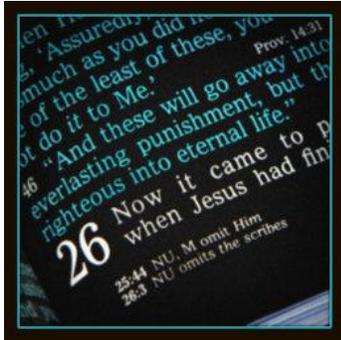


Matthew 25:46 Does Not Prove Eternal Torment



[Matthew 25:46](#) is one of the most commonly used texts to prove that hell is a place of eternal torment. The text reads, “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”¹ It is this reference to “eternal punishment” that is seen as a slam dunk, proving beyond a reasonable doubt that hell is a place of eternal conscious suffering.

Of course, it proves no such thing, and this passage has come up numerous times in the Rethinking Hell universe. It came up in a [response to Tom Ascol’s “4 Truths About Hell.”](#) It is addressed by Chris Date in [Episode 7](#) of the Rethinking Hell podcast. Chris Date also addressed some specific grammatical elements of the passage in [response to the blogger Turretinfan](#) and a [follow-up response](#).

However, there has yet to be a single, (relatively) succinct post (or series of posts) specifically about this text that can be referred to when the question comes up about how evangelical conditionalists might address the fact that the unsaved are condemned to “eternal punishment.” My goal here is to give such a response.

I want to be clear; my ultimate goal is not to make an affirmative case that [Matthew 25:46](#) is evidence for annihilationism (though I will draw attention to an oft-overlooked aspect of the passage that does weigh in our favor some). All that I am ultimately arguing is that this verse does not prove the traditional doctrine, and that annihilation is at least logically consistent with its warning of “eternal punishment.”

“Eternal Punishment” Does Not Necessarily Mean An Ongoing Act of Punishing

I do agree with most traditionalists that, in this passage, “eternal” speaks of something lasting for eternity. It lasts for ever and ever. It is everlasting. So then, please ignore all objections you may have heard or read that attempt to refute annihilationism by saying that we make “eternal” not mean eternal (which is most of them). The meaning of eternal is *not* the key assumption that I am refuting here.

The assumption is made that “eternal punishment” means that the act of punishing the unsaved is what continues on for eternity. Most traditionalists take that for granted. This would include me when I was a traditionalist. This likely includes most conditionalists who were once traditionalists. This assumption is the underpinning of the whole argument from this verse.

However, this assumption is unwarranted, and despite the fact that we have to talk about grammar, the reason for this is actually quite simple. In a nutshell, when other nouns of action

are qualified as eternal, it is often the results of the act, and not the act itself, that lasts for eternity. If this is even a reasonable possibility with [Matthew 25:46](#), then we can no longer say that this proves the wicked always consciously exist; the one-time act of destroying them as punishment would yield the eternal result of them no longer being around.

Now, many will quickly object, reasoning like Alan Gomes of Biola University's Talbot School of Theology: "One could argue that annihilation might be the result of punishment. But the Scriptures say that it is the punishment itself which is eternal, not merely its result."² But this rebuttal is insufficient, and later on, you will see why this reasoning completely fails to account for similar instances in the Bible, none of which say "the results of" but instead read just like "eternal punishment."

Nouns of Action (Like "Punishment")

You see, nouns of action, in English and in Greek and just in general, can often be taken in more than one way. This is not complex linguistic gymnastics that Jesus' listeners would not have understood. This is a basic rule of language that a small child understands, at least in practice. In a [previous post](#), Chris Date used "translation" as an example; "translation" may refer to the act of translating ("the translation of the book took ten years"), or to the result of translating ("the translation has been published recently").³

The word "punishment" is no different. So before we even get into biblical examples, it must be pointed out that Gomes and others give us a false dilemma. They frame it as punishment vs. the results of punishment. In reality, it is about one meaning of punishment vs. another. The question is, what meaning of "punishment" was intended? Was Jesus referring to the act of punishing (like "the translation of the book took ten years"), or was he referring to the result of the act of punishing (like "the translation has been published recently")? Either one would be "punishment."

With this in mind, annihilation is eternal punishment. God punishes the wicked at one time, by destroying them, while they are alive and punishable. The result, the *punishment* that results from the act of *punishing*, is that they are destroyed and will never ever come back to life.

If this sounds like I am twisting language, you will see below why I am doing no such thing. The Bible treats language the same way.

