



We'll begin with "aion." The definition of "aion" is provided below from [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org). And, as we can see, its meaning ranges from "for ever" and "eternity" to "period of time" or "age." As we can also see, its meaning does not include any concept of a short period of time.

### 165 aiōn

Part of Speech: masculine noun

- i. for ever, an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity
- ii. the worlds, universe
- iii. period of time, age

First, when it comes to the meaning of "aion," there is one critical point that controls the entire issue. Although a strict lexical meaning does not tell us whether "aion" refers to eternity or simply a fixed period of time, the way the term is used in scripture does provide information that identifies which meaning they had in mind in certain, particular instances. To be clear, "aion" doesn't mean "forever" or "an unending duration" every time that it is used. There are times when "aion" definitely refers simply to a long, fixed period of time. For example, in Matthew 13:39 Jesus explains a parable and says, "the harvest is the end of the world." The word for "world" is "aion" and Jesus is clearly describing an "aion" that has an end. He does not mean "forever." But in the same fashion, other contextual and usage clues allow us to identify when New Testament authors did indeed intend "aion" to convey "forever."

Second, for this portion of our study we conducted a survey of every time the Greek word "aion" occurs in the New Testament. A total of 102 verses contained the word "aion." Out of these 102 verses, there are a total of 5 that use "aion" in reference to the punishment of the wicked. We have placed all 5 of those passages below for reference.

**Mark 3:29** But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never (3756) (165) forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal (166) damnation.

**2 Peter 2:17** These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever (165).

**Jude 1:13** Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever (165).

**Revelation 14:9** And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast** and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, **10 The same 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: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever (165) and ever (165): and they have no rest day nor night,** who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

**Revelation 20:10** 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 (165) and ever (165).

Before we move on to our next point, we should perhaps take a few moments to comment about the particular translation of “aion” in Mark 3. The rest of these passages consistently translate “aion” as “ever.” Of course, the English translation doesn’t in any way prove what the original New Testament author intended. But we point this out simply because at first glance Mark 3 seems to translate “aion” differently. And that probably needs to be explained. In Mark 3:29, “aion” is preceded by the Greek word “ou” (Strong’s Number 3756), which means “no, not.” The English translators interpreted “ou” and “aion” as “never” in the sense of “not ever.” One immediate question that arises here concerns whether “aion” could be translated as “a long period” instead of “ever.” We’ll find one part of the answer to that question in our next point below. Another part of the answer will come when we examine the Greek word “aionios” a little later on. But for now, we can see that by choosing the word “never” in the sense of “not ever” the English translation does essentially translate “aion” consistently with the other 4 passages.

Third, every one of the 5 passages that employ “aion” with regard to the punishment of the wicked occurs in a book that also applies “aion” with regard to either the inheritance of the saints or to God himself. Below we’ve placed each of the 5 passages side by side with other verses in the same book that use the term “aion.” When viewing these passages it should be noted that every occurrence of the English word “ever” represents “aion” in the underlying Greek (with the exception of Mark 3:29, which translated “aion” differently). (Once again, for reference the number 165 denotes the Greek word “aion” while the number 166 denotes the Greek word “aionios.”)

– Mark –

**Mark 3:29** But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never (3756) (165) forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal (166) damnation.

**Mark 10:30** But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world (165) to come eternal (166) life.

– 2 Peter 2 –

**2 Peter 2:17** These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever (165).

**2 Peter 3:18** But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever (165). Amen.

– Jude –

**Jude 1:13** Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, **to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever (165).**

**Jude 1:25** **To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever (165).** Amen.

– Revelation –

**Revelation 14:9** And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast** and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, **10 The same 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: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever (165) and ever (165): and they have no rest day nor night,** who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

**Revelation 20:10** 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 (165) and ever (165).**

**Revelation 1:6** And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; **to him be glory and dominion for ever (165) and ever (165).** Amen.

**Revelation 1:18** I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, **I am alive for evermore (165) (165),** Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

**Revelation 4:9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, **who liveth for ever (165) and ever (165),** **10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship **him that liveth for ever (165) and ever (165),** and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

**Revelation 5:13** And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, **Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever (165) and ever (165).** **14** And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped **him that liveth for ever (165) and ever (165).**

**Revelation 7:12** Saying, Amen: **Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever (165) and ever (165).** Amen.

**Revelation 10:6** And sware by **him that liveth for ever (165) and ever (165),** who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things

that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

**Revelation 11:15** And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; **and he shall reign for ever (165) and ever (165).**

**Revelation 22:5** And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and **they shall reign for ever (165) and ever (165).**

There are several points worth noting here regarding “aion.” In particular, the fact that Mark, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation all use “aion” with regard to the reward of the saints or with regard to God himself poses a problem for both annihilation and universal salvation.

Number one, the problem isn’t as pronounced in the case of Mark, which is a relatively longer New Testament book and therefore contains examples where “aion” probably refers to a fixed duration of time with a limited length, in which cases it could be compatible with annihilation and universal salvation. The parable in Mark 4:19, for instance, refers to the “cares of this world.” This phrasing is very similar to the use of “aion” in Jesus’ parable in Matthew 13:39, which explains, “the harvest is the end of the world.” In both Matthew 13:39 and Mark 4:19, the word “world” is “aion” in the Greek. And as we pointed out previously, Matthew 13 states that this “age” will “end.” The similar phrasing in Mark 4 suggests that it is also using “aion” to talk about the present age which will end at the great harvest when Jesus Christ returns to establish his kingdom. Ultimately, examples like Mark 4:19 demonstrate that Mark is flexible with regard to how he uses “aion,” including that he sometimes uses it to refer to a fixed duration of limited length just as he does here in Mark 4. Since Mark may provide examples where “aion” is intended to refer to a fixed amount of time and examples where it may be applied to an unending amount of time (such as Mark 10:30), when we arrive at passages in Mark that apply the word “aion” to Hell, it’s not necessarily definitive which meaning is intended.

Number two, unlike Mark, the books of 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation do not exhibit such flexibility with regard to the meaning of “aion.”

One, Jude and 2 Peter only use “aion” one other time. Jude 1:25 uses “aion” in reference to God where it says, “To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.” 2 Peter 3:18 also uses “aion” in reference to God where it says, “To him be glory both now and for ever.” In fact, while Peter’s second epistle only contains two uses of “aion,” his first epistle uses “aion” four additional times. In 1 Peter 1:23, he describes “the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” In 1 Peter 1:25, he says, “the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” In 1 Peter 4:11, he refers to Jesus Christ and says, “to whom

be praise and dominion for ever and ever.” And in 1 Peter 5:10-11, he again refers to Jesus Christ and says, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

Two, Revelation is a large book in the New Testament scale and it employs “aion” in 11 other verses. Similar to 2 Peter 3 and Jude 1:25, Revelation 1:6, 5:13, and 7:12 use “aion” to praise God. Revelation 1:6 says, “to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13 says, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” And Revelation 7:12 says, “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.” Revelation 1:18, 4:9-10, 5:14, 10:6, and 15:7 use “aion” in phrases that refer to Christ Jesus being “alive for evermore” or to God “living for ever and ever.” And Revelation 11:15 and 22:5 use “aion” in phrases declaring that Christ or his saints “shall reign fore ever and ever.”

Three, we can expand our survey of John’s use of “aion” beyond the book of Revelation to his Gospel and his three epistles. Between John’s Gospel and his first two epistles, there are 14 occurrences of “aion.” Out of these 14 instances, 7 describe the reward of the saints either as eternal life or never dying (John 4:14, 6:51, 58, 8:51, 52, 10:28, and 11:26). In 2 other occurrences, “aion” is used to refer to Christ continuing for ever (John 8:35 and 12:34). And 1 John 2:17 explains that although “the world passeth away” yet “the will of God abideth for ever.” That’s a total of 10 out of 14 uses that all employ “aion” in reference to eternal things, not things that end after a limited period of time. Moreover, the other 4 uses of “aion” in John’s writings don’t provide any clear counterexamples, in which “aion” refers to a limited period of time. John 9:32 uses “aion” in the phrase “Since the world began.” Here, the speaker’s point is to declare that Jesus had an ability (to heal someone born blind) which had never been seen before in all of the long, unending, continuing history of creation. Because this is the speaker’s intent, it is reasonable to conclude that the phrase “Since the world began” should be interpreted to mean “never” or “not ever.” Similarly, in John 13:8, Peter protests to Jesus, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Peter obviously intends to convey “not ever.” He clearly doesn’t mean, “Thou shalt not wash my feet for a long time, but then after that maybe you will wash them.” John 14:16 and 1 John 1:2 refer to the Comforter and truth itself “abiding for ever” with the saints. Once again, this is hardly a case where anyone could insist that “aion” refers to a limited period of time. Ultimately, regardless of how John 9, 13, 14 and 1 John 1 are categorized, John uses “aion” to mean eternity the majority of the time.

