

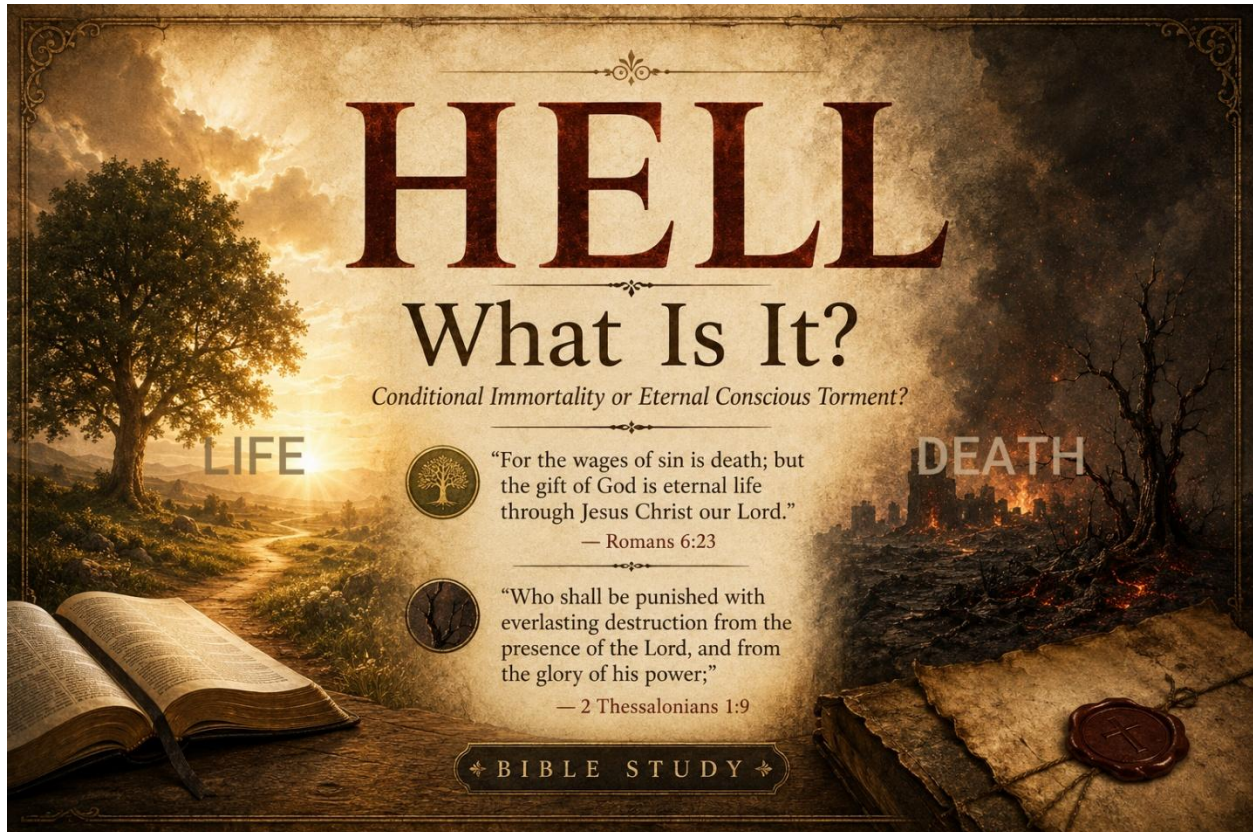
# A Biblical Examination of Final Judgment

Including

**The Justice of God**

And

**The Fate of the Wicked**



Restoring Oneness Apostolic Truth  
In the Last Days

Comprehensive Study Guide Series

By Pete Wierzbicki  
Former Pastor, San Francisco, CA

## Introduction

The doctrine of **Eternal Conscious Torment** (ECT) teaches that the wicked will remain alive forever while suffering conscious punishment without end. According to this view, a finite human life containing a limited number of sins receives an infinite sentence of unending pain. After millions, billions, and trillions of years have passed, the punishment will be no closer to completion than when it began.

This study does not deny hell, divine wrath, punishment, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, the lake of fire, or the final judgment of the wicked. Scripture plainly teaches that every person will stand before God and answer for his works. Those who reject Christ will suffer a real, fearful, and irreversible judgment.

The question is not whether God judges.

The question is whether Scripture teaches that God grants the wicked immortality so that they may be consciously tortured without end.

The biblical testimony points instead toward righteous and proportionate judgment followed by death, destruction, perishing, consumption, and permanent exclusion from eternal life. Eternal life is the gift of God to the redeemed. It is not the natural possession of every soul, and it is never promised to the damned. **This is known as Conditional Immortality (CI).**

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment is therefore incompatible with the justice, mercy, love, and revealed character of God.

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## Part One

### The Character and Justice of God

#### God Is Just

The Bible was written for mankind and provides a revelation of who God is, how He judges, and how His people are expected to live. We are not permitted to invent a definition of divine justice that contradicts the standards of justice God established in His Word.

Believers are called to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ:

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”  
—Romans 8:29

The character God requires from us must reflect His own character. God commands justice because He is just. He commands mercy because He is merciful. He commands love because He is love.

