torment** is a mixed metaphor, where **smoke** is figurative of an enduring memorial of God's punishment involving a real, ongoing, eternal, conscious torment.[10] [emphasis original]

Revelation 20:10

> 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.**

We noted above on Matthew 25:41 that both the wicked and their master, the devil, share the same fate. This is relevant when we come to Revelation 20:10, which describes the torment of the devil, beast, and false prophet. The passage teaches that "the devil…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." Since the wicked share the same fate of their father the devil, their torment has likewise the same duration and is in the same place (Rev 20:15). The Greek expression for "forever and ever" is very interesting, R. C. H. Lenski observes:

> The strongest expression for our 'forever' is *eis tous aionan ton aionon*, 'for the eons of eons'; many aeons, each of vast duration, are multiplied by many more, which we imitate by 'forever and ever.' Human language is able to use only temporal terms to express what is altogether beyond time and timeless. The Greek takes its greatest term for time, the eon, pluralizes this, and then multiplies it by its own plural, even using articles which make these eons the definite ones.[11]

The expression is in reference to God to Whom be glory (Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; 1 Pet. 4:11). In the Apocalypse, it is used of:

- Christ's never-ending life (Rev. 1:18);
- God's praise (Rev. 4:9-10; 5:13; 7:12; 11:15;);
- of God's life (Rev 10:6; 15:7);
- the smoke of Babylon (Rev 19:3);
- the torment of the lake of fire (Rev 20:10); and finally,

- about the reign of the righteous on the New Earth (Rev 22:5).

A similar expression (εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων, *eis aionas aionon*) is used concerning the torment of the wicked (Rev. 14:11). In none of these passages do we get any slight idea that this expression means anything less than endless things. Either the endless praise of God, or the endless glory which belongs to God, or the endless reign of the saints on the New Earth through all eternity. On what ground can we cast any doubts upon the torments of the ungodly, then? The torment of those in the lake of fire is said to be "day and night forever and ever", this calls to mind Revelation 14:11 which contains "forever and ever" (the only difference is that the expression does not contain the definite articles) and "no rest day and night" concerning the condition of the Devil's followers. Both the Devil and his followers will receive the same fate in the same place of torment. Satan is not the ruler of Hell, neither will the demons torment people as is commonly thought. But all who are in Hell will be tormented, both men and demons. In summary, we see in these passages (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10 in connection with Matt. 25:41) the teaching of unceasing and unending punishment for all the wicked, men and angels.

2 Thessalonians 1:9

> 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 says that the ungodly "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction". Annihilationists often point to language such as this in favor of total destruction and cessation of existence. Yet we must ask with Robert L. Dabney, "If this [everlasting destruction] consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing, it would be instant destruction, not everlasting. How can punishment continue, when the subject of it has ceased to exist?"[12] The point is that punishment requires its subject to be alive. Punishment presupposes *consciousness,* and this punishment inflicted on the wicked is eternal destruction. They are not punished with cessation of existence or annihilation, but with eternal destruction. Albert Barnes comments on this passage:

> The word which is here rendered "destruction" (ὄλεθρον olethron), is different from that which occurs in Mat 25:46, and which is there rendered "punishment" - κόλασις kolasis. The word ὄλεθρον olethron - "olethron" - occurs only here and in 1Co 5:5; 1Th 5:3; 1Ti 6:9; in each of which places it is rendered destruction. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is destroyed. Thus, health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned or sunk in the ocean; a limb is destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is:
>
> (1) to be continued forever; and,
>
> (2) is to be of the nature of punishment.
>
> The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being - its enjoyment, dignity, honor, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on in destruction. It seems difficult to conceive how anyone can profess to hold that this passage is a part of the Word of God, and yet deny the doctrine of future eternal punishment. It would not be possible to state that doctrine in clearer language than this. It is never is in clearer language in any creed or confession of faith, and if it is not true that the wicked will be punished forever, then it must be admitted that it would not have been possible to reveal the doctrine in human language![4]

John Gill likewise comments on the passage:

> **Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction**,.... With destruction both of soul and body, though not with the annihilation of either; their gnawing worm of conscience will never die, and the fire of divine wrath will never be quenched; the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever. Sin being committed against an infinite and eternal Being, will be infinite in its duration; nor will it cease to be in the persons punished, who will not be in the least reformed or purged from sin by punishment; which will make the continuance of it just and necessary.[2]