And herein lies the insurmountable problem for annihilation and universal salvation. When it comes to the application of “aion” to God’s glory, honor, power, and wisdom, no one would think that God only has these traits for a fixed, limited duration of time that will eventually come to an end. Likewise, when discussing the length of time that God lives, absolutely no one would think that “aion” refers to a limited period of time that could theoretically end. And with regard to the reward of Christ and the saints, no one would think that their reign and inheritance could theoretically only continue for a limited period and then

come to an end. When applied to God's life, God's glory and honor and power and wisdom, and to the reign and reward of Christ and his saints, "aion" must refer to "eternity." Or, to put it another way, when we consider whether Peter, Jude, and Revelation intend "aion" to mean "eternity" with regard to the punishment of the wicked, we must keep in mind that every other time they use "aion" in their writings, they mean "eternity."

These facts have two unavoidable implications.

Number one, it's not sufficient to simply say that God is an exception with regard to the meaning of "aion."

One, the vast majority of the times that Peter and the book of Revelation use "aion" it's with regard to God. A majority of the occurrences hardly counts as an exception. To the contrary, the fact that New Testament authors use "aion" in reference to God the majority of the time is the very definition of a general rule.

Two, in the two cases where "aion" describes the reign of the saints (who reign with Christ Jesus) it still means "eternity." (Although Christ hands the kingdom over to the Father at the end of the first millennium according to 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 and Revelation 20:1-15, that should not lead us to the conclusion that Jesus' reign ends or, by extension, that the reign of the saints ends either. Revelation 22:1-3 makes it clear that Jesus is still sitting on the same throne ruling with the Father for all eternity. Chapter 22:1 describes a "river of water of life" that proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And verse 3 of the same chapter describes the holy city saying that, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.") So, even when Revelation is using "aion" with regard to something other than God, such as the inheritance of the saints in Revelation 22:5, it still means "eternity." Therefore, God cannot be an exceptional case regarding the meaning of "aion."

Number two, this survey data reveals that in order for annihilation or universal salvation to be true, the only time that Jude, Peter, and Revelation do not intend "aion" to mean eternity is when they describe punishment of the wicked. But this is a clear example of the fallacy of special pleading. Wikipedia.org defines special pleading as "a form of fallacious argument that involves an attempt to cite something as an exception to a generally accepted rule, principle, etc. without justifying the exception." In this case, when it comes to the application of "aion" to the punishment of the wicked, an exception is being made regarding its normative meaning by those authors. These books universally use "aion" to refer to eternity in every other case but when it comes to the punishment of the wicked there is an exception and then suddenly meaning of "aion" switches to something that would not be appropriate in every other occurrence of "aion" in these books. Moreover, these passages which apply "aion" to the punishment of the wicked exhibit no textual details that would prohibit the normative meaning. Consequently, the exception to the normative meaning serves solely as an unwarranted means to avoid a scenario in which the punishment of the wicked is eternal. Therefore, the idea of an exception concerning the wicked must be

rejected on the grounds that it contradicts the normative usage of the term with no textual basis for creating such an exception. And remember, these are passages explicitly describing how long the wicked will be preserved in Hell and in some degree of torment! There is no hint in these texts of any reference to non-existence.

In summary regarding “aion,” we can’t have it both ways. Because these authors are so consistent with their meaning of “aion” when they are describing something other than the punishment of the wicked, we are forced to make a choice between one of two options. Either God’s glory, honor, power, and life and the reign of Jesus Christ and the reward of the saints will only last for a limited time and then end, or the punishment of the wicked is just as unending and eternal as God’s glory, honor, power, and life and as the reign of Jesus Christ and the reward of the saints. Since it is imperative to uphold that God’s life, glory, honor, and power and the reign of Jesus Christ and the saints last forever, we must conclude that the use of the same Greek word “aion” with regard to the punishment of the wicked likewise lasts forever. And consequently, the wicked cannot be annihilated in Hell nor can they eventually be reformed and released from Hell to be reconciled with God. In the words of Peter, Jude, and John, the wicked will remain tormented in fire and brimstone without rest day and night for ever without end just as God’s glory, honor, power, and reign with his saints will last for ever without end.

Number three, as we discuss the use of “aion” in passages like 2 Peter 2:17, Jude 1:13, and Revelation 14:9-11, we must avoid any attempt to reallocate the amount of time designated by “aion” from a period of conscious punishment to instead denote the amount of time the wicked will not exist after being annihilated.

One, we have seen from the definition of “aion” that at the minimum the use of “aion” in scripture denotes a period of time, never a brief or short duration. We have also seen evidence demonstrating that when John, Peter, and Jude used “aion” they meant all eternity. As such, so long as “aion” refers to the amount of time that the wicked remain alive in Hell, it is clear from the definition that they are alive in Hell for more than a matter of a few passing moments, minutes, hours, or even days before being annihilated by the fire.

Two, we have also seen earlier scriptural examples of lengthy, conscious durations in the fires of Hell both with regard to wicked angels and even deceased human beings. We saw that Revelation 9:1-2, 11 describes the army of wicked beings led by an angelic king are let up from the bottomless pit which is described as a furnace of fire filled with blackening smoke. We have also seen another example in Revelation 20:1-7 which describes the devil being cast into the bottomless pit for one thousand years and then released after the thousand years are completed. We also know from Jesus’s word in Matthew 25:41, that wicked humans are cast into the same fiery location as the devil and his angels. And lastly, we have also seen from Luke 16:19-31 and John 5:28-29 that the wicked dead go to an unpleasant, fiery location where they remain consciously alive until they hear Jesus call them forth to resurrection.

With such examples of lengthy imprisonment in Hell in view, when Peter and Jude describe wicked men being cast into “darkness” and “blackness,” we must conclude that this is the same fiery place of blackening smoke described in Revelation 9 and 20, where angels are kept alive and in prison for long durations. And consequently, since Peter, Jude, and even Revelation 14 are describing wicked men being cast into same dark, fiery furnace of Hell for an “aion,” we know that Peter, Jude, and John are using “aion” to describe the length of time that wicked men remain in the fire. Therefore, having seen scriptural examples that include similar descriptions of Hell that we find in Peter and Jude, it is inappropriate to make a switch and suggest that Peter and Jude (and Revelation) are using “aion” to describe the amount of time that the wicked will remain non-existent after annihilation rather than the amount of time that the wicked will remain in the fires of Hell.

Next, we can turn our attention to the related Greek word “aionios.” The picture with “aionios” is even more straightforward. “Aionios” occurs in 69 verses in the New Testament. But unlike “aion,” “aionios” is never used to refer to a limited period of time that will come to an end. It always denotes eternity. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon defines it as indicating either “without beginning” or “without ending” or both.

First, although “aionios” means eternity (or an unending duration of time) in all of the 69 verses where it occurs, there are 5 uses that are somewhat unusual when compared to the others and deserve special attention regarding their exact meaning.

Number one, there is only 1 passage that could potentially be compatible with annihilation, although it still offers no help whatsoever to universal salvation. In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, Paul explains that “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” then God will “recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” who “shall be punished with everlasting destruction.” If “destruction” here carries the sense of “annihilation,” then this verse would convey that the idea that the wicked will be annihilated once and for all when the Lord returns. However, there are two reasons not to interpret “destruction” in 2 Thessalonians 1 as a reference to annihilation.

One, we previously made the case that “destruction” does not refer to annihilation particularly when applied to immortal beings, such as angels, resurrected men, or even the disembodied souls of men. Instead, in cases where the forces of destruction are applied to beings with incorruptible and immortal constitutions, then the result is an unending interplay between the forces of destruction and the unyielding vigor and healing properties of the immortal being. And in that scenario, their experience of the forces of destruction never ends because their immortal existence is never terminated in the process but continues forever counterbalanced by the destructive forces. Consequently, the model that we’ve put forward can accommodate the phrase “eternal destruction” that occurs here in 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

Two, as we will see below, neither the doctrine of annihilation nor the doctrine of universal salvation will be able to accommodate the remaining 64 occurrences of “aionios” in the New Testament. Consequently, if we interpret “destruction” in 2 Thessalonians 1 as a reference to annihilation, then we will end up with one verse teaching a doctrine that is disproved by the rest of scripture. Consistency demands we interpret this 1 occurrence of “aionios” to conform with, rather than contradict, the other 64 uses of this same Greek word.”

But before we move on, let’s examine the other 4 passages where “aionios” has a meaning that falls outside otherwise universal New Testament meaning.

Number two, in Philemon 1:15 Paul expresses his hope for reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon and says, “perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.” Clearly, Paul is not hoping for them to be reconciled temporarily or only for a limited time that would eventually end. Instead, he is using “aionios” to mean “permanently” and most likely in a way that is inclusive of their shared fellowship in the eternal kingdom as well.

Because of the similarity of the final three instances of “aionios” we will discuss them as a group.

Number three, Romans 16:25 uses “aionios” when describing how the Old Testament largely kept the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ obscure as a “mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” The words “world began” are translated from the Greek word “aionios” and the Greek word “chronos” (Strong’s number 5550), which simply means “time.”