Moses declared:

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”  
—Deuteronomy 32:4

God does not merely possess the authority to punish. He judges truthfully, rightly, and without iniquity.

Job asked:

“Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?”  
—Job 8:3

The expected answer is no. God cannot pervert justice without contradicting His own nature.

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#### God Defines Justice Through Weights, Measures, and Balances

Scripture repeatedly explains justice through the language of weights, measures, and balances:

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.”  
—Proverbs 11:1

“Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have.”  
—Leviticus 19:36

A just balance requires proportion. The weight placed on one side must correspond to the weight placed on the other. A false balance exaggerates, diminishes, or distorts what is owed.

God commands mankind to use just balances because He does not use a false balance Himself.

Scripture also says:

“To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.”

—Proverbs 21:3

“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”

—2 Samuel 23:3

Human beings may attempt to define justice according to culture, emotion, tradition, or philosophy. But if our definition contradicts the justice prescribed in Scripture and demonstrated in the character of God, then we have created a false system of justice.

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### **Punishment Must Be Proportionate**

The principle of proportional justice appears clearly in the Law:

“And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,  
Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,  
Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

—Exodus 21:23–25

This principle was not intended to encourage private vengeance or unnecessary mutilation. It established a limit upon punishment. The penalty was to correspond to the harm committed—no more and no less.

It prevented excessive punishment. A person could not be killed for knocking out a tooth.

It prevented false leniency that would undermine justice.

It applied a measurable standard rather than allowing punishment to be determined by the anger, wealth, influence, or status of those involved.

It required equal treatment of the rich and poor, powerful and weak.

Justice required an equitable measure.

Punishment may be severe, but it must remain just. It must correspond to guilt, knowledge, intention, opportunity, and the actual wrong committed.

Jesus Himself taught degrees of accountability:

“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself... shall be beaten with many stripes.

But he that knew not... shall be beaten with few stripes.”

—Luke 12:47–48

Many stripes and few stripes demonstrate proportionate judgment. Not every sinner receives the same measure because not every sinner possesses the same knowledge, opportunity, influence, or guilt.

The judgment of God is exact.

It is not careless.

It is not indiscriminate.

It is not an infinite punishment imposed without meaningful distinction upon every lost person.

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### **Judgment According to Works**

Scripture repeatedly teaches that every person will be judged according to his works:

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

—Romans 2:6

“And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

—Revelation 20:12

Judgment according to works requires distinction and proportion.

If every lost person receives an infinite sentence of endless conscious torment, differences in conduct become nearly meaningless. Whether someone committed one sin or thousands, whether he acted in ignorance or with full knowledge, whether his influence was limited or caused widespread destruction, the sentence never ends. Severity of crimes would be irrelevant; stealing food and barbaric genocide lumped together for the same punishment.

Some defenders of eternal torment argue that the intensity of suffering may differ. But differing degrees of infinite punishment do not solve the problem. An eternity of lesser torment is still an eternity. It never concludes, never satisfies a measured debt, and never reaches a point at which justice has been fulfilled. It never offers any relief from physical or emotional pain.

Biblical judgment is serious, fearful, and final.

But it is also just.

## Part Two

### The False Balance of Eternal Conscious Torment

Eternal conscious torment destroys the biblical principle of proportionate justice.

It teaches that sins committed during a limited lifetime receive suffering that never ends. One year of sin does not receive one year of punishment. Seventy years of rebellion do not receive seventy years of punishment. Instead, torment continues for millions, billions, and trillions of years—and after all of that, the condemned have not moved one instant closer to the end of their sentence.

Under this doctrine, one finite sin can receive infinite suffering.

That is not a just balance. God commands justice.

A just measure may be severe, but it remains measured. Eternal conscious torment has no measure because it has no end. It can never satisfy justice because the penalty is never completed. This violates the very definition of justice.

If a debt can never be paid, the punishment is no longer proportionate, compensatory, corrective, or measurable. It becomes suffering for the sake of suffering.

Scripture says a false balance is an abomination to God. We therefore cannot attribute to God a system of judgment that would be condemned as monstrous and unjust if practiced by any human ruler.

No righteous earthly judge would sentence a person to endless torture for crimes committed during a brief lifetime.

No loving father would keep a rebellious child alive forever for the sole purpose of inflicting pain without end.

No Christian could witness another human being tortured eternally and reasonably call it justice.

We cannot be commanded to possess more compassion, fairness, restraint, and mercy than the God whose image we are called to reflect.

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## **God Is Love**

Scripture does not merely say that God performs loving actions:

“God is love.”

—1 John 4:8

God’s judgments do not contradict His love. His holiness, wrath, justice, and mercy exist in perfect harmony.

Divine love does not mean that there is no judgment. The wicked will be judged. Sin has consequences, and those who reject God will not inherit eternal life.

But punishment must not be confused with endless torture.

The God who commands us to love our enemies does not maintain His own enemies in immortal agony forever. Jesus said:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.”

—Matthew 5:44

God does not command His children to act according to a higher moral standard than He practices Himself.