Notice that the ungodly are said to *suffer* this everlasting destruction. Suffering and punishment presuppose consciousness, therefore their suffering this "eternal destruction" is a conscious suffering. A dead body is not punished nor can it suffer, the same goes for a rock because these things lack consciousness. Neither could it be said that an annihilated body is suffering eternal destruction, for an annihilated body lacks consciousness. Yet the passage before us teaches the very fact that the wicked will experience and suffer this everlasting destruction. See also Robert A. Peterson's comments below on the destruction of the beast meaning his eternal torment (Rev. 17:8, 11 with Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

Degrees Of Punishment

A point which we discussed above and which I see as inconsistent with any idea of annihilation is the degrees of punishment in Hell. If the punishment of Hell is extinction and cessation of existence, then there is no "light beating" and "severe beating" (Luke 12:47-48), for all share in the same fate of annihilation. Therefore, the doctrine of degrees of punishment is annihilated by the teaching of annihilationism. It is no different for Chorazin or Bethsaida on the Day of Judgment than for Tyre and Sidon, for they will all meet the same fate, i.e., annihilation (Matt. 11:21-22). Why would the Day of Judgment be more "tolerable" for Sodom than Capernaum if they both share the same fate (Matt. 11:23-24)? What *greater* condemnation will the Pharisees receive if all men receive the same condemnation (Matt. 12:40; Luke 20:47)? Degrees of punishment does not make sense in Annihilationism. Couple to that the fact that some believe the doctrine of soul-sleep, this then means that the wicked never experience torment.

Annihilation Is What The Wicked Want

I want to believe the doctrine of Annihilationism because it is emotionally better than the biblical doctrine of Hell, but I must believe what the God-breathed Scripture teaches. Annihilation is what the wicked want. They hope for annihilation and they run, wanting the rocks to fall upon them than face the wrath of God (Rev. 6:16-17). Annihilation is exactly what they desire, and it is that which they will never get. If Annihilationism is true, then the most wicked man on earth will receive the same fate and same punishment as one, who from a human point of view, was very good and generous, yet unbelieving. The words of Jesus concerning Judas become very difficult to explain in such a scheme: "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born" (Matt 26:24). Christ says that Judas has the *greater* sin than Pilate (John 19:11). Charles Hodge observes, "This, at least, is conclusive against the doctrine of universal salvation; for if, after any period of suffering, an eternity of happiness awaits a man, his being born is an unspeakable blessing."[13]

How do we understand these statements in an annihilationist scheme? Basically, that which the wicked see as a blessing, cessation of existence, the Annihilationist sees as a curse and a punishment. Christ says of Judas that it would have been better if he was not born, but why? Because he has the greater sin and thus will have a greater condemnation in Hell. If he were not born, he would not suffer Hell or be suffering now in Hades. But if the Annihilationist case is right, it would make absolutely no difference for Judas. The words "it would have been better" do not make sense, for before his birth he did not exist and after the Judgment, he will not exist. In other words, he will have the same condition as he did before he was born, namely, non-existence. Jonathan Edwards comments on this passage, saying: "This seems plainly to teach us, that the punishment of the wicked is such that their existence, upon the whole, is worse than non-existence. But if their punishment consists merely in annihilation, this is not true. — The wicked, in their punishment, are said to weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, and activity, and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment, Isa. 33:14."[6]

Scriptural Language

The Annihilationists argue that words like "destroy", "cut off" and the like support the idea that the wicked will cease to exist. David F. Wells reviews the wide range of meaning of these words:

> Sinners are 'cut off' (Ps. 37:9, 22, 28, 34, 38), but so is the Messiah (Dan. 9:26); sinners are 'destroyed' (Ps. 143:12), but so was Israel (Hos. 13:9; cf. Isa. 9:14) and so were the sheep and coins that were then found (Luke 15:4, 8); unbelievers are said to 'die,' but then all of us have always been 'dead' (Rom. 6:13; 7:4; Eph. 2:1, 5; cf. Rom. 7:10, 13; 8:2, 6; I Tim. 5:6; Col. 2:13; Rev. 3:1), and that surely does not mean we have been without existence and consciousness.[14]

Alan W. Gomes likewise, in responding to the Annihilationist's linguistic argument, says:

> The most common term translated "destroy" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *abad*. It is used to describe the fate of the wicked, as in, for example, Proverbs 11:10. But should we understand this destruction to mean total annihilation?
>
> It is clear from other Old Testament passages using this word that *abad* need not mean annihilation. The word has a range of meaning. For example, Numbers 21:29 says that the people of Chemosh were "destroyed" (*abad*). But this is a reference to their being sold into slavery, not to their annihilation. In 1 Samuel 9:3 and 20, the word is used in reference to Saul's "lost donkeys" (*athonoth abadoth*). In this context, the word means "lost," not "annihilated." In Psalm 31:12, a vessel is "broken" (*abad*), not annihilated. Here, the meaning is that the vessel is rendered unfit for use, not that it has lapsed into nonexistence. It simply is not true that *abad*, "without exception," must mean annihilation.[15]