Number four, 2 Timothy 1:9 uses “aionios” in the same way as Romans 16:25 and describes the “grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Once again, the words “world began” are translated from the Greek word “aionios” and the Greek word “chronos” (Strong’s number 5550). Here in 2 Timothy, these words follow the Greek preposition “pro” (Strong’s number 4253) which means “before.” More importantly, it is clear that this grace never ended. Prior to creation, God determined to give this grace to us through Christ and that grace has continued and will continue toward the saints without end.

Number 5, Titus 1:2 uses “aionios” twice. The first use of “aionios” discusses “eternal life” and will be discussed in our larger list below. In the second case, “aionios” is used to declare that God’s promise of eternal life was “promised before the world began.” Again, the words “world began” are translated from the Greek word “aionios” and the Greek word “chronos” (Strong’s number 5550). Similar to 2 Timothy 1:9, in Titus 1:2 the phrase “world began” follows the Greek preposition “pro” meaning “before.”

Though Romans 16:25 does not include the Greek preposition “pro” it is clear that Paul’s intent is the same as in Titus 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:9. In all of these verses the phrase “world began” (“chronos aionios”) is intended in reference to

the beginning of the world at the time of creation. Paul is describing something that God decided to do before the world began. Before the world began, God decided to give grace to us through Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:9). Before the world began, God promised the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2). (Incidentally, the question might be asked, "How did God promise the hope of eternal life from before creation?" God extended the promise of eternal life when he decided to make men mortal but to provide them with the tree of life. As long as they remained obedient, they would be allowed access to the tree of life and allowed to eat of its fruit, which would allow them to continue to live forever.) And before the world began, God decided to save men through Jesus Christ. But even though this was his plan, God did not openly declare it for a long time. Instead, he used obscure and enigmatic language to keep it a secret from before creation began (Romans 16:25).

As we can see, our study of Paul's use of language in these passages shows that when he couples together the Greek words "chronos" and "aionios" he is referring to the beginning of the world, the creation. It is also apparent that none of these 3 passages involves a clear case in which "aionios" refers to a limited period of time that will come to an end. If we factor in the other 64 occurrences of "aionios" all refer to unending time, then the meaning of these 3 instances of "aionios" would be translated more as "since the beginning of time without end," or in other words the beginning of the unending history of creation. This meaning would be consistent with Paul's point in these 3 passages and with the clear meaning of 64 other verses containing "aionios."

Second, we will now turn our attention to those remaining 64 passages and demonstrating that, statistically speaking, "aionios" always refers to eternity, never just a long duration of time that has an eventual end.

Number one, in 43 of those verses "aionios" is referring to "eternal life" in Matthew 19:16, 29, 25:46, Mark 10:17, 10:30, Luke 10:25, 18:18, 30, John 3:15, 16, 36, 4:14, 36, 5:24, 39, 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68, 10:28, 12:25, 50, 17:2, 3, Acts 13:46, 48, Romans 2:7, 5:21, 6:22, 23, Galatians 6:8, 1 Timothy 1:16, 1 Timothy 6:12, 19, Titus 1:2, 3:7, 1 John 1:2, 2:25, 3:15, 5:11, 13, 20, and Jude 1:21. All of these 43 instances necessitate that the New Testament uses "aionios" to refer to eternity. Otherwise, virtually every statement in the New Testament about eternal life would only promise a long duration of life that could eventually end with the saints dying. (Matthew 25:46 actually uses "aionios" twice. We will discuss this fact in more detail below.)

Number two, in 10 verses "aionios" is used in reference to things closely related to eternal life or the saints inheritance in the kingdom of God, including "everlasting habitations" in Luke 16:9, "eternal weight of glory" in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "everlasting consolation" in 2 Thessalonians 2:16, "eternal glory" in 2 Timothy 2:10, "eternal salvation" in Hebrews 5:9, "eternal redemption" in Hebrews 9:12, "eternal inheritance" in Hebrews 9:15, "eternal glory" in 1 Peter 5:10, "the everlasting kingdom" in 2 Peter 1:11, and a metaphorical description of the resurrected body as a "building of God" or "tabernacle" that is "in the

heavens” in 2 Corinthians 5:1. Again, these 10 uses support the conclusion that “aionios” means eternal. Otherwise, items that are very closely tied to eternal life would themselves have an end for the saints.

Number three, in 2 verses “aionios” refers to the covenant of Jesus Christ. Revelation 14:6 uses “aionios” in the phrase “everlasting gospel.” Hebrews 13:20 uses “aionios” in the phrase “everlasting covenant” in Hebrews 13:20. Once again, both of these uses of “aionios” demonstrate that it means “everlasting.” Otherwise, the gospel or the new covenant through Jesus Christ would eventually cease.

Number four, in 3 verses “aionios” refers to a member of the Godhead. Romans 16:26 uses “aionios” in the phrase “everlasting God.” Hebrews 9:14 uses “aionios” in the phrase “eternal Spirit.” And 1 Timothy 6:14-16 uses “aionios” to ascribe to Jesus Christ “power everlasting.”

Number five, 1 time “aionios” is used in 2 Corinthians 4:18 when Paul explains that “things which are seen are temporal” in contrast to “things which are not seen are eternal.” Here the Greek word for “temporal” is “proskairos” (Strong’s Number 4340), which means, “for a season, enduring only for a while, temporary.” Given this contrast, “aionios” must mean eternal and permanent.

Number six, 1 time “aionios” is used in the phrase “eternal judgment” in Hebrews 6:2. The Greek word for “judgment” is “krima” (Strong’s Number 2917), which means, “decree, judgment, condemnation of wrong, the sentence of a judge.” In the sense that it can reflect condemnation or a sentence, this usage would directly corroborate our conclusion that the punishment of the wicked is eternal. In fact, even if “krima” is intended to mean “judgment” in a neutral sense without denoting approval or condemnation, that still confirms our conclusion because it would imply that God’s judgments of approval or condemnation last forever.

Number seven, 5 times “aionios” is used in reference to the punishment of the wicked. Matthew 18:8, Matthew 25:41, and Jude 1:7 use it in the phrase “everlasting fire.” Matthew 25:46 uses it in the phrase “everlasting punishment.” In addition, Mark 3:29 uses “aionios” in the phrase “eternal damnation.” The Greek word for “damnation” in Mark 3:29 is “krisis” (Strong’s Number 2920) “Krisis” is defined as “a separating, separation,” which is certainly consistent with our conclusion that the punishment of the wicked is not annihilation but eternal separation from a relationship with God, from God’s presence, and from his blessings and provisions in the kingdom. And as we discussed earlier, a survey of the New Testament usage of “krisis” establishes that it conveys condemnation and separation rather than approval, acceptance, or reconciliation.

Third, this analysis of the use of “aionios” in the New Testament results in an insurmountable problem for both annihilation and universal salvation. Although 2 Thessalonians 1:9 can be accommodated once we recognize the scriptural evidence that immortal beings experience the forces of destruction without ever succumbing to annihilation, neither annihilation nor universal salvation can

accommodate the fact that in all of the other 68 verses where “aionios” is used it necessarily refers to something never-ending. The particularly problematic passages are highlighted below.

Number one, when “aionios” is used with the phrase “eternal separation” in Mark 3 and “eternal judgment” in Hebrews 6, the result is that any condemning decree by God and any separation that results from it must be never-ending.

Regarding universal salvation, this utterly prohibits the possibility of the wicked eventually being reformed, repentant, forgiven, or accepted by God. The only way for universal salvation to avoid this conclusion is to claim that these two passages are an “exception” to the otherwise universal meaning of “aionios” in the New Testament, which is simply too convenient and contrary to statistical evidence. And while it may be true that Mark 3 is talking only about a specific type of sinner who commits the specific sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the damage is already done. Once again, we see there is no way to avoid God condemning at least some people to Hell forever without the possibility of reconciliation to God.

Regarding annihilation, as we mentioned a moment ago, the eternal nature of the fire in Matthew 18:8, Matthew 25:41, and Jude 1:7 is problematic for any annihilationist position. Of course, these verses only necessarily prove that the fire itself is everlasting, not those who are cast into it. But, since we also know that the fire is never quenched, that means the fuel that the fire is consuming must never be exhausted, which in turn suggests that the immortal beings in Hell continue to exist forever for the fire to act upon.

Number two, Matthew 25:46 is also particularly problematic for both annihilation and universal salvation.

One, Matthew 25:46 occurs shortly after the reference to “eternal fire” in Matthew 25:41, but this time “aionios” is applied to “eternal punishment.” Here the term “punishment” is not a word for “destruction” or a synonym for it. So, the word itself cannot even be construed to mean “annihilation.” Instead, it is the Greek word “kolasis” (Strong’s Number 2851), which means, “correction, punishment, penalty.” In other words, the wicked will experience punishment forever.