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment portrays God as preserving human life eternally—not to redeem, correct, restore, or bring judgment to completion, but to ensure that suffering may continue forever without conclusion.

That picture is incompatible with the God who is love.

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## **God Is Merciful**

The mercy of God appears throughout Scripture:

“For his mercy endureth for ever.”

—Psalm 136:1

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

—Psalm 103:8

God’s mercy does not eliminate His judgment, but it reveals the spirit and character of the One who judges.

Jeremiah wrote:

“For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”

—Lamentations 3:33

God does not delight in suffering for its own sake. He does not afflict simply because He possesses the power to do so.

Ezekiel likewise records:

“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”

—Ezekiel 18:23

If God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, how can we claim that He perpetually sustains them in conscious agony that never accomplishes anything and never ends?

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## Part Three.

### The Abuse of Hell as an Evangelistic Weapon

Some preachers go far beyond the language of Scripture and describe eternal torment in graphic, horrifying detail—imagining endless screaming, mutilation, burning and melting flesh, bodily agony, and other scenes the Bible itself does not portray. These descriptions are then used to frighten saints, children, visitors, and sincere seekers into obedience. Yet fear-based preaching of this kind often produces the opposite result. Many who hear such horrors from the pulpit—especially children who do not yet understand the deeper things of God—respond with fear and anxiety and may go on to serve God primarily out of terror. They learn to live merely to avoid His wrath rather than to love Him, trust Him, and seek to please Him from the heart. But no one can truly please God without sincere faith, devotion, and love. A life driven chiefly by fear will eventually stumble and fall short of the spiritual maturity, purpose, and potential for which God created it.

Others who are looking for the love, mercy, and justice of God may hear these invented horrors and conclude, “I could never serve a God like that.” Instead of drawing souls to Christ, such preaching can cause them to reject the Bible altogether because they have been presented with a cruel and distorted picture of God. At a minimum, some continue in the faith with a troublesome, unspoken distrust of God.

The gospel does not need exaggerated terror in order to be effective. Scripture already gives a solemn and sufficient warning: eternal life is conditional. It belongs to those who are in Christ, receive His Spirit, remain faithful, and are raised to immortality at His coming. The wicked do not inherit eternal life; they perish, are destroyed, and suffer the second death. That truth is fearful enough. A person should desire salvation because life is found only in Jesus Christ, because sin ends in death, and because exclusion from God’s eternal kingdom is final. Conditional immortality preserves both the seriousness of judgment and the goodness of God. It warns the sinner truthfully without inventing scenes of endless torture that Scripture does not teach, and it presents the Lord as He truly is: just, merciful, holy, and willing that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Jesus did use strong and fearful language concerning final judgment, but His purpose was to warn people of the terrible reality of losing eternal life and facing the righteous consequences of sin. Those who reject Him will stand before God, give account for their works, suffer punishment, and realize that they have forfeited the glory of dwelling with Christ forever. There will be weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, sorrow, regret, and cries of anguish as judgment is revealed and carried out. But Jesus never said that these expressions continue for eternity, because damnation is not endless conscious suffering; it is the final loss of life, the destruction of the wicked, and their permanent exclusion from the kingdom and presence of God. We do not need to add to the Word of God and misrepresent Him on the fate of those who reject His beautiful gift of salvation.

## Part Four

### The Wages of Sin Is Death

The Bible plainly identifies the final consequence of sin:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”  
—Romans 6:23

The contrast could not be clearer.

The wicked receive death.

The righteous receive eternal life.

Eternal life is not the natural possession of every human soul. It is not something automatically shared by both the redeemed and the damned. It is a gift of God given through Jesus Christ to those who are saved.

The lost are never promised eternal life in hell.

The damned are never said to receive immortality so that they may remain alive forever in torment.

Eternal life belongs to the saved. Eternal life is conditional.

Jesus said:

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”  
—John 3:36

The believer possesses everlasting life. The unbeliever “shall not see life.”

Jesus did not say that both groups live forever under different conditions. He said one receives life and the other does not see life.

Again, Jesus said:

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.”  
—John 10:28

Eternal life is something Christ gives to His sheep. It is not an inherent quality possessed equally by every person. Those to whom Christ gives eternal life do not perish. Those who do not receive it will perish.

Paul expressed the same truth:

“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.”

—Romans 2:7

Immortality is something the righteous seek and receive from God. It is not something all men already possess by nature.

Scripture says that God:

“Only hath immortality.”

—1 Timothy 6:16

Man does not possess independent immortality. Immortality belongs to God and is given through Christ to the redeemed.

At the resurrection, the righteous receive this gift in its fullness:

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

—1 Corinthians 15:53

If immortality must be “put on,” it is not already possessed naturally by every human being. The saved put on immortality at the resurrection. The wicked are nowhere promised the same gift.

Eternal conscious torment requires the wicked to be made immortal or otherwise preserved alive forever so that their suffering can never end. But Scripture reserves immortality and eternal life for those who belong to Christ.

The Bible does not teach that the righteous receive eternal life in joy while the wicked receive eternal life in misery.

It teaches that the righteous receive eternal life while the wicked perish.

