

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

### Theological Presuppositions Shared with the Annihilationist

1. At death, the souls of both the righteous and the wicked will undergo judgment and proceed to enter a place of conscious joy (heaven) or a place of conscious torment (hell). [Lk. 16:20-31; Heb. 23:23]
    - We agree that physical death does not involve annihilation, but separation.
    - We agree that the souls of wicked men are *presently* undergoing conscious torment in hell.
  2. At the last day, the bodies of both the righteous and the wicked will be reunited with their souls, at which time they will both stand before the final judgment seat of Christ. [Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15]
    - We agree that the bodies of the wicked remain part of the material creation and will be resurrected at the last day.
    - We agree that when God resurrects the bodies of the wicked at the last day, he will cast them, body and soul, into hell.
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### Areas of Disagreement

1. The annihilationist would say that the biblical words “destroy” and “perish” imply that God will (at some future time, after the final judgment) annihilate the wicked, ending their conscious existence.
  2. The eternal separationist (i.e. traditional view) would say that the biblical words “destruction” and “perish” do not indicate annihilation or cessation of consciousness, but conscious separation.
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## Common Hebrew and Greek Words for “Destroy” and “Perish”

*All of which ordinarily convey the idea of conscious separation or exile.*

### **ABAD** (Hebrew: Perish, Destroy, etc.)

1. **Conscious separation or exile from the earth, the body, and all living men (via physical death).**
  - **Num. 16:33**, They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.
  - **Job 18:17-18**, His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.
  - **Psalms 21:10**, Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.
  - **Psalms 31:12**, I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.
2. **Conscious separation or exile from the place of God’s blessing.**
  - **Dt. 4:26-29**, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.
  - **Dt. 8:19-20**, And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.
  - **Dt. 30:18-20**, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

- **Ezek. 28:12-19**, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

### 3. **Conscious separation or exile from one's proper domain.**

- **Ps. 119:176**, I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.
  - **1 Sam. 9:3**, And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.
  - **1 Sam. 9:20**, And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?
  - **Jer. 50:6**, My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.
  - **Ezek. 34:2-6**, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.
  - **Ezek. 34:16**, I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.
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**SHAMED** (Hebrew: destroy)

**1. Conscious separation or exile from the earth, the body, and all living men via physical death.**

- **Gen. 34:30**, And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.
- **Ps. 37:34-38**, Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.
- **Josh. 23:15**, Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

**2. Conscious separation or exile from the place of God's blessing (mainly the Promised Land).**

- **Deut. 6:14-15**, Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.
- **Dt. 28:20f**, The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. **[36-37]** The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. **[45-46]** Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. **[64-68]** And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.
- **Deut. 33:27**, The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.
- **Isa. 13:9**, Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.
- **Isa. 48:18-19**, O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. Go ye forth of Babylon...

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### **APOLUMI** [Greek: destroy, lose; consistently used to translate Hebrew ABAD]

#### **1. The wicked man's final destination in hell. (both sides would agree on this)**

- **Matt. 7:13**, Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.
- **Matt. 10:28**, And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- **John 3:15-16**, That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
- **Rom. 9:22**, What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.
- **Phil. 3:18-19**, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.
- **1 Tim. 6:9**, But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.
- **2 Pet. 2:1**, But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.
- **2 Pet. 3:9**, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

#### **2. Conscious separation or exile from the earth, the body, and all living men (via physical death).**

- **Matt. 2:13**, And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
- **Matt. 12:14**, Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.
- **Jn. 2:19**, Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.
- **1 Cor. 10:9-10**, Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

#### **3. Conscious separation or exile from God's comfortable presence (in hell).**

- **Mk. 1:23-24**, And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
  - **Mt. 8:29**, And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?
  - **Lk. 8:31**, And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep [abyss, bottomless pit].

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

### 4. Conscious separation or exile from God's presence, either in this life or the next (lost condition).

- **Matt. 10:6**, But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
  - **Matt. 15:24**, But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
  - **Matt. 18:8-14**, Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.
  - **Lk. 9:25**, For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?
  - **Lk. 15:4-6**, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.
  - **Lk. 19:10**, For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
  - **John 6:39**, And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.
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## OLETHROS [Greek: destruction, death, desolation]

### 1. Conscious separation or exile from the earth, the body, and all living men (via physical death).

- **Heb. 11:28**, Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

### 2. Conscious separation or exile from God's comfortable presence (in hell).

- **1 Thes. 5:2-3**, For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.
  - **2 Thes. 1:7-9**, And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;
  - **1 Tim. 6:9**, But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
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## Five Additional Arguments Against Annihilationism