Two, of course it is possible to conceive of a punishment in which someone is banned from something forever. For example, professional sports in America have from time to time imposed a lifetime ban on individuals that were previously involved in one sport or another. In this theological case, perhaps there is a permanent ban on existence for certain individuals. Therefore, it could be argued that the punishment is that the wicked will have their existence terminated forever. However, there are four points worth making here regarding annihilation and universal salvation.

First, regarding universal salvation, notice that the suggestion of a permanent ban on existence necessarily affirms that “aionios” means “forever.” So, even if Matthew 25:46 did refer to a permanent ban on existence, it would disprove universal salvation.

The next four obstacles created by Matthew 25:46 all pertain to the doctrine of annihilation.

Second, fundamentally this suggestion of a permanent ban on existence creates a scenario in which the punishment somehow continues despite the fact that the person to whom the punishment was assigned no longer exists to experience it. This strains the notion of punishment to the breaking point. There is virtually no other scenario imaginable in which a punishment could conceivably continue after the recipient of the punishment ceases to exist. For instance, in modern cultures when someone receives a sentence of life imprisonment, no one would think that the punishment continues even after they die in prison. Therefore, the suggestion that the “eternal punishment” could be a permanent ban on existence is yet another classic example of the fallacy of special pleading.

As we noted earlier, wikipedia.org defines special pleading as “a form of fallacious argument that involves an attempt to cite something as an exception to a generally accepted rule, principle, etc. without justifying the exception.” In this case, the term punishment is being applied in a way that would not work in any other scenario involving punishment. Consequently, we must reject the suggestion that “eternal punishment” is a permanent ban on existence because this particular interpretation of their punishment is too contrived, uniquely self-serving for the doctrine of annihilation, would make sense in no other context, and has no other support in scripture. It is simply an attempt to whittle out a little room for annihilation in any place that it might be possible to do so. But that is a far cry from positive proof that demands annihilation is correct. No doctrine should be based on mere speculative possibilities, especially ones that contradict direct contrary evidence elsewhere in scripture.

Third, we already know from Revelation 14:9-11 and Revelation 20:10 that the word “aion” is used when describing the length of time that the devil and anyone who worships the antichrist will be tormented without rest day or night. Likewise, we also saw that 2 Peter 3:18 and Jude 1:25 use the closely related word “aion” to refer to traits that God will possess for all eternity while 2 Peter 2:17 and Jude 1:13 use this same word “aion” when describing how long the wicked will remain in Hell. In other words, we already know that the wicked will at least receive a punishment that involves experiencing torment for a long period of time. And Matthew 25:41-46 is very similar to these two statements in Revelation because Matthew 25 explicitly states that wicked humans share the same punishment as the devil and his angels. And all three passages relate that punishment to the fires of Hell. So, why argue that the reference to “eternal punishment” in Matthew 25:46 refers to something other than this long-term torment of the devil and the wicked that is described in Revelation 14 and 20? It is unreasonable to think that scripture teaches that wicked humans and the devil will be tormented for a long

period of time as indicated by “aion” in Revelation 14 and 20 and separately when that “aion” is over they will also be punished with an eternal ban on existence. To the contrary, the interpretive principle of harmony requires that we first look to harmonize scriptures that appear to touch on the same topic, not isolated them and distinguish between them without warrant just because we “can.” Instead, we should conclude that the punishment in Matthew 25, Revelation 14, and Revelation 20 are all describing the same thing, a punishment that involves some measure of torment that continues for “aion” and for “aionios,” both of which have been shown to mean “forever” in these contexts.

Fourth, 2 Peter 2, Jude 1, and Revelation 14 and 20 also demonstrate that it is pointless to deny the wicked experience punishment eternally in Matthew. Because 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation 14 and 20 already establish that God will indeed send the devil and those who worship the antichrist to torment that lasts at least for a long period of time, there is simply nothing gained for the doctrine of annihilation by suggesting that the wicked will eventually be annihilated after a long period of time suffering in Hell. Such a suggestion would not avoid any of the allegations of divine cruelty, which annihilation seeks to avert. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, since we have shown that the wicked (including both men and angels) can be in the fires of Hell for a significant duration without being annihilated, then we can no longer assume that phrases such as “thrown into Hell” automatically convey annihilation by means of placement in Hell.

And fifth, there are two bible verses where the Greek word “aionios” (Strong’s number 166) is used to refer to both the final state of the righteous and the final state of the wicked.

As we have already noted, the first instance where “aionios” occurs twice is Matthew 25:46. In the text of that verse, Jesus plainly states that the wicked “will go away into eternal (“aionios”) punishment (“kolasis”): but the righteous into life eternal (“aionios”). In order to fully appreciate the relevance of Matthew 25:46, we need to take a few moments to review some critical items. Earlier in our study we showed that “eternal life” not only entails existing forever, but biblically-speaking eternal life entails fellowship with God in his presence and benefiting from the provision he will give to the righteous. We demonstrated that “kolasis” refers to correction, to a punishment, or to a penalty. Likewise, we’ve established that Matthew 25:46 does not exclude the wicked from eternal existence, but instead teaches that they will be separated from God and deprived of the benefits and blessings inherent to living in God’s presence. Having covered this important point, the significance of Matthew 25:46’s application of “aionios” to both the final state of the righteous and the wicked becomes apparent and succinctly illustrates our larger point regarding the biblical use of “aionios.” Here in Matthew 25:46, the meaning of “aionios” with regard to the final state of the righteous unquestionably refers to an eternal and unending reward. Therefore, when it is applied to the final state of the wicked in the very same sentence, it is also clear that the punishment of the wicked will also be eternal and unending. It

is simply not possible to interpret Matthew 25:46 in any way that would avoid an eternal punishment for the wicked.

The second instance where “aionios” is applied to both the righteous and the wicked comes from Daniel 12:2. The text of Daniel 12:2 reads, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt.” In the Hebrew both instances of “everlasting” are translated from the Hebrew noun “owlam” (Strong’s number 05769), which can refer to a long duration of time in the past or future as well as to concepts like eternal, unending, or forever. However, in the Septuagint Greek translation of this passage, both occurrences of “owlam” are translated using “aionios.” While both Matthew 25:46 and Daniel 12:2 state that the righteous will live with God forever, Daniel indicates that both groups, the wicked and the righteous, will be resurrected. It is important to note that Daniel 12:2 applies the same resurrection to both the righteous and the wicked. It does not leave room for two different types of resurrection. We know that the resurrection of the righteous is an immortal resurrection. And, as we have seen, the New Testament teaches that through Jesus Christ all men, both the righteous and the wicked, will be resurrected to immortality. Therefore, Daniel 12:2 confirms that the wicked are not stricken from existence for all eternity as an annihilationist position would require. Rather, just as the righteous are resurrected to enjoy their eternal reward, in the same way the wicked are resurrected to endure an eternal punishment, shame, and contempt according to Daniel 12:2. Given that both groups are resurrected and both receive something eternal, it is not possible to interpret Daniel in any way that would allow for the wicked to be annihilated instead of receiving immortal life through the resurrection.

In conclusion, we can see that the New Testament’s usage of both “aion” and “aionios” is incompatible with the doctrines of annihilation and universal salvation. “Aion” and “aionios” are applied to the life and inheritance of the saints and to other items that are necessarily eternal and without end, including to God himself. Such unavoidable references to “eternity” are particularly the case in the writings of Jude, Peter, and John, which contain the majority of passages describing the punishment of the wicked using “aion.” As a result, when these two Greek words are applied to the punishment of the wicked, they leave no possibility that the torment of the wicked will ever end. And that rules out both annihilation and universal salvation.

But before we move away from the use of “aion” and “aionios,” we should take a few moments to address a possible counterargument that could be posed to challenge the conclusions that these Greek terms denote eternity when used by Jude, Peter, and John to discuss the conscious punishment of the wicked in Hell. Specifically, this argument starts with the usage of “aion” twice in the phrase “her smoke rose up for ever and ever” in Revelation 19:3, which describes the destruction of the city that is held responsible for the death of the apostles and prophets. Below we have included Revelation 19:3 in the larger context of Revelation 18:16-24, which describe the end of this great city.

**Revelation 18:**16 And saying, **Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!** 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 **And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!** 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! **for in one hour is she made desolate.** 20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. 24 **And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.** **19:**1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for **he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.** 3 And again they said, Alleluia **And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.**

The basic line of thought in this potential counterargument is that Revelation's description of the destruction of this city parallels Old Testament prophecies regarding the destruction of ungodly cities prior to the coming of Christ. The critical element of such comparisons is the assertion that such historic cities did not literally have the smoke of their burning rise for all eternity. Instead, the smoke cleared, probably within days or weeks. Moreover, these Old Testament prophecies even used the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word "aion." In short, if the Hebrew equivalent of "aion" can be used in Old Testament prophecies regarding cities whose smoke did not rise for eternity, then that would show that the use of "aion" in Revelation 19 did not refer to eternity either. Instead, Revelation would simply be the latest instance in a trend of poetically exaggerated language used by prophets, which should not be taken to literally indicate an unending amount of time or even a lengthy duration of time that eventually ends.