When we look to the uses of these words in connection with the righteous, we clearly do not see them being zapped out of existence, therefore, on what ground do we think that it means the wicked are zapped out of existence? But this is not the only thing which we have, we have already reviewed texts which teach that the torment and punishment will go on without end. And punishment presupposes consciousness. Therefore, this terminology does not support the annihilation of the soul or body. Their linguistic argument from the New Testament is likewise unconvincing. They point to the word commonly translated with "destroy" as evidence of annihilation. The Greek verb ἀπόλλυμι (*apollumi*, G622) which basically means "destroy", does not support extinction or non-existence. Charles Hodge observed:

> To destroy is to ruin. The nature of that ruin depends on the nature of the subject of which it is predicated. A thing is ruined when it is rendered unfit for use; when it is in such a state that it can no longer answer the end for which it was designed. A ship at sea, dismasted, rudderless, with its sides battered in, is ruined, but not annihilated. It is a ship still. A man destroys himself when he ruins his health, squanders his property, debases his character, and renders himself unfit to act his part in life. A soul is utterly and forever destroyed when it is reprobated, alienated from God, rendered a fit companion only for the devil and his angels. This is a destruction a thousandfold more fearful than annihilation.[16]

We must also note the wide range of meaning of "destroy", and with that, Alan W. Gomes helps us:

> As Reymond points out, Luke 15:8-9 uses the word to describe the lost but existing coin. In Luke 15:4 and 6 it describes the lost but existing sheep. The prodigal (but existing) son is described by this term in Luke 15:17, 24. Murray Harris cites other passages, such as John 11:50, Acts 5:37, 1 Corinthians 10:9-10, and Jude 11, where the concept of destruction (*apoleia*) or perishing (*apolusthai*) need not imply annihilation. Indeed, as Albrecht Oepke remarks in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, "What is meant here [in passages speaking of divine judgment] is not a simple extinction of existence, but an everlasting state of torment and death."[15]

Another proof that destruction does not mean the cessation of existence comes from Robert A. Peterson, who notes that

> there is biblical evidence that the "destruction" of God's enemies is their endless punishment. In Revelation 17:8, 11 "destruction" (apoleia) is prophesied for "the beast." Two chapters later the beast and false prophet are "thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (Rev. 19:20). John teaches that after Satan is cast into this lake, he, the beast, and the false prophet, "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). The beast's "destruction," therefore, is not annihilation, but eternal punishment.[8]

Therefore, the idea of destruction, biblically, does not mean non-existence.

Atonement For Sin

Another argument for endless punishment comes from the fact that the only Person Who satisfied the wrath of God was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only propitiation spoken of in the Bible. He is the only Sacrifice which satisfies the wrath of God and turns His anger from us. Nowhere in the Bible do we get the idea that man can atone for his own sins without the Savior, nor is second-chance salvation taught in Scripture. My point here is that the biblical teaching is that Christ alone has satisfied the wrath of God for the elect. Therefore, the reprobate will have to answer for their sins, unshielded from the wrath of God through which they will suffer everlasting destruction. Since man cannot atone for his owns sins, therefore his punishment is never-ending. Couple to that the nature of his sins against an infinitely holy God. Our modern culture has no sense about the depths or seriousness of sin or of the standard of righteousness. If sins against earthly authorities are sometimes punished severely, how much more sins against an infinitely holy God? We must understand that each and every sin is, first of all, a sin against God (Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:21) and every sin is a transgression of His holy standard (1 John 3:4) and a point for which we must give an account. But since the sinner has not received Christ, he stands unprotected from the wrath of God before the Throne of Judgment. Since the sinner cannot atone for himself through his death or suffering, therefore he will suffer forever, without ever atoning for his sins, as a just punishment from God, against Whom he has sinned and rebelled. We do not go by our measurements of justice or our feelings, we must go by the infallible Word of God. Therefore, there is no need to repeat the most basic objection against Hell, in that it is inconsistent with God's love.

Unchanging Nature of the Damned

Finally, an unspoken assumption must be made clear in these discussions. Inherit in any doctrine of temporary punishment is the idea that sinners are repentant or made better by the punishment. In the comments of Gill on 2 Thessalonians 1:9 which we cited above, we read an important argument which is often missed:

> Sin being committed against an infinite and eternal Being, will be infinite in its duration; nor will it cease to be in the persons punished, who will **not be in the least reformed or purged from sin by punishment**; which will make the continuance of it just and necessary.