Jesus said:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

—John 3:16

The contrast is not everlasting life in heaven versus everlasting life in hell.

The contrast is perishing versus everlasting life.

## **The Holy Ghost Is the Pledge of Eternal Life**

The gift of eternal life is received through the new birth and the indwelling Spirit of God.

Jesus said:

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”  
—John 3:5

Peter preached the same Apostolic experience:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”  
—Acts 2:38

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of life dwelling within the believer. Paul wrote:

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”  
—Romans 8:11

The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will give life to the mortal bodies of those in whom He dwells.

The Holy Ghost is therefore not merely an emotional experience or temporary blessing. He is the present indwelling pledge of eternal life that will be fully manifested at the resurrection.

Paul called the Spirit:

“The earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.”  
—Ephesians 1:14

The believer who has received the Holy Ghost possesses the divine pledge of future resurrection life and immortality.

Paul wrote:

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”  
—Romans 8:9

And again:

For the law of the **Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus hath **made me free from the law of sin and death**.  
—Romans 8:2

Eternal life belongs to those who are in Christ and possess His Spirit.

Those who reject Christ, remain outside the new birth, and do not possess His Spirit are not promised eternal life.

The damned do not receive the gift belonging to the sons of God.

They do not receive the immortality promised to the righteous.

They do not live forever because eternal life is not theirs.

Their sentence is death, destruction, and perishing.

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### **Death, Destruction, and Perishing Mean What They Say**

Scripture says:

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

—Ezekiel 18:4

Jesus warned:

“Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

—Matthew 10:28

Paul described the end of the wicked as:

“Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”

—2 Thessalonians 1:9

Destruction does not mean eternal preservation.

Death does not mean everlasting life.

Perishing does not mean conscious survival without end.

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment reverses the biblical contrast. It gives eternal life to the wicked while calling their endless existence death. It makes immortality the possession of both the redeemed and the damned, differing only in the quality of their experience.

But the Bible reserves eternal life for the saved.

It is the gift of God.

It is given through Jesus Christ.

It is promised to those who believe.

It is pledged through the indwelling Holy Ghost.

It is completed when the mortal puts on immortality at the resurrection.

The wicked receive no such promise.

They do not inherit eternal life.

They perish.

They are destroyed.

They die.

The wages of sin is not eternal life in torment.

The wages of sin is death.

The gift of God—and only the gift of God—is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## Part Five

### What About the Words of Jesus?

Defenders of eternal conscious torment often appeal to the warnings of Jesus in the Gospels. They point to fire, outer darkness, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, and the place “where their worm dieth not.”

We do not deny any of these warnings.

We do not deny that the wicked will experience terror, regret, anguish, and punishment when judgment is disclosed.

We do not deny that there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

We do not deny the fire of divine judgment.

The issue is that none of these passages explicitly says that every condemned individual remains consciously alive and tormented forever.

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### Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

Jesus repeatedly described the condemned as experiencing weeping and gnashing of teeth:

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

—Matthew 8:12

“There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

—Matthew 13:42

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

—Matthew 22:13

These expressions describe the real anguish, terror, regret, anger, and despair of those who discover that they are excluded from the kingdom of God.

The fact that there is weeping does not prove that the weeping continues eternally.

The fact that teeth are gnashed does not prove that the person is kept alive, gnashing forever.

A condemned person may weep and gnash his teeth as judgment is pronounced and executed. These passages establish conscious distress during judgment, but they do not establish endless conscious survival after the judgment has accomplished its purpose.

Jesus' language is serious and should never be weakened. The wicked will recognize what they have lost. They will understand the justice of their condemnation. They will experience the fear and anguish of exclusion from the kingdom.

But conscious anguish preceding destruction is not the same doctrine as conscious torment continuing without end.

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### **Outer Darkness**

Jesus also spoke of the wicked being cast into outer darkness:

“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

—Matthew 25:30

Outer darkness represents exclusion from the light, fellowship, kingdom, and presence of God. It communicates rejection, loss, and separation.

But outer darkness is symbolic language. It cannot be pressed into a literal description of the physical environment of the lake of fire, because literal darkness and literal flames producing light would create opposing images.

Jesus uses vivid pictures to communicate the certainty and horror of final exclusion.

The imagery is true in what it teaches, but the symbolic details should not be forced into a philosophical doctrine of immortal souls undergoing everlasting torture.

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### **“Where Their Worm Dieth Not”**

Jesus said:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

—Mark 9:44

This language comes directly from Isaiah:

“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.”

—Isaiah 66:24

Isaiah does not describe immortal, conscious people endlessly writhing in pain.

He describes **carcasses**.

The people are dead.

The worm feeds upon what remains, and the fire consumes without being stopped.

The text says that the worm does not die. It does not say that the person never dies.

We are not required to believe that the worms themselves possess literal immortality or conscious suffering forever. The image signifies that nothing will interrupt the process of destruction. The worm will not be prevented from consuming, and the fire will not be extinguished before its work is complete.

An unquenchable fire is not necessarily a fire that burns forever after nothing remains. The consequences of the destruction remain forever.

“Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” — 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

The emphasis is certainty and completeness, not the eternal preservation of the condemned.