A few of the Old Testament examples that might be cited in support of this argument might be Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre, or Edom. We might begin our discussion with a few words on each of these prominent examples.

First, it should be noted, however, that while Genesis 19:28 does describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah "as the smoke of a furnace," it nowhere uses a term like "forever" or otherwise comparable with "aion." Therefore, it doesn't

provide a sufficient similarity for direction comparison to the use of “aion” in Revelation 19.

Second, the destruction of Tyre in Isaiah 23-25 is certainly very similar to the language used in Revelation 18-19 to describe the destruction of the great harlot city. While the description of Tyre’s destruction does not mention smoke, Isaiah 25:2 does state that Tyre “shall never be built. The Hebrew word translated as “never” is “owlam” (Strong’s Number 5769). As noted earlier in this study, “owlam” has a similar range of meaning as “aion” and can denote either finite “long durations” or “everlasting” and “perpetual.” As might be expected, when the Septuagint translates Isaiah 25:2 into Greek, it translates “owlam” into “aion.” However, here we should note that our argument is not that “aion” always denotes an endless duration. We have already noted that “aion” has a range of meaning that includes both long, finite periods of time as well as endless duration. Some passages and some authors may prefer one meaning over another. Some authors, such as Mark, may use both meanings. Consequently, the Septuagint of Isaiah 25:2 may simply use “aion” to refer to a finite duration of time after which point Tyre could be rebuilt. But since Isaiah was not written by Peter, Jude, or John, the use of “aion” in Isaiah does not provide any direct evidence that would contradict our analysis regarding how Peter, Jude, and John employed “aion,” including in Revelation 19. It could very well be the case that Isaiah 25:2 is stating that the destruction of Tyre would last a finite period of time while Revelation 19 is describing the destruction of another city that exceeds the destruction of Tyre and lasts forever without end. We will return to this point momentarily below.

Third, the example of Edom is perhaps the closest to the specific wording of Revelation 19:3. We find the prophecy concerning Edom in Isaiah 34:10, which states, “It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” Here we see the phrase “the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.” Like Isaiah 25:2, the Hebrew word for “for ever” is “owlam” and the Greek word used in the Septuagint is “aion.” However, it should be noted that Revelation 19:3 includes one noteworthy word that is missing from Isaiah. Unlike Isaiah 34:10, Revelation 19:3 actually repeats the word “aion” twice. This at least suggests that the destruction in Revelation 19:3 is longer than the destruction in Isaiah. At the most, the repetition of the word “aion” twice could suggest that the duration in Revelation 19 will last either for a long duration of “aions” or from one aion to the next aion in a perpetual fashion. Ultimately, the inclusion of the second “aion” in Revelation presents at least a potential relevant difference from the wording Isaiah, which prevents concluding that the two passages denote the same meaning regarding the amount of time they describe.

In addition, there are a few other problems with the counterargument derived from Revelation 19:3, which leads us to our next points.

Fourth, although Revelation 18-19 describes the destruction of a city and can therefore be compared to Old Testament prophecies regarding the destruction of cities, the wording in 2 Peter and Jude is not phrased in a way as to mirror such

Old Testament prophetic language. It would be inaccurate to say that Peter or Jude are borrowing the language common to prophecies related to the destruction of cities. Consequently, at most this counterargument is limited to John's use of "aion." But it would not refute the analysis regarding Peter and Jude's use of "aion." That evidence would remain unrefuted by this counterargument.

Fifth and most importantly, the fundamental component of this counterargument assumes that eschatological events and phenomenon cannot exceed the magnitude of Old Testament events and phenomenon, which turns out to be a rather dubious presumption. Even a cursory consideration of this point provides a list of items that can be found in the Old Testament, which might be described as limited foreshadowing of God's ultimate plan.

Chapters 8-10 of the Book of Hebrews, for example, explain how the animal sacrifices conducted under the Law of Moses were limited in their effectiveness and so had to be conducted repeatedly year after year. Hebrews goes on to explain that Jesus' sacrifice superseded the animal sacrifices because by his death and he shed blood, Jesus was able to once and for all offer atonement in a permanent way. Clearly, the Old Testament precursor was limited while Christ's sacrificial work is eternal. These same chapters in Hebrews also explain that the tabernacle and Temple, which were used in the Old Testament, were built in the pattern of a heavenly Temple that Moses was shown and which Revelation later mentions. Clearly, the earthy tabernacle and Temple lasted a much shorter period of time than the heavenly Temple. Another prominent example of this is the kingdom of David, which foreshadows the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Yet David's reign lasted only forty years while the kingdom of Jesus Christ will last forever. Simply put, the root of this counterargument ignores an obvious fact, namely, that the Old Testament contains elements which provide a finite, limited foreshadowing of components of God's ultimate plan, including Jesus' atoning work and the kingdom of God itself. Certainly, given this basic fact, the occurrence of finite destructions of ungodly cities in the Old Testament would in no way necessitate that the ultimate destruction of the ungodly and their chief city in the end times would likewise have to be finite. More specifically, even when Revelation 19:3 borrows language from passages like Isaiah 23-25 and 34, it is more than reasonable to conclude that the language in those Old Testament passages is foreshadowing an event of much greater magnitude and duration than the initial Old Testament events themselves.

Ultimately, the fact that Revelation 19:3 uses similar wording to certain Old Testament prophecies does not provide sufficient grounds for overturning linguistic analysis regarding the use of "aion" by John, Peter, and Jude, primarily because there is established precedent in which Old Testament phenomenon provide only a finite foreshadowing of the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan, which will supersede their finite limitations in excessive magnitude. While it is possible to reconcile the similar language in Revelation 19 and Old Testament prophecies in terms of limited foreshadowing, insisting that Revelation 19 and John's other uses of "aion" must be finite in duration because of the Old Testament precursors is unable to reconcile the evidence regarding the other

application of “aion” and “aionios” in Peter, Jude, and John. To be a sound interpretation, an explanation must be able to reconcile all the evidence. This particular counterargument does not accomplish that necessary step.

## **#6 – The Missing Mechanism for Annihilation**

The evidence examined in the previous three sections culminates into an addition problem that is so important that it deserves to be highlighted on its own.

First, we have seen from passages like 2 Peter 2:4, 17, Jude 1:6, 13, Revelation 9:1-11, Revelation 14:9-11, Revelation 20:1-10, and Luke 16:22-31 and John 5:28-29, that God has already imprisoned both angels and the disembodied spirits of wicked dead men in the fires of Hell for long durations of time over the course of human history prior to the day of Final Judgment. We have also seen that Peter, Jude, and John use the Greek words “aion” and “aionios” to mean unendless duration, not a long finite duration, including in passages like Revelation 14:9-11, which denotes how wicked men who worship the beast or accept his mark will “be tormented with fire and brimstone” and that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever” so that “they have no rest day nor night.” A comparative examination of the phrases “day and night” and “no rest” in the book of Revelation (especially chapter 4:8 and 7:15) also revealed that they referred to a perpetual duration, particularly when they are used in combination with each other. And herein lies the problem for annihilation. In any case, the evidence shows that wicked beings, both men and angels, already have been and will exist in the fires of Hell for at least long durations of time, if not perpetually.

Second, we have also established that the other characteristics of Hell all seem to serve the purpose of restraining movement and activity. 1 Peter 3:19-20, and 4:6, refer to Hell as a prison for those who sinned and died from the time of Noah. Matthew 16:18-19 and Revelation 1:18, 9:1-3, 20:1-3, 7 describe Hell as having a lock and key. Luke 16:26 describes a great gulf within Sheol that specifically serves to prevent the wicked from escaping from the place of fire and move to the place of comfort for the righteous. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 states that angels are placed in chains in Hell. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 also describe Hell as a place of great darkness, which we have identified as resulting from the smoke of the great fires of Hell, as seen in Revelation 9:1-2. And lastly, the Greek term “Gehenna” (Strong’s Number 1067), which is a common New Testament word for “Hell,” refers to a valley located southeast of Jerusalem and Revelation 14:9-11 indicates that the lake of fire will be “in the presence” of Jesus and his saints as they rule from Jerusalem. In this context, the presence of the “great and high” walls and gates that surround the new Jerusalem in Revelation 20:10-18 because just outside the city are the wicked, even as indicated in Revelation 22:14-15. We also noted that there is a precedent of God using fire as a barrier to restrict movement as recorded in Exodus 19:20-21 and Deuteronomy 4:12 and 15 as well as at the expulsion of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:22-24.

From these two facts emerges an enormous problem. In light of the evidence supporting that Hell functions as a prison and its fires function as a form of

punishment and restraint, proponents of annihilation may want to have it both ways, accepting the long-term conscious punishment but maintaining that the long-term punishment does not negate eventual annihilation by the fires of Hell when the long-term punishment concludes. But since the traits of Hell reveal that it is designed as a prison, as Peter calls it, and wicked men and angels have been and will be put in the prison of Hell for long periods, what basis is left for asserting that Hell serves as a mechanism for annihilation? This is essentially an addition problem in the sense that proponents of annihilation have to argue that Hell has two purposes. In addition to the demonstrable purpose in which Hell serves as a prison where living, conscious, wicked beings are kept for long durations, they have to suggest that Hell also serves to eventually annihilate the wicked. But not only is the second purpose extraneous to the first purpose, but it is also contrary to the first purpose. Designing a prison to contain wicked beings is essentially the opposite of designing a mechanism to annihilate them. Imprisonment is necessary if annihilation is not going to occur and the occurrence of annihilation would make imprisonment unnecessary.