Biblical Examples

"Eternal Judgment" – [Hebrews 6:2](#)

What does "eternal judgment" mean? It's pretty simple; God judges, and the result is everlasting. Few traditionalists, if any, argue that this verse teaches that God is continually judging for eternity, banging his gavel and repeatedly declaring saved or unsaved the same finite number of existent people.

be continually in the act of saving us, but the result, that we are saved (our “salvation”), lasts for ever and ever.

“Eternal Inheritance” – [Hebrews 9:15](#)

Our inheritance, the thing which we inherit, the result of our inheriting the kingdom, is what is eternal. We certainly are not going to be in the act of inheriting for eternity. We inherit, and we forever have what we inherit.

So Then...

It may be hasty to say that [Matthew 25:46](#) *must* be like these passages. Nevertheless, it certainly is a reasonable possibility that it is. With this in mind, [Matthew 25:46](#) certainly does not prove anything in rebuttal to evangelical conditionalism.

Being Killed/Annihilated/Destroyed Is A Form of Punishment

There is another element to this that is worth discussing, and that is the meaning of punishment. In some senses it is moot, given that in the previous section I showed that “eternal punishment” need not mean that the act of punishing is continuing for eternity in the first place. But I want to cover all of the necessary bases.

A major reason why this passage is believed to prove eternal torment is because it says “punishment,” and punishment, it is argued, must mean pain or some sort of conscious suffering, and therefore must mean that the person is alive and conscious to suffer.

This is partially true, but the part that is not true is what makes all the difference. Let us grant that someone has to exist as a sentient being to be punished, at least in any meaningful sense. It would make little sense, for example, to punish someone by beating their corpse since a corpse can’t feel. However, I am not denying that the hypothetical unsaved person is conscious and alive *when God punishes them* with destruction. They certainly are. But it is not the case that the punishment, the result of being punished, continues only as long as the person is alive/conscious to feel it and be aware.

Consider capital punishment, what is most often the most severe penalty inflicted on earth for crimes. Yes, the person is alive when the punishment is inflicted, but we don’t simply measure the punishment in terms of their conscious suffering. If that were the case, a short stint in prison or maybe even a fine would be more severe. The punishment is the years of life that were lost. The punishment continues on after the infliction of punishment and the consciousness of it ends.⁷

Under the evangelical conditionalist scenario, the fate of the wicked is similar. They are alive at judgment, and God inflicts punishment unto them. He punishes them by killing them, body and soul. But just as the judgment of [Hebrews 6:2](#) has not ended the moment that God stops the act of judging, so here the punishment does not end the moment that God stops punishing. Just as

Christ redeemed us once and for all and yet the redemption lasts for eternity, so here God punishes the wicked once and for all (by destroying them), and yet the punishment lasts for eternity. They are [annihilated](#). They are killed and dead forever, deprived of the eternity of life they would have otherwise had. And this time, it is at God's hand, done in body and soul, and there is no escaping it or reversing it. It is "eternal punishment."

Parallel Between Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment

The parallelism that Jesus makes between "eternal life" and "eternal punishment" is the biggest aspect appealed to. Since at least the time of Augustine,⁸ it has been argued that since the phrase "eternal" is used twice in this verse, and the other time it describe the life of the saved (which certainly lasts for eternity), it means that the punishment also lasts for ever and ever. However, in light of the above, this is of little relevance. I agree that in both cases, "eternal" means the same thing. So if you should see a polemical writing against annihilationism where the author argues that, in light of "eternal life," punishment must also last for eternity, you can ignore it, as it does not even address my argument here.

Far less common arguments that "eternal punishment" must entail an ongoing process since "eternal life" entails people consciously living forever will be addressed in Part 2.

Taking the Passage at "Face Value"

As I have written about [previously](#), some may appeal to the fact that the Bible, when taken at face value, supports their view. After all, God's word should be accessible to everyone, shouldn't it? But this argument is problematic because no one side can take the Bible at face value all the time. Admittedly, some may be able to do so more than others (compare the many references to death and destruction for the unsaved compared to the very few references to torment). However, every view will have trouble passages.

With that in mind, consider that to many, this passage sounds more like eternal torment, when taken at face value, and so that is seen as evidence for that view. But aside from the fact that face value can be misleading, this sword cuts both ways.

This is because this passage doesn't just reference "eternal punishment." The passage directly contrasts "eternal punishment" with "eternal life." Now, some will argue that "eternal life" has nothing to do with having conscious existence and is only about the quality of existence (although in light of the Bible's descriptions of "life," as discussed [here](#), that claim is rather tenuous). Be that as it may, we are talking about face value. At face value, "eternal life" sounds like living forever (i.e. being a consciously existent sentient being). At face value, it sounds like life and living in the way that we normally mean it, in the way that [even a number of notable traditionalists mean it](#) when speaking of the unsaved living forever in hell (until, of course, a conditionalist points out that the Bible says that the unsaved *don't* have life).