Their sin is not only committed against the Majesty of Heaven, and thus deserves severe punishment. But their sinning does not stop in Hell. Hell is punishment not rehabilitation. Unrestrained sinners do not become repentant when they're under the judgment of God. Scripture tells us the reaction of sinners at the judgments of God. Revelation 9:20-21 says:

> The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, 21 **nor did they repent** of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

They are under the eschatological wrath of God and see it as the wrath of God and do not repent. Nothing can cause a fallen man to repent except the grace of God. In Revelation 16:9, the acknowledgment that it came from God is made even more clear:

> They were scorched by the fierce heat, and **they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues**. They **did not repent and give him glory**.

Revelation 16:11 adds that they "**cursed the God of heaven** for their pain and sores. They **did not repent of their deeds**." They understand that their punishment is coming from God and they do not do the only sensible thing—repent and give Him glory—but they choose to remain in sin. This is the eschatological wrath of God on earth, how much worse in Hell when *all* restraint is gone? The condition of the wicked will not be reformed by the punishment. In fact, from these verses the opposite seems to be the case. In Revelation 22:11, near the end of the book, we read:

> Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

On this side of eternity, our condition in sin is never fixed for we can be saved by the grace of God. But on the other side of eternity, our condition is fixed. This seems to be describing the condition of man *after* the Last Judgment which fits with what we have seen elsewhere in the book concerning man's reaction to God's judgment. Albert Barnes comments on this passage:

> At the close of this book, and at the close of the whole volume of revealed truth, it was proper to declare, in the most solemn manner, that when these events were consummated, everything would be fixed and unchanging; that all who were then found to be righteous would remain so forever; and that none who were impenitent, impure, and wicked, would ever change their character or condition. That this is the meaning here seems to me to be plain; and this sentiment accords with all that is said in the Bible of the final condition of the righteous and the wicked...Every assurance is held out in the Bible that the righteous will be secure in holiness and happiness, and that there will be no danger - no possibility - that they will fall into sin, and sink to woe; and by the same kind of arguments by which it is proved that their condition will be unchanging, is it demonstrated that the condition of the wicked will be unchanging also. The argument for the eternal punishment of the wicked is as strong as that for the eternal happiness of the righteous; and if the one is open to doubt, there is no security for the permanence of the other.[4]

Conclusion

These things still convince me of the endless punishment of the reprobate.

The Praises Of Heaven

While we generally find it very hard to praise God for His judgments, Heaven does not. Several times we read in the Apocalypse of this fact. In chapter 11 after the Final Judgment, Heaven's praise is the following:

> Rev. 11:17-18 saying, "**We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty**, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 18 The nations raged, but **your wrath came**, and the time for **the dead to be**

judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for **destroying the destroyers of the earth**."

Heaven praises God for His power to reign, for His wrath which came against the wicked, for the Final Judgment and for "destroying the destroyers of the earth." The destruction of the wicked, a point for which God is praised, is that of unending punishment, yet Heaven still praises God for that. Just before the seven plagues and bowls are unleashed, Heaven praises God saying, "**Just and true are your ways**, O King of the nations!" (Rev. 15:3). His judgments and His righteousness will be a reason that "All nations will come and worship you, for **your righteous acts have been revealed**" (Rev. 15:4). In the next chapter, with the third bowl of God's wrath, an angel declares: "**Just are you, O Holy One**, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. **It is what they deserve!**" (Rev 16:5-6). God is justified in His judgments because He has given them exactly what they deserve. Such is the mentality of Heaven respecting the judgments of God. While we may have difficulty in acknowledging that God brings judgment in our lands and in our world, Heaven praises Him for that very fact. God is praised not because He's a meanie, but because He is Just. God is praised for His justice which repays the wicked exactly what they deserve, and the standard of justice is Himself (1Sam. 2:3). Lastly, the angel adds, "It is what they deserve!" They've got exactly what they deserve. God did not punish them beyond their sin or compromised His holiness, but He gave them exactly what they deserve. Finally, a voice from Heaven agrees with what the angel had said:

Rev. 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, **true and just are your judgments!**"

Just as God was described as Just, so likewise His judgments reflect His character.