Of course, God could decide to consciously punish wicked beings for a duration of time and later annihilate them, but we must keep our focus on the mechanism for both actions. And herein lies the most pointed difficulty for proponents of annihilation. In a scenario where wicked beings are punished by consciously enduring the discomfort of the fires of Hell, the fires of Hell serve either as a mechanism for discomfort as punishment or a mechanism for the restriction of their movement or both. But in such a scenario, the function and purpose of the fires of Hell is already accounted for and identified as something other than annihilation. Moreover, the fact that wicked beings exist in the fires of Hell for long durations, even hundreds or thousands of years, demonstrates that the fires of Hell are specifically not having an annihilating effect on them. So, any theoretical annihilating function of the fires of Hell is shown to be superfluous and ineffective. The function of the fires of Hell is already spoken for and they serve a different purposes other than annihilation.

As a result, proponents of annihilation are left without the ability to appeal to the fires of Hell as their mechanism for annihilation and would be forced to speculate about other possible mechanisms for which there is, once again, no scriptural attestation. Even passages like Job 4:8 and Job 34:14-15, which describe God “consuming” men with “the breath of his nostrils” and “gathering unto himself his spirit” so that “all flesh shall perish together” lack sufficient detail as to identify a future event or point in time that can be identified as annihilation.

**Job 4:8** Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. **9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.**

**Job 34:14** If he set his heart upon man, **if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;** **15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.**

As we can see from the text, it is unclear whether either passage from Job is describing an event on or after Final Judgment. The language of God “gathering” the spirit he imparted to man back to himself might suggest the gathering of all men to him at Final Judgment, but it also pertains to all men, which would suggest the annihilation of all humans, wicked and righteous, which would be problematic. Moreover, the notion that Job 34:14-15 describes annihilation by retraction of God’s spirit would have to be reconciled with the many other scriptural descriptions we have seen describing the wicked being sent to endure “torment” in the Lake of Fire for long durations starting at the Final Judgment. The text of Job is too brief and lacking in detail to overturn evidence. Similarly, in Job 4:8 it is equally unclear whether God is simply killing mortal men who continue to live afterward as disembodied spirits. There is no mention of any detail in Job 4 that would help us to identify the point in time it is describing. And consequently, it can be easily reconciled as one of many passages discussing God killing mortal men over the course of human history or even at the beginning of the millennium, rather than providing a description of an annihilation at or after the Final Judgment. There is simply insufficient data in Job 4 or 34 upon which to establish that they depict an annihilation event.

In contrast to the elusive nature of any other mechanism for annihilation other than the fires of Hell and given the preeminence of the Lake of Fire as the punishment for the wicked on the day of Final Judgment, proponents of annihilation could perhaps turn back to the fires of Hell as a mechanism and suggest something akin to God eventually turning up the heat of the fire so that it exceeds its previous function of causing discomfort and restraint, which it has done for centuries and millennia, and that future point the fire acquires the new ability to annihilate. But the problem here is identifying where in scripture that such a future annihilating event takes place. An ideal point in time for the fires of Hell to act as a mechanism of annihilation would be the Final Judgment after the millennium, which is also known as the Lake of Fire. But, as we have seen, the language pertaining to the casting of the wicked into the Lake of Fire at final judgment remains consistent with the language of long-term imprisonment prior to the Final Judgment. 2 Peter 2:4 and 17 and Jude 1:6 and 13 use the Greek word “aion” to describe the “blackness” of Hell as “reserved” for the wicked in terms on par with the angels enduring in the same darkness of Hell for centuries prior to Final Judgment. Revelation 14:9-11 uses the phrases “no rest” and “day and night” and the Greek word “aion” repeated twice to describe the “torment” of wicked men in terms that are similar to the casting of the devil into the Lake of Fire in Revelation 20:7-10, which also uses the phrase “day and night” and the Greek word “aion” repeated twice to describe the devils “torment” starting at the time of the Final Judgment after the millennium. All of these indications show that as of the time of the Final Judgment, the purpose of the fires of Hell remains one of torment and imprisonment for both wicked angels and wicked men.

Moreover, the closing chapters in Revelation represent the latest-dating information we have about the state of the wicked, just as it is for the saints. There are no descriptions of any event decades, centuries, or millennia after the Final Judgment describing an event in which the wicked are annihilated, just like there

is no indication that the status of the saints will change or end decades, centuries, or millennia after the Final Judgment. As we saw earlier, even passages like Isaiah 66:22-24 reveal that at the most the fires of Hell either do not annihilate the wicked men placed there but instead those wicked men remain visible to be seen by pilgrims who month after month and year after year venture to Jerusalem on the feast days to worship the Lord. Likewise, the reference to the wicked as “ash” in Malachi 4:1-3 has been shown to be at the most a reference to the death of mortal men at the time of Jesus’ return one thousand years before the wicked dead are resurrected to face Final Judgment. In other words, the last we hear about the wicked in scripture, they are placed in Hell as a prison to endure discomfort for a long period starting at the Final Judgement.

The absence of any post-Final Judgment annihilation event is crucial given the fact that every other major event in God’s future plan for mankind has explicit attestation in both New and Old Testament texts, including such items as the coming of the antichrist, Jesus’ return to reign, the resurrection of the saints, the resurrection of the wicked, the onset of the kingdom of God reigning over the earth and inherited by the saints, the Final Judgment, the arrival of the heavenly city of Jerusalem to the earth, and the casting of wicked men and angels into the Lake of Fire where Hell breaks through to the surface of the earth in the valley of Gehenna southeast of Jerusalem. It is clear that no matter how distant from our present time, for every future event that God wants us to believe in, God has declared it openly in the scripture. And since God’s last description of the state of the wicked at Final Judgment uses language that is consistent with the previous imprisonment and “torment” prior to Final Judgment, we simply cannot accept the speculative notion that some far off day after Final Judgment God will end the conscious torment of the wicked in Hell by annihilating them. Ultimately, scripture provides us with a choice. Either Hell serves as a prison and its fires serve as a mechanism of punishment and restraint or Hell and its fires serve as a mechanism of annihilation. With so much incontrovertible evidence that Hell and its fires serve as a prison where conscious beings are punished including at the Final Judgment and no revelation of any future point in time when Hell is described as resulting in annihilation, there remains no scriptural mechanism for annihilation.

## **#7 – The Chronology of Events in Daniel and Revelation**

Over the course of this study, we have already discussed the resurrection of the wicked as described in Daniel 12 and Revelation 20. But previously we have not focused on the chronology of that resurrection and the impact that chronology has on the doctrine of universal salvation. Below are the relevant verses from each passage.

**Daniel 12:1** And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, **every one that shall be found written in the book.** 2 And **many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to**

**everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

First, notice that Daniel 12 contains two essential components. Number one, verse 1 refers to those who are “found written in the book.” And number two, verse 2 refers to the resurrection not only of the righteous but of the wicked. As we will see, Revelation 20 has those same two components.

**Revelation 20:**1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 **And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them:** and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and **they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** 5 **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.** 6 **Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection:** on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and **shall reign with him a thousand years.** 7 **And when the thousand years are expired,** Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 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. 11 **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. 12 **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.** 13 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. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Second, like Daniel 12, Revelation describes the resurrection not only of the righteous but of the wicked also. And like Daniel, it describes how the distinction between the wicked and the righteous will be made based on what is written in God’s books regarding them, including the book of life.

Third, notice the detailed chronology provided by Revelation. Verses 4-6 use the term “first resurrection” to describe the resurrection of those who are “blessed and holy” at the start of Jesus’ thousand year reign. However, verse 5 specifies that there will be another resurrection at the end of this initial thousand-year period. Verse 7 then begins a description of events that unfold after these thousand years are completed. Verses 11-12 describe “the dead” standing before God and being “judged out of those things which were written in the books.” This is clearly a depiction of the final judgment as well as the second resurrection, which verse 5 explained would take place after the thousand years. Furthermore, verse 15 informs us that this second resurrection includes wicked men whose names are “not found written in the book of life.” But, the term “whosoever” in the phrase “whosoever was not found written in the book of life” implies that some of those who are resurrected after the thousand years might indeed be found in the book of life and, therefore, not condemned to the lake of fire along with the wicked.

This chronology poses several problems with regard to the doctrine of universal salvation.