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

1. In Revelation 14:10-13, we're told that those who worship the beast "*shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*" There are several reasons why this passage must speak of eternal conscious torment:
  - a. The wine of God's wrath and indignation is poured out without mixture, meaning that it is not diluted or mitigated in any sense. Now, keep in mind that God is immutable and that the sin of the wicked can never be removed (that is, apart from salvation in Christ, who is no longer available to them). As such, God always sees their sin; He is always indignant against it; that indignation always produces unmixed wrath; and that this wrath always results in conscious torment. To change this would be to change God Himself.
  - b. The stated purpose of the fire and brimstone is not to consume or annihilate, but to torment. To understand this fire as a fire of annihilation rather than a fire of conscious torment is to impose foreign concepts on the text.
  - c. The smoke that ascends forever is not called the "smoke of their annihilation," but the "smoke of their torment". Torment, by definition, must be consciously experienced by its subject or recipient. If at any point, the recipient of the torment ceases to exist (or ceases to consciously experience the torment), the torment itself ceases to exist. This is where we get the notion that death can "put a man out of his misery" No consciousness, no torment. In John's description of hell (see above), the smoke is clearly a byproduct of the conscious torment experienced by the wicked. To say that the smoke continues to ascend long after the torment has ended completely undermines both the text and its imagery. When fire has consumed a thing, the fire ceases to smoke. The everlasting ascent of the smoke proves the everlasting continuance of the fire, thus implying the everlasting continuance of the torment. The doctrine of annihilationism is entirely inconsistent with this passage.
  - d. Annihilationism teaches that the smoke of the wicked's torment ascends long after the wicked have been zapped into unconscious nothingness. By contrast, the text speaks of them as perpetually restless: "they have no rest". Restlessness is a conscious state of mind. If these individuals were annihilated, what sense would it make to add that they have no rest? Only a conscious being seeks rest. Indeed, verse 13 speaks of rest as a metaphor for the heavenly experience of the saints, who "rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." The contrast here is between those conscious beings that *have* rest and those conscious beings who very much *desire* to have rest but are *denied* it as a punishment for their wickedness. This is precisely the point that Jesus makes in his parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:20-31), in which we read: "*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*" (vv. 23-26).

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

- e. It is true that certain other passages of Scripture use similar “eternal smoke” imagery to describe judgments that are clearly temporal and historical in nature (e.g. Isa. 34:9-10; Rev. 19:3). However, it must be noted that **(1)** In each of these instances, the emphasis is upon the fiery destruction of *entire cities*, not upon the conscious torment of *individual sinners*. Moreover, these judgments occur *in history*, not at the *consummation* of history. **(2)** These lesser historical judgments are intended to prefigure the final judgment in the same way that lesser historical figures such as David, Solomon, and Jonah prefigured the far greater One, Jesus Christ. **(3)** While the New Testament authors occasionally use *temporal* judgments to illustrate the *final* judgment (Lk. 17:27-34), they also give us clear warrant to distinguish between the two (Matt. 11:21-24). **(4)** Although John’s description of hell employs imagery which is comparable to these other passages, we cannot import more from the other passages than is implied in the immediate context. The very fact that John refers to individual sinners and the “smoke of their torment” (a concept absent in the other passages) should itself demonstrate that this text is not a carbon copy of the others.
- f. Not only are the wicked without rest, but they “have no rest day or night”. This phrase “day or night” indicates that the torments of hell are neither temporary nor intermittent, but perpetual and constant. Revelation 20:10 says this: “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*” Conversely, Revelation 4:8 informs us that “the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Likewise, Revelation 7:15 says of the righteous that they are “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” Why would the conscious torment of the wicked in hell and the conscious joy of the saints in heaven be described in such identical terms if one were eternal and the other merely temporary?
2. Another passage that creates insurmountable problems for Annihilationism is Revelation 20:10-15, which says this: “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” Consider the following observations:
- According to Matthew 25:41, Jesus will declare to the wicked (at the final judgment), “*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*” The devil and his fallen angels are spirits; they do not have bodies. Hence, if the “everlasting fire” of hell was designed specifically to “torment” these immaterial spirit-beings “day and night for ever and ever,” then we can be certain that this fire does not have the capacity to annihilate immaterial spirits or souls. Otherwise, it could not carry out its God-ordained function of eternally tormenting the demons. Moreover, if indeed this “everlasting fire” does not have the capacity to annihilate immaterial spirits or souls, then it certainly does not have the capacity to annihilate the human consciousness of eternally condemned sinners. Rather, it is designed to “torment” such beings “day and night for ever and ever.” In fact, the

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

text is quite clear that when the devil is cast into this lake of fire, there are already other human entities there waiting for him: the beast and the false prophet. Then afterward, at the last judgment, we're told that every condemned sinner will be cast into this same lake of fire, which (as we've seen) does not have the capacity to annihilate the demons, much less a human soul. I realize that this does not address the issue of physical bodily suffering in hell, but it does establish that hell does not entail the annihilation of man's immaterial consciousness (i.e. soul).