At the judgment and destruction of Babylon, the angel, showing John this vision, says: **Rejoice over her, O heaven**, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" (Rev. 18:20). Babylon represents the world in its fallen state and its opposition to God and His people. The saints *should* rejoice at the judgment of Babylon, this would include rejoicing at the judgment of the wicked. In chapter 6, we encounter martyred saints in the Intermediate State who urge upon God to "judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 6:11). And in Revelation 18, their prayers are finally answered with the judgment upon Babylon who is said to be "drunk with the blood of the saints" (Rev. 17:6) and in whom "was found the blood of prophets and of saints" (Rev. 18:24). While the saints should rejoice because judgment is given in their favor, the people of the world—those who belong to Babylon and who have benefited from her—mourn for her destruction and judgment (e.g. Rev. 18:15-19). In the next chapter, we have Heaven answering the angel's call to praise God:

Rev. 19:1-3 After this I heard what seemed to be the **loud voice of a great multitude in heaven**, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for **his judgments are true and just**; for he has **judged the great prostitute** who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has **avenged on her the blood of his servants**." 3 Once more they cried out, "**Hallelujah**! **The smoke from her goes up forever and ever**."

Heaven has no problem in praising God for His judgments against the great whore of Babylon, the wicked world system, which is tormented (Rev. 18:10, 15). Heaven is happy and is occupied with joy and praise of God, because God is just and He has demonstrated that through His judgment of the great prostitute. Furthermore, God is praised for answering the prayers of the martyred saints in Revelation 6:11. They even praise God for the smoke which goes up from her forever and ever. This expression is used in Revelation 14:11 to speak of the unceasing torment of the reprobate, and therefore it is very interesting that this is a point for which God is praised. Now having mentioned Revelation 14, we see there that the torment of the wicked takes place "in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10). We have reason to believe that if the angels can see it, redeemed men can see it too. For one, the Hell before the Final Judgment, Hades, was visible for Abraham and Lazarus in Heaven. Second, Isaiah 66:24, whose description the Lord Jesus applies to Hell in Mark 9:48, says that the worshipers of God will "go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me." Hell will serve as a contrast between the great justice and wrath of God, and the great grace and love of God.

Jesus The Tormentor

The Bible teaches that both men (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:9-11; 20:15; 21:8), as well as fallen angels/demons (Rev. 20:10; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6), will be inhabitants of Hell. They are in Hell, not because of correction, but because of a punitive punishment for their sins. The question which we must ask is: Who is the one who will punish them? The popular idea is that Satan and his demons torment the sinners in Hell. Strangely, I still haven't encountered that idea in the Bible. What I believe the Bible teaches is that God is the One who inflicts the punishment upon the wicked in Hell. Although this seems emotionally difficult, but what else can we say? God is the offended party and He will inflict the punishment.

Several times when the Lord Jesus encountered demons they told Him not to "torment" them (Mark 5:7; Matt 8:29; Luke 8:28). This is very strange and it is evidence that the usual idea of "demons torturing people in Hell" is incorrect and with no biblical support. The demons shudder from the Lord Jesus, their Judge and Tormentor. The demons beg Him saying, "I adjure you by God, **do not torment me**" (Mark 5:7). A group of demons is terrified at the presence of Christ and inquires, "Have you come here to **torment us** before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). The demons acknowledge that it is Christ with Whom they have to deal and it is Christ who will inflict punishment upon them. The same word is used with reference to the worshipers of the beast (Rev. 14:10), i.e., the reprobate, and also the Devil, beast and false prophet (Rev. 20:10). Their Judge and Tormentor is the Lord Jesus Christ.

An important passage about the punishment of reprobate humans for our purpose is 2 Thessalonians 1. There we read:

> 2 Thess. 1:7-9 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 **in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance** on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of **eternal destruction**, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of his might,

The revelation of Christ will bring the judgment upon the wicked. He will come to kill off the wicked. His robe is dipped in blood (Rev. 19:13), symbolizing the victory against His enemies. The Lord Jesus will come with fire and inflict vengeance on all the reprobate. Their destruction and their punishment will be because of Christ's *Apokalupsis*. Then we have in v. 9 the wicked suffering "the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might". We've looked at this passage above in reference to the *duration* of Hell-torments, but now we want to inquire about whence the destruction comes. Most Bible translations indicate in their translation that the wicked are "away from the presence of the Lord", which is true only in one sense, i.e., from His blissful and merciful presence. As God is Omnipresent, there is no escape for the sinner from the presence of God which will torment him. **Proverbs 15:11** says, "Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!" **Job 26:6** says, "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering." **Psalm 139:8** says, "If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" The last reference is very significant because it contrasts Heaven (above) and Sheol (beneath), and it states that God is everywhere and anywhere we go (**see here for more on Sheol**). God *is* in fact in Hell, but His presence is very different from His presence in Heaven. With the phrase "away from" the ESV has a marginal reading which says "Or *destruction that comes from",* indicating that the preposition ἀπό (*apo,* G575) can either indicate cause or separation. I believe the meaning to be causative, in other words, the passage is saying that their eternal destruction came from the Lord's presence. Verse 9 explicitly states what is implicit in v. 8. Not only their initial destruction is caused by Christ at His Second Coming, but their suffering "the punishment of eternal destruction" likewise comes from the presence of the Lord, since He is the offended party. Joseph Thayer lists the use of *apo* in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 as indicating "the efficient cause" and explains it as "ὄλεθρον ἀπό προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου destruction proceeding from the (incensed, wrathful) countenance of the Lord"[17]. The HCSB and KJV seem to support this interpretation which say:

> KJV Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord**, and from the glory of his power;
>
> HCSB These will pay the penalty of **eternal destruction from the Lord's presence** and from His glorious strength

With these translations, it is easier to understand the "destruction" to be coming from the presence of God, than the "away from the presence of the Lord" of the ESV. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown note on this phrase: 'the sentence emanating from Him in person, sitting as Judge (Bengel). But thus "presence of the Lord" would be a circumlocution for the personal Lord. Rather, driving them far from Him (Mat 25:41; Rev 6:16; Rev 12:14 : cf. Isa 2:10; Isa 2:19; 1Pe 3:12).'[18] Johann Albrecht Bengel commented on this passage, saying:

> Ἀπὸ, *from*) It is a *judicial procedure* from the Divine *presence* itself, that will inflict punishment upon them. □□□□, from the face. Devils will not be the tormentors; for even in this life bad men are not punished by devils, but rather by good angels: and in Psa 78:49, the phrase, angels of (bringing) evil, may even denote good angels.[4] Exo 12:23; 2Sa 24:16.—ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΥ, *the face*) This face will be intolerable to them; they shall not see it, but they shall be made to feel it. *Face* and *glory* are generally parallel.—ἰσχύος, *of His might*) Lay aside your fierceness (haughty confidence of 'might') ye wicked men![19]

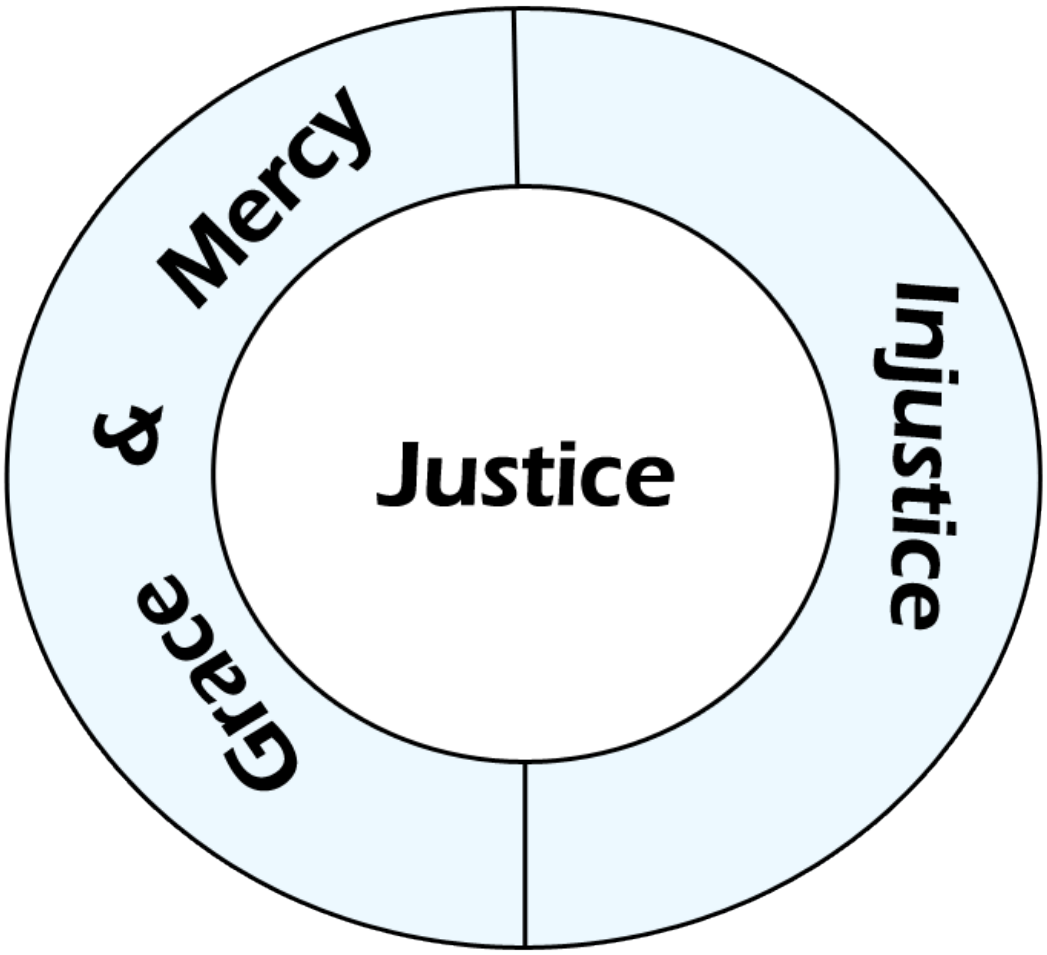
The phrase ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου (*apo prosopou tou kyriou,* from the face of the Lord) is also used in Acts 3:20, in which "the presence of the Lord" is a cause of the "times of refreshing" which would come and signifies God's