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### **Unquenchable Fire**

John the Baptist warned:

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

—Matthew 3:12

The chaff is burned **up**.

Unquenchable does not mean that the chaff remains forever unconsumed. It means the fire cannot be extinguished or resisted before the chaff is destroyed.

Jeremiah used similar language concerning Jerusalem:

“Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”

—Jeremiah 17:27

That fire is not still visibly burning today. It was unquenchable because no one could stop the judgment until its work was completed.

The same principle applies to final judgment. The fire of God cannot be escaped, resisted, or extinguished. It will accomplish everything God has appointed it to do.

But an unstoppable fire is not necessarily an eternally ongoing process.

## **Everlasting Fire and Everlasting Punishment**

Jesus spoke of:

“Everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

—Matthew 25:41

He also said:

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

—Matthew 25:46

The punishment is everlasting because its result is everlasting. Those destroyed in final judgment do not return. Their exclusion from life is permanent. Their death is irreversible.

Scripture uses similar language elsewhere. Hebrews speaks of “eternal judgment” (Hebrews 6:2). This does not mean God is eternally in the process of judging without ever rendering a verdict. The judgment is eternal in authority, consequence, and finality.

Likewise, “eternal redemption” does not mean Christ is forever in the process of dying and purchasing redemption. His work was completed, but its result is everlasting.

An everlasting punishment can therefore be a completed act of judgment whose effect will never be reversed.

The contrast in Matthew 25 remains consistent with the rest of Scripture:

The righteous enter eternal life.

The wicked receive an everlasting punishment that excludes them permanently from that life.

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## **Sodom and Gomorrah as an Example**

Jude describes Sodom and Gomorrah as:

“Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

—Jude 7

Yet Sodom and Gomorrah are not still visibly burning today.

The fire was eternal in its divine source, irreversible judgment, and permanent result. The cities were destroyed and never restored to their former state.

Peter said that God turned them:

“Into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”

—2 Peter 2:6

The biblical example of eternal fire is not a city burning forever while remaining intact. It is a city reduced to ashes.

That is destruction, not eternal preservation.

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### **“Their Fire Is Not Quenched” Does Not Mean Their Life Never Ends**

The Gospel warnings of Jesus must be allowed to speak with their full severity. The wicked will face real judgment and irreversible loss.

But none of these descriptions states that every condemned individual receives immortality and remains conscious forever.

The worm does not die—the text does not say the person does not die.

The fire is not quenched—the text does not say its victims cannot be consumed.

There is weeping and gnashing of teeth—the text does not say those actions continue for eternity.

The punishment is everlasting—the text does not require the process of punishing to remain eternally unfinished.

The biblical words of Jesus agree with death, destruction, perishing, consumption, and everlasting exclusion from life.

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## Part Six

### The Beast, the False Prophet, and “Tormented for Ever and Ever”

One of the first objections raised against the rejection of eternal conscious torment is 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 and ever.”

This passage must be interpreted according to the symbolic nature of Revelation and the identities of the figures being described.

The beast is not merely one ordinary human individual. Revelation presents the beast as a composite political and religious system with seven heads and ten horns, representing kingdoms, powers, rulers, and organized opposition to God.

The false prophet likewise represents the deceptive religious power that supports the beast and causes the world to follow its authority.

A system cannot experience physical pain in the same manner as a living human being.

Therefore, the language of torment cannot simply be treated as a literal description of two individual men being consciously tortured forever.

The everlasting torment signifies the complete, irreversible, and eternal judgment of everything represented by the beast and false-prophet systems.

Their authority is destroyed permanently.

Their deception will never rise again.

Their influence will never be restored.

Those who knowingly gave themselves to that system face judgment from which there is no later repentance, restoration, or return to God.

The punishment is eternal in result: final exclusion from the presence, kingdom, and life of God.

Revelation frequently uses vivid symbolic language to describe the permanence of divine judgment. “For ever and ever” establishes that the sentence and destruction will never be reversed. It does not require the conclusion that God preserves every condemned person alive forever for the sole purpose of inflicting endless pain.

The wicked suffer judgment according to their works, but the final result remains what Scripture repeatedly calls death, destruction, perishing, and everlasting separation from God—not the gift of everlasting life in torment.

We must be careful not to take a highly symbolic passage from Revelation and use it to overturn the many plain, explicit, and consistent statements found throughout the rest of Scripture. Sound interpretation requires the clearer passages to establish doctrine and the symbolic passages to be understood in harmony with them—not the other way around.

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### **The Smoke of Their Torment**

Revelation also says:

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

—Revelation 14:11

This imagery likewise comes from Old Testament judgment language.

Isaiah said concerning Edom:

“The smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste.”

—Isaiah 34:10

Edom is not literally producing a visible column of smoke today. The ascending smoke represented a permanent and irreversible overthrow. It stood as the memorial and evidence that judgment had been executed.

In Revelation, the smoke ascending forever signifies that the judgment is final, complete, and never reversed.

Smoke is the evidence of consumption.

It does not prove that the objects being burned remain forever unconsumed.