First, notice also that verse 13 describes Hell delivering up the dead that are in it. In other words, some of those resurrected will be coming out of Hell where they were formerly kept. Consequently, when verse explains that “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,” we know that it is referring to this group of dead that came out of Hell. In fact, Revelation 14:9-11 and 19:13-21 demonstrate that many of the dead who are kept in Hell prior to the final judgment were people who worshipped the antichrist or were part of the armies gathered by the devil to battle the returning Jesus Christ right before the start of the thousand years of his reign. And, of course, there has been no resurrection of the wicked at any point previously in history, which means that a great many of the dead who are resurrected from out of Hell to stand before God have been in Hell going back to very nearly the start of creation. Yet, apparently even after thousands of years, the fires of Hell had no reforming effect on them otherwise they would not be cast into the lake of fire. If there was any opportune time to repent and reform in Hell, certainly it would be before the final judgment commences. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that if the fires of Hell did not produce repentance or reformation prior to the final judgment, there is no reason to think that the fires of Hell will produce repentance or reformation after final judgment. And this leads us to our next point.

Second, in an earlier section we examined Hebrews 6:2 which uses the Greek word “aionios” in the phrase “eternal judgment.” We also noted that the Greek word for “judgment” in Hebrews 6:2 is “krima” (Strong’s Number 2917), which means, “decree, judgment, condemnation of wrong, the sentence of a judge.” We also demonstrated that every time “aionios” occurs in the New Testament, it always means eternal, never a limited duration of time that will come to an end. Consequently, Hebrews 6:2 informs us that God’s judgment will be final in the sense that what he decrees at judgment will never end. Therefore, if the fires of Hell did not produce repentance and reformation prior to the second resurrection and the final judgment, after final judgment it will be too late for God’s decree to

be changed, which leaves no opportunity for a commuted sentence some time later after final judgment.

Third, verses 7-9 of Revelation 20 explain that after the thousand years of Christ's reign, the devil will be released from his imprisonment in the abyss of Hell and, at that time, he will "go out to deceive the nations" and "to gather them together to battle." Verse 9 describes that those who are deceived will be killed by God when God sends fire out of heaven in a manner that seems parallel to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, the critical detail is the fact that verse 8 describes these people of the nations as "deceived" by Satan after the thousand years are over. This creates an inevitable scenario in which a large mass of people who were previously not deceived by the devil, suddenly turn to rebellion and are killed right before the final judgment. Since the final judgment is "eternal" according to Hebrews 6:2, these people will have absolutely no opportunity to be reformed in Hell before God's condemnation of them becomes irreversible in the final judgment that subsequently occurs not long after they are killed. This leaves no chance for any reconciliation with God for this group of sinners who are killed at the end of the thousand years.

Fourth, notice that in Revelation 20 the resurrection of the wicked does not occur after some future repentance or reconciliation with God. Instead, it occurs before their punishment begins at the final judgment. This unequivocally demonstrates that the purpose of the resurrection of the wicked is fundamentally different from the resurrection of the saints. The saints are resurrected as a reward for belief and repentance in conjunction with being judged righteous and in preparation for their reception of the eternal kingdom prepared by the Father (Matthew 25:34, 46). But resurrection is not bestowed on the wicked as a reward for faith and repentance or in preparation for participation in the kingdom. Instead, they are resurrected in preparation for their judgment and sentence in the lake of fire, just as we previously noted that in Matthew 25:41 Jesus plainly states that the fires of Hell were prepared for immortal angels, not men. (To be clear, we should note that Matthew 25:31-46 is discussing Christ judging the righteous and the wicked when he returns to the earth before the onset of the millennial kingdom. On the other hand, Revelation 20 is discussing a judgment that occurs and is conducted by God the Father after the end of that millennial period.)

Fifth, and even more importantly, the fact that the wicked are not resurrected in conjunction with faith and repentance supports the conclusion that there will be no faith or repentance or subsequent reconciliation for the wicked. If such things did lie ahead of the wicked, then why wouldn't God just keep them in Hell until the fires of Hell produced faith and repentance? Then God could bestow resurrection on them as a reward for faith and repentance in a manner that would be completely consistent with the reconciliation of the saints. The fact that God is deviating from the reconciliation process that is employed regarding the saints demonstrates that, unlike the righteous, the wicked will not be reconciled to God, otherwise, God could and would simply maintain his same reconciliation practices for both groups.

Likewise, it is relevant that the fact that Revelation bothers to inform us of a second resurrection and subsequent final judgment one thousand years after Christ returns to set up his kingdom, to resurrect the righteous to participate in it, and to remove the wicked from it. The important point is that Revelation reports no additional future periods of resurrection and judgment after Revelation 20 in which other persons are remanded to further punishment or included in the reward of the righteous. This means that after Revelation 20 and the final judgment at the end of the millennial period, there is no further opportunity for reconciliation for the wicked ever presented anywhere in scripture. This is further evidence against universal salvation.

In summary, the chronological sequence in which the wicked have already been in the fires of Hell for centuries prior to final judgment and the fact that the resurrection of the wicked takes place prior to any repentance or reconciliation of the wicked demonstrates that there is no reason to think the fires of Hell would bring about the repentance of wicked individuals and no opportunity for their sentences to be reversed after final judgment even if repentance were possible. Consequently, the chronological sequence of the final resurrection and the final judgment prohibits universal salvation because it rules out any future reconciliation after the final judgment.

#### *Two Universal Salvation Arguments: Paul's Use of the Word "All"*

As we near the end of this study, we would like to take the time to address language in certain passages of scripture, which might be raised to support the idea of universal salvation.

First, one example of such language concerns phrases that describe God ultimately being "all in all." We find this language in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:28 and Ephesians 1:23.

**1 Corinthians 15: 26** The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put **all things under him.** 28 And when **all things shall be subdued unto him,** then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, **that God may be all in all.**

**Ephesians 1:22** And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him **that filleth all in all.**

Regarding universal salvation, it could be suggested that this phrase "all in all" conveys the idea of God being reconciled to all. However, in an earlier section of this study entitled, "Immortality and the Rest of Creation," we demonstrated that in both 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 1, the idea of God being "all in all" solely refers to God making all the mortal parts of creation immortal. The language was not intended to convey reconciliation at all. Although we provide a more detailed

analysis of these passages in that earlier section of our study, three things are worth noting here for our present purposes.

Number one, the language of 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 1:22 is similar. Both passages discuss “all things” being subdued under Christ’s authority and conclude with the idea of God becoming “all in all.” These uncanny similarities demonstrate that Paul has the same topic in mind in both passages.

Number two, since we know from our analysis earlier that the phrase “all in all” refers to immortality, we might consider whether becoming immortal necessarily entails reconciliation. But there is no reason to think that immortality and reconciliation should be tied together. After all, wicked angels are already immortal in the present time, yet they are still God’s enemies and are not reconciled to him. Moreover, some of them are already imprisoned in Hell and have been for a long time.

Number three, just two verses before the phrase “all in all” in 1 Corinthians 15:28, verse 26 still describes the devil as an enemy. The particular phrase is “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” We know that Paul is talking about the devil here and using death as a title for the devil because Hebrews 2:14 specifically states that “him that had the power of death is the devil.” The fact that the devil is still called an enemy and his final status is identified specifically as “destruction” right before the phrase “all in all” demonstrates that “all in all” does not involve the reconciliation of all wicked beings.

Consequently, the phrase “all in all” does not relate to reconciliation, but only to all creation one day being allowed to share in the immortality that is inherent to God’s own Being.

Second, Romans 5 contains another phrase that might be raised in support of universal reconciliation.

**Romans 5:1** Therefore **being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:** 2 By whom also **we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,** and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly.** 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** 9 Much more then, being **now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.** 10 For **if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.** 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom we have now received the atonement.** 12 Wherefore, **as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so**

**death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:** 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For **if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.** 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For **if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)** 18 Therefore **as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.** 19 For **as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.** 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:18 declares that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." In particular, the relevant component is the phrase "all men unto justification of life." At first glance, this language might seem to suggest that not only will all men, wicked and righteous, be resurrected to life, but also that literally all men will receive justification before God through Jesus Christ and be reconciled to God.

Specifically, there are essentially two components, which form the basis of the perception that this verse could support universal salvation.

First, there is the perception that becoming sinful or being justified are automatically applied to men in an inevitable manner rather than depending on their individual choices. Typically, this is phrased in terms of all men universally receiving condemnation when our forefather Adam sins, long before and without regard for any sin that we might later commit ourselves. And because it is perceived that this process is automatic and unconditional in nature, the natural but erroneous conclusion is that all men will invariably experience both conditions, sin and justification.

Second, there is also the perception that Paul's use of the word "all" here is absolute, rather than qualified, conditional, and limited in nature. To illustrate what we mean by qualified, conditional, and limited, consider the phrase "All children who clean their room will get ice cream." In this example, the phrase "who clean their room" qualifies the word "all." Consequently, "all" doesn't mean 100% of the children will unavoidably get ice cream. Instead, in this instance "all" means only a qualified portion of the whole population will get ice

cream. In short, “all” means “some” because of the qualification that is attached to it.