gracious face. The wicked in Revelation 6:16 want to hide from the "from the face [ἀπὸ προσώπου, *apo prosopou*] of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb". In this passage, the face or presence of God is connected with the wrath of the Lamb. To be in the presence or before the face of God in the context of Revelation 6:16 is not good! Even Heinrich Meyer, who disagrees with us, says that "there is an essential inconvenience to this second mode of interpretation [which sees *apo* as causative], inasmuch as by its assumption without the introduction of a new idea there is only a repetition in other words of what has already been said in 2Th 1:7-8 from ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει [in the revelation] to διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν [suffer justice]; the whole of the 9th verse would only contain αἰώνιον [eternal] as a new point."[20] Basically, our idea that the wicked receive their punishment stands on the ground of v. 8, even if v. 9 is to be understood merely of separation and not *also* cause, for we do not separate both when the "presence" is properly defined.

The Lord Jesus, being God and Man, representative of the Father, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is the offended party Who will inflict punishment both upon reprobate angels and men.

Manifestation Of His Justice And Grace

Hell is a manifestation of God's justice and is His wrath, as He has desired in Romans 9:21-24. God wants to show both His fierce anger and His mind-blowing grace. His fierce anger is displayed against those who did not obey the gospel of our Lord, nor sought the face of God for their sins. On the other hand, there is another group, the elect, chosen from before the foundation of the earth, who likewise, on their own, deserve to be under His fierce wrath, but are not. The elect are delivered from the wrath of God by the blood of the Lamb (Rom. 5:9), and they receive mercy and grace, something which God is never ever obligated to give. The reason for God giving these people grace and for having chosen them before the creation of the world is "to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:6). The one group, the reprobate, receive justice; while the other group, the elect, receive mercy. R. C. Sproul explains the two categories of justice and non-justice with the following diagram:



There is strict justice that demands the punishment of sin and there is non-justice. Non-justice includes injustice and grace. Injustice is clearly wrong and God is not unjust, and therefore, He is not glorified by being unjust. But He is glorified and praised for being just (**see above The Praises Of Heaven**), and likewise merciful (e.g., Ps. 28:6; 116:1-2). His glory in non-justice is not by injustice, but by mercy and grace. Mercy and grace are a category outside of strict justice, but it is not

injustice. We receive mercy and grace and are justified because of a Substitute who received strict justice on behalf of the elect. In this God is glorified both in His justice and in His grace. For He is shown to be severe against those who dishonor Him, giving His enemies what they deserve; and on the other hand showing amazing grace and condescending to redeem, and thereby glorifying His mercy and grace (Rom. 11:22). God has desired to show all the range of His attributes, from His justice and wrath to His grace, mercy, and love, all of which are holy, holy, holy.