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## Part Seven

### The Lake of Fire Consumes and Destroys

The Bible describes the final judgment as the lake of fire, and the nature of fire cannot be ignored.

Fire consumes.

Scripture says:

“For our God is a consuming fire.”

—Hebrews 12:29

A consuming fire does not preserve what it judges forever in the same condition. It destroys, reduces, and brings an end.

This agrees with the repeated biblical language used for the fate of the wicked:

- Death
- Destruction
- Perishing
- Consumption
- Burning up
- Being reduced to ashes
- Exclusion from eternal life

The same truth is seen in the destruction of the present creation at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote:

“The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

—2 Peter 3:10

He continued:

“The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

—2 Peter 3:12

The present heavens and earth are not preserved eternally in a state of burning. They are dissolved, consumed, and replaced by the new heavens and new earth.

Their destruction is permanent and irreversible, but it is not an endless process in which the old creation remains forever intact and alive within the flames.

The lake of fire should be understood consistently.

It is final.

It is complete.

It is without reversal.

Those cast into it do not receive eternal life in torment. They suffer the judgment of God and are destroyed.

The punishment is everlasting because its result cannot be undone. There is no return, no future existence, and no second opportunity after final judgment.

Jesus warned that God is able:

“To destroy both soul and body in hell.”

—Matthew 10:28

He did not say that God would preserve both soul and body alive forever in hell.

He said He would destroy them.

The final fire completely cleanses creation of sin, death, corruption, and every enemy of God. Just as the old heavens and earth pass away in fire, the wicked are finally removed from life and from God’s creation.

The fire is eternal in its judgment and consequence—not because the condemned are granted immortality so that they may burn without ever being consumed.

Fire consumes.

The old creation is dissolved.

The wicked perish.

Only those who receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ continue into the new heavens and new earth.

## The Second Death

Revelation explicitly identifies the lake of fire:

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

—Revelation 20:14

The lake of fire is called the **second death**.

It is not called eternal life in pain.

It is not called everlasting conscious preservation.

It is death.

Death and hell themselves are cast into the lake of fire, demonstrating that the final judgment removes death from God’s creation permanently.

This agrees with Paul:

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

—1 Corinthians 15:26

When death is finally destroyed, there cannot remain an everlasting realm in which immortal sinners continue suffering, dying, and experiencing corruption without end.

The new creation contains no continuing kingdom of death.

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## Part Eight

### The Historical Drift into Eternal Torment

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment did not originate with the Apostles. Forms of everlasting punishment appeared among some early Christian writers; however, the doctrine was systematized and entrenched within Western Catholic theology, especially through Augustine.

It later became intertwined with medieval teachings about hell, purgatory, penance, masses for the dead, and indulgences. Fear concerning the condition of departed souls could be used to control consciences, demand religious compliance, and obtain money.

Although Protestant Reformers rejected purgatory and many Catholic abuses, most retained the inherited doctrine of endless conscious torment rather than reexamining it completely from Scripture.

From Protestantism it passed into later evangelical Christianity, Pentecostalism, and eventually the modern oneness apostolic movement.

It has often been accepted as unquestionable tradition despite its conflict with the biblical language of death, destruction, perishing, proportionate judgment, and eternal life as the exclusive gift of the redeemed.

The fact that a teaching is old does not make it Apostolic.

The fact that Catholics, Protestants, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Oneness believers have all taught it does not prove that Jesus and the Apostles taught it.

Every doctrine must still be examined by Scripture.

Perhaps the doctrine of eternal conscious torment, as it is commonly taught within modern oneness apostolic churches, is one of the clearest indications that serious doctrinal errors exist within our movement; long-standing doctrinal positions that require further examination. In many churches, it is treated as virtually taboo even to consider whether Scripture may teach something different about the nature of hell. To question eternal conscious torment is often regarded as rebellion, doctrinal instability, or evidence of spiritual immaturity, rather than as an honest attempt to search the Scriptures. Yet a doctrine should not be protected from examination by fear or stigma. If it is truly Apostolic, it should withstand careful biblical scrutiny; if it cannot, then loyalty to tradition must give way to the plain and consistent testimony of Scripture.

## Part Nine

### Eternal Conscious Torment Distorts the Character of God

The greatest problem with eternal conscious torment is not merely its interpretation of a few disputed passages.

It is what the doctrine says about God.

It portrays Him as more merciless than the cruelest human tyrant.

It portrays Him as sustaining life eternally for the purpose of inflicting pain.

It portrays Him as demanding measured justice from mankind while practicing immeasurable punishment Himself.

It portrays the redeemed as enjoying eternal peace while others remain in unending agony with no possibility of relief, restoration, death, or conclusion.

That is not the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

We should be careful not to say that those who believe this doctrine intentionally worship an evil God. Many sincere Christians inherited the teaching and have never carefully examined its implications.

But the character attributed to the “God” of eternal conscious torment is evil. It presents a distorted, lower-case **god** who acts in ways that would rightly be condemned as monstrous if attributed to any other being.

The true God does not pervert judgment.

He does not use false balances.

He does not punish beyond what is just.

He does not take pleasure in endless suffering.

He is holy.

He is righteous.

He is love.