3. The Scriptures teach that both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected at the last day and sent to their respective destinations for all eternity. As Paul declared, "*there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*" (Acts 24:15). Jesus Himself asserted that "*the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" Consider the following observations:
  - a. The fact that the wicked will be resurrected at the last day creates problems for Annihilationism (which is perhaps one reason why the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses" deny it!). Why would God give the wicked resurrection bodies only to then annihilate them soon afterward? Why are the resurrection bodies of the righteous indestructible, yet those of the wicked may be annihilated? Such a view seems to create more questions than it actually answers.
  - b. Annihilationism tends to view the terms "life" and "death" strictly in terms of existence and non-existence. For the annihilationist, the believer's "eternal life" means that he will exist perpetually, while the unbeliever's "eternal death" means that he will cease to exist. This overly simplistic understanding of the terms "life" and "death" cannot account for the language here used by Jesus. Notice that *both* the righteous and the wicked are said to experience "resurrection," which implies that *both* will continue to *live* or *exist* in body and soul. The contrast, therefore, between the "resurrection of life" and the "resurrection of condemnation" cannot be a contrast between existence and non-existence, since both are resurrected and both exist. Rather, the contrast relates to the kind of life experienced by each. The righteous man will exist in a state of exalted glory, living the abundant, everlasting "life" that he was created to live, in communion with God and His people in Christ. The wicked man, on the other hand, will exist in a state of deserved torment and damnation, separated from the comfortable presence of His God. The fact that this damnation (or condemnation) is contrasted with life means that it is a form of death (or separation from God). This is the damnation that is elsewhere referred to as "eternal" (Mk. 3:29).
4. The Scriptures sometimes refer to the "everlasting destruction" deserved by the wicked (2 Thes 1:9) as "death" (Rom. 6:23). This is the death that Christ suffered as a substitute for believing sinners (Rom. 5:8-9). This means that Christ experienced an "everlasting [i.e. infinite] destruction". According to annihilationism, the "everlasting destruction" of the wicked amounts to temporary suffering, followed by the total annihilation of body and soul. On this view, in order for Jesus to suffer the punishment due to sinners, He would have needed to undergo temporary suffering, followed by total annihilation. Obviously, this is not how things went down at the cross. On the cross, Jesus experienced two things: separation and infinite wrath. Only He (because of His omnipotent deity) could endure such infinite punishments in a limited space of time. If endured by a mere finite man, this infinite suffering would last for an infinite duration of time (that is, for eternity). But for a human nature united to the infinite Son of God, such suffering could be fully satisfied in a limited space of time. Similarly, only Jesus Christ (because of His infinite value as God's Son) could pay the infinite price of our sin. Hence, according to 'eternal

## Thoughts on Annihilationism

separationism' (the historic, confessional view of hell and judgment), Christ endured the full force of what we deserved as sinners: "everlasting destruction," consisting in infinite wrath, away from God's comfortable presence [1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Thes. 1:8-9].

5. Apart from regeneration, the natural man is sinfully depraved in every aspect of his nature, at vicious enmity with God (whom he hates), and cannot but displease God in all his thoughts, words, and deeds (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 19:17; Rom. 1:30; 8:7-8; Eph. 2:1-3; Heb. 11:6; etc). Since the final resurrection of the wicked does not involve spiritual regeneration, it is apparent that they will continue in this totally depraved condition while in hell. In fact, there is every reason to believe that entrance into hell will mark the end of that common grace whereby God has restrained the wickedness of man in order to preserve the world from premature destruction (Gen. 8:21-22). In other words, the wicked in hell will be permitted to grow ever-increasingly vile (in accordance with the depraved lusts of their hearts), since the restraints of God's gracious providence will no longer be in effect. Now, IF "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23), and IF "because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph 5:6), then we must conclude that each and every sin committed by the wicked in hell will *itself* merit God's wrath and require the sinner to undergo *further* conscious torment. For this reason, even if we grant that each sin merits only a *finite* (not an *infinite*) experience of conscious torment, there is still no way to escape the reality of everlasting conscious torment. This is because the sinner in hell never stops committing the very sins that will increase his guilt before God. The notion that God would annihilate a sinner before he has "paid the uttermost farthing" for every one of his sins is inconsistent with the justice of God. Hence, even on this faulty view, a sinner could never be relieved of his conscious torment unless at some point he ceased to commit sins – something which will never actually occur, since there is no sanctifying grace available in hell. Of course, this is all for the same of argument. The fact is that we *do* believe that each *individual* sin merits an *infinite* interval of conscious torment.

According to Jesus, the wicked will ultimately be "*cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28). Both weeping and gnashing of teeth are *conscious* responses to the torment of hell and they are both *essential* to Jesus' depiction of hell.

Annihilationism, on the other hand, teaches that a time will come when hell is no longer a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. It teaches that hell will eventually be completely silent and void of all human consciousness or expression. This, as we have seen, is entirely incompatible with our Lord's own doctrine of hell. Indeed, if such had been the case, He surely never would have uttered that well known (and utterly terrifying) warning to Judas Iscariot, "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."