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§3 Certainly Persuaded That There Shall Be A Day Of Judgment

3. As Christ would have us to **be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment,** both to deter all men from sin, **1** and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity, **2** so will he have the **day unknown to men,** that they may shake off all carnal security, and be **always watchful,** because **they know not at what hour** the Lord will come, **3** and may ever be prepared to say, **Come Lord Jesus; come quickly.** **4** Amen.
    1. 2 Cor. 5:10-11
    2. 2 Thess. 1:5-7
    3. Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40
    4. Rev. 22:20

The thought of **a day of judgment** should **deter all men from sin** (2 Cor. 5:10-11) as there will come the time when they will have to give an account for each and every sinful action and thought (e.g., Matt. 12:36). Therefore, it is proper to fear and keep the day of judgment in mind. Christians should not fear the day of judgment (1 John 4:17). But it is also a source of great **consolation** for **the godly in their adversity** (2 Thess. 1:5-7) as we know that we will be vindicated and our enemies punished for what they have done to us. It is with this thought in mind that we accept suffering at the hands of the wicked and do not resist evil with evil, but with good (Rom. 12:17-21). It has pleased the Lord, to **shake off all carnal security** and to cause us to **be always watchful** (Mark 13:35-37) to make **the day unknown to men** (Matt. 24:36). He has not revealed it to us so that the wicked would not be prepared and the righteous may always be watchful for the Lord's coming and **ever be prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen** (Rev. 22:20).

Christ, the God-Man, spoke more about Hell than Heaven, because He knew it is terrible and he forewarns us about where our choices will bring us. Therefore, it is a mercy from God that He has given us special revelation about this terrible place called Hell in which the ungodly will suffer without end, so that we would be saved from it through the Savior. Paul, after speaking about the judgment seat of Christ, says, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others" (2 Cor. 5:11). He knows how terrible it is to be a subject of God's condemnation and of His punishment. Paul knows what he was saved from, he was saved from God and from His holy wrath. Hebrews 10:31 gives a sobering warning: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He is our Judge and He will inflict the punishment and it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God, but this God is described as the true and *living God.* According to the Bible and to Jonathan Edwards, this God is an Angry God against sinners, therefore, Sinners [are] in the Hands of an Angry God outside of Christ. There is no protection from the wrath of God outside of Christ Who bore His wrath in our place. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord and knowing what the Bible says about the afterlife for the ungodly, we should be more earnest in our evangelism and in persuading people to be reconciled with God.

On the Day of Judgment, the Lord's people will be in joy, in peace, and have confidence as we saw in paragraph 1, as they will be vindicated and rewarded for their works done in faith through the Spirit. Therefore, the thought of the Day of Judgment brings encouragement to the believer in that their works are not in vain and that God works everything according to His will and will reward them on the last day. Moreover, the Day of Judgment gives the believers encouragement in enduring trials in this life, knowing that they will be vindicated and their foes will be judged on the last day. They will see the downfall of their enemies and their enemies will see the glory and praise of the children of God. We are the children of the King, and therefore anyone who "messes" with us, "messes" with the King.

Until He comes, we are to engage in the business of our Master, doing His work and expecting His return, although we know not at what hour He will come. The Lord was explicit that no man will know the day or hour of His Second Coming (e.g., Matt. 24:36). Therefore, we should always be awake (Mark 13:35-37), and busy with the Master's work, so that when He returns, He will see us doing His work. We don't want the Master to come back and see us sleeping and neglecting His work. Therefore, we should always be watchful and in the expectation that He would come, crying from the bottom of our hearts and longingly saying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

...he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

(Acts 17:31)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. a, b, c, d *John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
3. ^ *John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
4. a, b, c, d *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
5. ^ *Alan W. Gomes. Evangelicals and the Annihilation of Hell Part One. Bible Research.*
6. a, b *Jonathan Edwards. The Eternity of Hell's Torments.*
7. ^ *The Pulpit Commentary. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
8. a, b *Robert A. Peterson. The Dark Side of Eternity: Hell as Eternal Conscious Punishment. Christian Research Institute.*
9. ^ *Charles J. Ellicott. Commentary For English Readers. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
10. ^ *G. K. Beale, David H. Campbell. Revelation: A Shorter Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 2015). p. 305.*
11. ^ *As quoted in Alan W. Gomes. Evangelicals and the Annihilation of Hell Part One.*
12. ^ *Robert L. Dabney. Systematic Theology. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985). p. 854.*
13. ^ *Charles Hodge. Systematic Theology: Volume 3: Soteriology. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. 1999, originally 1872). p. 877.*
14. ^ *As quoted in Stephen E. Alexander, Flaws in the Arguments for Annihilationism.*
15. a, b *Alan W. Gomes. Evangelicals and the Annihilation of Hell Part Two. (Bible Research, 1991). Footnote references removed.*
16. ^ *Hodge, Systematic Theology. p. 3:874.*
17. ^ *Thayer's Greek Lexicon in Bible Hub, 575. apo.*
18. ^ *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Full). Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
19. ^ *Johann Albrecht Bengel. Gnomon of the NT. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
20. ^ *Heinrich Meyer. Critical and Exegetical NT. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc. Words within square brackets supplied.*