He is merciful.

He will judge the world with perfect equity:

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.”

—Acts 17:31

The wicked will not escape judgment.

Every secret thing will be brought into account.

Every person will receive according to his works.

But justice does not require eternal torture.

Justice requires a true balance, a righteous measure, and a punishment proportionate to the offense.

Eternal conscious torment is therefore not a defense of God's justice.

It is a contradiction of it.

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## Part Ten

### Hell: Righteous and Proportionate Final Judgment Through Conditional Immortality (CI) —not Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT)

Perhaps one of the worst man-made doctrines ever embraced by, and imposed upon the Oneness Apostolic Church is the doctrine of eternal conscious torment. It deserves that distinction for at least three reasons.

**First**, it is one of the most horrific, mind-bending, and morally grotesque doctrines ever conceived: the idea that God will preserve the wicked alive forever for the purpose of endless torture and suffering. **Second**, it stands alongside the Trinity as one of the doctrines most contrary to the revealed character and nature of God, who is holy, just, merciful, righteous, and whose judgments are true. **Third**, for some strange reason, it has become one of the most deeply ingrained and untouchable doctrines in the church. To even question its validity is often treated as though a person is denying the faith itself, and many are made to fear that simply asking honest questions about eternal torment might place them in danger of the very fiery torture pit the doctrine describes.

That is not biblical confidence. That is doctrinal intimidation. A teaching that cannot survive honest examination by Scripture should never have been given unquestionable authority over the conscience of the Church.

#### **Fact: The God of Heaven is the Same God of Hell**

Bear in mind, the Bible teaches only two eternal destinies: heaven and hell. The God of Heaven is also the God of Hell. This means that the God who will preside over heaven will also preside over hell – **simultaneously** – *if* you believe that hell is eternal torment. That is a hard thought to comprehend, especially because people you know and love will be in both – *simultaneously*.

This is a clear indication that ECT is not reasonable and that the ‘god’ of eternal conscious torment is not the same God revealed in Scripture. That’s because the very depraved nature of ECT is incompatible with the character of the God of justice, mercy, love, and righteous judgment. “Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?” (Job 8:3) No, He does not.

The true God will require every person who rejects Him to pay the full and exact penalty for sin, according to his works and knowledge, but justice demands the full price—not the full price plus an infinity of additional suffering that can never be completed, satisfied, or brought into balance. That level of suffering is incomprehensible to the human mind, not reasonable, and not consistent with the nature of the God who is love and by whom all creation came into existence.

Heaven and earth will pass away, yet many believe that the works of darkness, sin, and evil itself will be kept intact, alive, and taken beyond the bounds of this defiled, soon-to-be terminated creation and into another realm to be repurposed for no other reason than abhorrent, infinite suffering.

That belief forces us to face a question few dare to ask openly—often for fear of shame, condemnation, or having their faith and spiritual maturity questioned by pastors or fellow believers. So we will ask it plainly here, on behalf of the many sincere Christians who have long carried it quietly in their hearts. Truth and justice demand that this question be asked openly and placed squarely into the ECT belief system:

**“How can I enjoy eternity in heaven knowing that my own family members are out there somewhere being tortured and suffering without end — at the hands of Jesus — the very same hands that so lovingly embrace me here in glory?”**

Any person who is honest with themselves would have to admit that is a horrific thought. And if this were actually the case, at a certain point deep into eternity, they would likely call Jesus aside and pose the question, **“Jesus, my precious, sweet little Grandma died Catholic, isn’t one zillion years enough already?”** Then imagine the Jesus of ECT responding, **“I’m sorry, my child, there is never enough. This is just the beginning. There is no end.”** Pause and think about that... Many non-believers *have* been willing to openly ask that question and thought about it. Their conclusion is simple: “I would never serve the Christian God.” Fortunately, **this morbid scenario is not one we need to worry about while looking forward to our home in heaven.** The Bible does not teach any such evil, and no one (*especially* Jesus) could wish this kind of unimaginable, conscious suffering even on their worst enemies.

There are those who have been so indoctrinated that they would actually respond, “God is sovereign, His ways are not our ways.” To which we would agree to both, yet maintain our God is not evil, and if you would believe the God of Calvary is capable of this, we implore you to rethink your view of Jesus and hell. To those who would say, “Well, that’s what the Bible says,” we would respond **“Actually, no it doesn’t!”**

The Bible explicitly teaches **“The wages of sin is death...”** (Rom 6:23) and **“...everlasting destruction”** (2 Thes 1:9); **“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”** (Ez 18:4). **Only the righteous put on immortality** (1 Cor 15:53, Romans 2:7). These scriptural truths make the Conditional Immortality view of hell a reasonable response to sin by the Just Judge of the unsaved: sweet little Grandma and Joseph Stalin receive the same eternal fate; the only difference is the degree of appropriate punishment for their disobedient works. **“The Lord is not willing that any should perish (be destroyed) ...”** (2 Pet 3:9) and **“Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matt 10:28). The unsaved will be destroyed, not suffer forever without end.

## Conclusion: Eternal Conscious Torment Is Incompatible with Scripture

God is perfectly just, and His judgments must agree with His own standard of a just balance.