Think about it. At face value, the saved get eternal life. They get to live for ever and ever. Since the alternative is eternal punishment, the punishment must be not having life (for eternity, no

less). The punishment is not getting eternal life, so it means being eternally like a corpse or a pile of ashes. It is like if someone, on earth, had the option of life or capital punishment. It sounds like the punishment is being put to death.

In a nutshell, this passage says that the unsaved don't get eternal life, so how can they be alive to be tormented forever? At face value, this flies in the face of the traditional doctrine.

Like I said, this sword cuts both ways. When "eternal life" comes up, suddenly the face value meaning of phrases isn't so important, and examining the scripture more in-depth is not seen as unnecessarily complicating the matter.

Conclusion

Given how deeply ingrained the doctrine of eternal torment is in Christendom, it is understandable that to the average person, the meaning of "eternal punishment" is eternal torment. But when we compare scripture with scripture, and look into the matter further, we see that it is hardly that simple.

It should be apparent already how evangelical conditionalism is consistent with this passage, though it will be useful to address further issues, lest we leave important stones unturned. In Part 2, we will look at some rebuttals made to what I have put forth here. We will also look at an alternative conditionalist interpretation of [Matthew 25:46](#).

To recap, in Part 1, I gave an explanation for how Matthew 25:46 and "eternal punishment" is consistent with annihilationism. Here in Part 2, I will show why some of the rebuttals to what I put forth in Part 1 are insufficient to show that Matthew 25:46 proves eternal torment. I will also address an alternative conditionalist interpretation, one that I don't hold but that is stronger than traditionalists usually give it credit for.

NOTE: One might see the traditionalist rebuttals below and find them lacking. I am not trying to knock down strawman arguments or anything like that. Simply put, despite having read far more about hell than your typical Bible student, I haven't really come across anything better. That may sound harsh, but it is what it is. In a lot of traditionalist works, there isn't anything put forth that my arguments in Part 1 do not already address (e.g. the traditionalist argument that "eternal" means eternal, which I already grant). A few have gone more in-depth, and that is what I am addressing below.¹

Matthew 25:46 Does Not Prove Eternal Torment – Part 2

To recap, in Part 1, I gave an explanation for how Matthew 25:46 and "eternal punishment" is consistent with annihilationism. Here in Part 2, I will show why some of the rebuttals to what I put forth in Part 1 are insufficient to show that Matthew 25:46 proves eternal torment. I will also address an alternative conditionalist interpretation, one that I don't hold but that is stronger than traditionalists usually give it credit for.

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Playing it By the Numbers

In Part 1, I gave several examples where nouns of action are qualified as eternal (just like "eternal punishment"), examples where what is eternal is the result of the act, not the perpetuation of the act itself. But one may ask, how common of a phenomenon is this? Are my examples a small handful out of hundreds? Or, are most or all of such instances like those in Part 1?

Truth be told, playing it by the numbers is complicated. For starters, some passages are ambiguous or disputed. 2 Thessalonians 1:9, commonly cited as evidence for traditionalism, speaks of "eternal destruction." Is God continually in the act of destroying the unsaved without ever actually completing the process? It depends upon who you ask. More at the lay level than the scholarly level, some will argue that it is speaking of an eternally ongoing act. At the scholarly level, this is less often the case. Douglas Moo, while *advocating* traditionalism in the book *Hell under Fire*, concedes that eternal nouns of action can refer to the result being what is eternal, and even cites 4 of my 5 examples from Part 1 as instances where this occurs² Nevertheless, this is still a passage in dispute.

Another such passage is 2 Thessalonians 2:16, which speaks of God giving us "eternal comfort." The question arises as to whether it is speaking of God continually comforting us (because God is really awesome like that), or whether we are given comfort, i.e. we are comforted at one time, and the result, the comfort, lasts for eternity. This passage could go either way.

Matthew 25:46 itself is a disputed passage.

So far, all examples have either spoken of results, or are disputed/ambiguous. That weighs in my favor. However, there is one other noun of action in the Bible that is qualified as eternal: "eternal life." If one grants that "life" in eternal life is speaking of the verb of living, then this would be a counter example. But how much weight should it be given? Since "eternal life" is used many times in the Bible, far more than my examples, should it be treated as many counter-examples? Or, is it but one counterexample? After all, eternal life may be used many times, but it is a single phrase that means essentially the same thing every time it is used.