But there are several problems with the perceptions that becoming sinful or becoming justified are automatic and unconditional and the perception that Paul intended “all” as an absolute, unqualified reference to 100% of mankind.

Number one, this passage does not actually teach that men are judged as sinners universally in Adam. In verse 12, we see the English phrase “and so” at the beginning of the second half of the verse. In English, this phrase is simple and easy to overlook. But in Greek, the phrase “and so” is “houto” (Strong’s Number 3779), which means, “in this same manner.” “Houto” conveys the idea of a pattern that is repeated or of one thing serving as an illustrative model for another. We find “houto” used to denote a pattern that is repeated in Matthew 5:12, which says, “great is your reward in heaven: for so (3779) persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” And we see another example in 2 Timothy 3:8, which says, “as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth.” Both verses convey that the experiences of men who lived earlier in history will be repeated by men who lived later in history. The later men follow in the footsteps of the actions of those who came before them. Since we know “houto” conveys a pattern that is being followed, we know that verse 12 is not talking about all men automatically being counted guilty in Adam when Adam himself sins, but about men becoming guilty when they themselves sin and thereby follow in Adam’s pattern.

Number two, the fact that becoming a sinner is not automatic or unconditional is also affirmed by the last part of verse 12, which concludes “in this same manner death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” The phrase “for that” is comprised of two Greek words, “epi” (Strong’s Number 1909) and “hos” (Strong’s Number 3739). Specifically, “epi” means “upon” and “hos” means “who or which.” Consequently, Paul is literally saying that just as Adam sinned and was sentenced to death, in the same manner the sentence of death passes upon all men which sin. The phrase “upon all that sinned” qualifies and sets a conditional limitation on Paul’s use of the term “all” in verse 12. In other words, “epi” and “hos” restrict Paul’s meaning of “all” to only those men who choose to follow Adam’s pattern and commit sin. (Of course, our intention isn’t to argue that only a few men have made that choice. The point is that regardless of the quantity of men who have chosen to sin, the point is how men end up in that condition. The Greek here informs us that men do not end up sinner automatically or unconditionally, but rather conditionally depending on their own choice.)

Number three, throughout this passage, Paul repeatedly contrasts Adam and Jesus as parallel, but contrasting models. In fact, in verses 12, 15, 18, and 19 Paul uses “houto” to set up a parallel between Adam’s choice to sin and its results and Jesus’s choices to obey and its result. Because of this fundamental parallel throughout the chapter, we know that not only is the sinful state something that men enter into conditionally based on their own choice, but the same must be true for justification. If we enter into sin by choosing to follow in Adam’s footsteps,

then we likewise would receive justification if we choose to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

Number four, just as verse 12 explained that it is each man's own choice to sin that qualifies him to receive death, Romans 5 is not silent regarding what qualifies men to receive justification. In fact, Paul provides the qualifier for justification all the way back in verse 1, which stays, "being justified by faith." The choice to believe in Jesus Christ and his teachings is the condition that justification depends on just as our condemnation of death depends on our own individual choices to sin.

Number five, although verse 18 uses the Greek word "pas," which means, "all," the very next verse of Romans 5 confirms that Paul did not intend "all" as an absolute, unqualified reference to 100% of mankind. We have already noted that Paul's use of the Greek words "houto," "epi," and "hos" demonstrate that he was limiting "all" to only those who fulfilled the specified conditions. But verses 15 and 19 prove that "all" does not mean 100% of mankind in an even more direct way and, consequently, they confirm that Paul's use of the word "all" in verse 18 was intended to be qualified and limited. In both verse 15 and verse 19, Paul does not use the Greek word "pas," which means "all," but instead he uses the Greek word "polus" (Strong's Number 4183), which means "many." Verse 15 uses "polus" twice when it declares, "if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." What's really relevant about verse 19, of course, is that it follows immediately after verse 18 and is very much a further explanation and clarification of Paul's meaning in verse 18. Here again, we find "polus" used twice when verse 19 declares, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

And number six, here we have to ask a simple question. If Paul intended "pas" to refer to 100% of mankind without any qualifying or limiting sense in verse 18, how is it possible for Paul to switch to only say "many" in verses 15 and 19? Many denotes a large number, but it definitely does not mean 100%. The answer to this question is that "all" is a qualified group. Paul never intended to use "pas" in an absolute or unconditional way. And because "pas" meant everyone in a qualified group rather than 100% of mankind, Paul's use of "many" in verses 15 and 19 is perfectly consistent and literally conveys the exact same meaning as "pas" does in this context.

Ultimately, while it is certainly accurate to conclude that "all who believe and repent will be justified," it is not accurate to conclude that "all men in general will be justified." Nor does Paul say anything in Romans that would suggest all men will eventually believe and repent. He only affirms that all those who meet the condition of having faith will be justified, without making any claims whatsoever about what percentage of mankind will choose to believe. Consequently, Romans 5 does not provide any support for universal salvation because the passage does not teach that 100% of mankind will believe, will repent, or will be justified. It

only teaches that all those who believe and repent will be justified. And it remains the case that those who do not believe and repent will not be justified at all.

### *Study Conclusions*

At the beginning of this study, we set out to explore a series of topics that all relate to the question, “What happens to human beings after the death of the body?” both before and after the final judgment. We also took note of common modern theological terms like Christian Mortalism, Soul Sleep, Annihilationism, Universal Reconciliation, and Universal Salvation, all of which relate to this basic question in one manner or another.

As we can see, both Annihilationism and Christian Mortalism assert that the human soul is not immortal. Christian Mortalism also sometimes includes the idea that the human soul may become “uncomprehending” or unconscious between “bodily death and Judgment Day. In contrast, Annihilation teaches that at the final punishment, God will cause the wicked to utterly cease to exist. And lastly, Universal Reconciliation (also known as Universal Salvation) teaches that all humans will ultimately be reconciled to God. The notion that the wicked may suffer a finite period in torment in Hell before reconciliation is also associated with Universal Reconciliation and is fundamentally similar to the concept of Purgatory, which is a state of temporary punishment that some humans experience before being allowed to enter heaven.

With regard to these topics, this study has examined the scripture in depth and established the following 15 conclusions:

1. From the beginning the bible depicts two forms of death. One form of death is the death of the body in which the soul and body are separated from one another. And the other form of death is separation from a relationship with God, from God’s presence, and from all of the provisions that God has prepared for those who obey him.
2. Eternal life is more than just living forever, but requires a reversal of both forms of death.
3. The soul is immortal and continues to consciously exist after the death of the body even prior to resurrection and final judgment.
4. Sheol or Hell is a real place located within the surface of the earth that is comprised of great depth, darkness, and fire.
5. When the body dies the soul is taken to reside either in a place of comfort or a place of suffering in Sheol. Prior to the resurrection of Jesus, that place of comfort was also within Sheol but after Jesus’ resurrection the righteous go to be with Jesus in heaven to await their resurrection upon his return to earth to establish his kingdom, which they will rule with him.
6. There are two types of resurrection in scripture, restoration to a mortal bodily life and transformation to an immortal bodily life. Jesus introduced the resurrection to immortality through his own death and resurrection.

7. All men whether righteous or wicked will be resurrected through Jesus Christ after that pattern of his own immortal resurrection.
8. Resurrected men are equal to angels and incapable of dying. All men who are resurrected through Christ and by Christ, which includes all the wicked, will be resurrected in the pattern of Christ's resurrection, which is an immortal resurrection.
9. Hell was prepared for angels and the wicked men who go to Hell receive the same punishment as angels.
10. Spirit is inherently immortal and incorruptible, is capable of exuding healing and rejuvenating properties even in the case of angels, and is itself unyielding to the forces of destruction.
11. The purpose of the fires of Hell is identified in scripture in terms of both "torment" and also restraint. As such, the fires of Hell do not function as an annihilating mechanism, but to the contrary multiple passages depict both wicked angels and disembodied human souls continuing to exist in the fires of Hell for long durations of hundreds and thousands of years without ceasing to exist. Since the "second death" is explicitly identified as the lake of fire, there is no basis for speculating that the term "second death" refers to an annihilation event. And since the last description of wicked men and angels in scripture is their placement in the fires of hell at the final judgment, there is no basis for speculating that God annihilates them through some other means later on hundreds or thousands of years after the final judgment.
12. There is no annihilation for the wicked in Hell or through any other means at any point after the final judgment that occurs at the end of the millennium, but the wicked will continue to exist consciously in Hell for ever.
13. The fires of Hell act as a constant and necessary restraining counterbalance to the vitality and strength of wicked immortal beings.
14. Immortal beings do experience pain as a result of the fire, but it is incorrect to conceive of that pain in terms of the scale or manner in which mortal, corruptible bodies experience pain. Consequently, because the pain is not the primary purpose of the fire and is mitigated by the immortal, incorruptible nature of the beings who experience the fire, the pain of the fire does not equate to torturous pain to cruel or inhumane punishment enacted by God.
15. There will not be universal salvation in which all the wicked are ultimately reconciled to God. Nor does time suffering in Hell produce any reforming effect on the wicked.