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.”

—Proverbs 11:1

Eternal conscious torment imposes infinite suffering for finite sins and gives eternal life to the wicked even though Scripture reserves immortality for the redeemed.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.”

—Romans 6:23

Restoration must uphold real, fearful, and final judgment while rejecting the idea that God preserves the wicked alive forever for endless torture.

The biblical end of the lost is:

- Judgment according to works
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth when condemnation is disclosed
- Punishment measured according to knowledge and guilt
- Exclusion from the kingdom and life of God
- The lake of fire
- The second death
- Everlasting destruction
- Perishing
- Consumption by divine fire
- A judgment that can never be reversed

The wicked do not escape.

They do not receive a second opportunity after final judgment.

They do not enter the new creation.

But neither do they receive the eternal life and immortality promised exclusively to the redeemed.

The saved live because God gives them life.

The wicked perish because the wages of sin is death.

Fire consumes.

Death is destroyed.

The old creation passes away.

The redeemed enter the new heavens and new earth.

Sin, corruption, death, and every enemy of God are permanently removed.

This is righteous judgment.

This is proportionate judgment.

This is everlasting judgment in its final and irreversible result.

And this is consistent with the character of the God who is just, holy, merciful, and love.

### Final Note:

The Catholic Church, and later many Protestant churches, used the doctrine of eternal conscious torment to instill fear, manipulate consciences, enforce compliance, and strengthen loyalty to religious authority. The Apostolic church today has no business following that model by terrifying people into submission through a doctrine that fails the Apostolic model when tested against Scripture.

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## Appendix A

### Non-Exhaustive Explicit Scriptural Clarifications

We can say conclusively that the Bible never explicitly states that the human soul is inherently eternal or immortal.

What the Bible **does** explicitly say is:

- **God alone inherently has immortality**

“Who only hath immortality...”

— **1 Timothy 6:16**

- **Eternal life is a gift**, not a natural possession of every human being

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

— **Romans 6:23**

- **Immortality is something the saved seek and later put on**

“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.”

— **Romans 2:7**

“This mortal must put on immortality.”

— **1 Corinthians 15:53**

- **The soul can die / be destroyed**

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

— **Ezekiel 18:4**

“Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

— **Matthew 10:28**

So the biblical pattern is not that every soul is naturally immortal, but that **immortality belongs to God and is granted to the redeemed through Christ**.

A more precise way to say it would be:

**“The Bible never says that the human soul is inherently immortal or eternal in itself. Rather, immortality and eternal life are presented as gifts from God given to the saved.”**

## Appendix B

### Conditional Immortality compared with Eternal Conscious Torment

# HELL — WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

## CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY vs. ETERNAL CONSCIOUS TORMENT

A Comparative Biblical Infographic — KJV



|  <b>CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY</b><br>— THE TRUTH                                                                                                                                                     | <b>ETERNAL CONSCIOUS TORMENT</b><br>— THE LIE                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>1. Eternal life is a gift<br/>“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<br/>— Romans 6:23</p>                                            | <p>1. Claims the wicked live forever in torment</p>                                                                                                    |
|  <p>2. God alone has inherent immortality<br/>“Who only hath immortality”<br/>— 1 Timothy 6:16</p>                                                                                                 | <p>2. Gives immortality to the lost, even though Scripture gives immortality to the redeemed</p>                                                       |
|  <p>3. The saved receive life; the lost perish<br/>“Should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<br/>— John 3:16</p>                                                                           | <p>3. Turns ‘death’ and ‘destruction’ into endless life in suffering</p>                                                                              |
|  <p>4. The soul can die / be destroyed<br/>“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”<br/>— Ezekiel 18:4<br/>“Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”<br/>— Matthew 10:28</p> | <p>4. Imposes infinite punishment for finite sins</p>                                                                                                |
|  <p>5. Final judgment is everlasting in result<br/>“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”<br/>— 2 Thessalonians 1:9</p>                              | <p>5. Often built from symbolic passages while ignoring many plain scriptures</p>                                                                    |
|  <p>6. The lake of fire is the second death<br/>“This is the second death.”<br/>— Revelation 20:14</p>                                                                                           | <p>6. Conflicts with God’s just balance<br/>“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.”<br/>— Proverbs 11:1</p>  |
|  <p><b>BIBLICAL CONCLUSION:</b><br/>The righteous receive immortality.<br/>The wicked <i>die, perish,</i> and are <i>destroyed</i>.</p>                                                          | <p>7. Presents a distorted view of God’s character<br/>God is just, merciful, and righteous.</p>                                                     |
| <p><b>DOCTRINAL ERROR:</b><br/>endless torment gives eternal life to the lost and contradicts the plain language of <i>death, perishing,</i> and <i>destruction</i>.</p>                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

**COMPARE EVERY DOCTRINE BY SCRIPTURE.**



### THE BIBLE TEACHES

## CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY —

ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE SAVED,  
FINAL DESTRUCTION FOR THE WICKED.



“For the wages of sin is death...”  
— Romans 6:23



“...everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”  
— 2 Thessalonians 1:9