Because of this issue with “eternal life,” any argument that appeals to the numbers will have problems. However, it cannot be denied that my argument is consistent with biblical language, no matter what one’s reckoning of the numbers.

Of course, that is not the last that you will see regarding the connection between “eternal punishment” and “eternal life”...

More About The Parallel Between Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment

In Part 1, I referenced the appeal to the fact that “eternal punishment” and “eternal life” appear together in the same sentence. As noted previously, it should be apparent why the parallelism is largely irrelevant to my arguments (and to those who have argued similarly, e.g. Edward Fudge³).

However, for some, it is still not enough that “eternal” mean the same thing in “eternal life and “eternal punishment.” Some will argue that, since eternal life is an ongoing process (insofar as the saved live forever), eternal punishment must likewise be an ongoing process of punishment being inflicted. Robert Peterson at least alludes to this argument (though it is in the context of another argument)⁴. After all, “eternal punishment” and “eternal life” show up together, and both are eternal, so it is reasoned that they must not only both be everlasting, but they must share other similarities, such as being an act that continues for eternity.

What of this argument? Does the fact that those with “eternal life” live forever mean that we should assume “eternal punishment” means eternal punishing?

More than anything else, this argument fails simply because it makes too much of the seeming parallelism. What they have in common is the qualification of “eternal,” and I am already granting that both times it means the same thing. To say that these phrases have to also be the same in every other way is just a bald assumption, the kind that good theologians don’t typically make, except, so it seems, when dealing with the issue of hell.

Between “eternal punishment” and “eternal life,” there are also noteworthy differences. For example, the two phrases are not grammatically the same. All of the examples of eternal nouns of action that I point to above are based on transitive verbs (acts that a subject does to an object). The verb “punish” is no exception (one person punishes another). In no instance in the Bible does a noun of action from a transitive verb, when qualified as “eternal,” necessarily refer to the ongoing act. The verb “live,” however, is an intransitive verb (you live; you can’t live somebody). If “life” and “punishment” are not grammatically the same, so why would we assume that they must work out exactly the same? There is also a sense in which “life” is not actually the act of living, but rather a thing (“life” is a noun) that is both the cause and the result of living,⁵ although that is probably going into more detail than is necessary here.

The point is, the only things that “eternal life” and “eternal punishment” share is their duration, since they are both “eternal,”⁶ and that duration does nothing to refute annihilationism. Beyond the duration (which I grant is the same in both cases), there isn’t really much to go on. At least

insofar as I have read, the argument just simply is assumption, assumption that since they are mentioned together, they form a parallelism that means both must not only be everlasting but also everlasting in the same way. So, all I can really say is that mere assumptions cannot disprove annihilationism. There's no reason why they must be parallel in such a way that proves that "punishment" is meant as an eternally ongoing process.

Particular Word Endings Implying a Process Instead of a Result

In *Erasing Hell*, Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle argue that words in Greek that have a -sis ending when transliterated imply an eternal process and not a result.⁷ Since the Greek word for punishment in Matthew 25:46 is *kolasis*, this could be quite relevant to the matter at hand.

Now, I want to point out that, despite advocating what I consider a false view, *Erasing Hell* is relatively well-researched and even-handed. And I said this about the book even before Preston Sprinkle appeared on our podcast (Episodes 5 and 6) and subsequently came to adopt our view. Having even made this argument at all shows that Chan and Sprinkle had a better understanding of our view than many other books on the subject. Also, for all I know, they might not even hold to it anymore (Sprinkle did change his mind on the overall issue, after all).

That said, since some may read the argument and be sympathetic to it, I will explain why it does not do much to refute conditionalism.

There are not many occurrences of eternal nouns of action that have the -sis ending⁸ There are only two.

The first is 2 Thessalonians 2:16. They cite it as an example of an ongoing act. I explained above how it really is ambiguous, since comfort may last after the act of comforting has ended.

Even if we grant that they are right about 2 Thessalonians 2:16, however, the second example undermines the thesis. The second instance is Hebrews 9:12, "eternal redemption." The word for "redemption" is the Greek *lutrosis*, which has the same -sis ending⁹ Yet no one is arguing that Jesus would be continually redeeming us. It was a one-time, accomplished act, which bought for us the result of redemption, a result that lasts for eternity.

Therefore, at most, the -sis ending indicates a process in 50% of these instances. This could potentially lend a small amount of weight to the idea of "eternal punishment" being a process, but not enough to make it even the probable meaning.

Arguing That Instances Of Eternal Results Really Speak Of Eternal Processes

In Part 1, I gave 5 examples of passages where nouns of action are qualified as “eternal,” and yet, despite the fact that they read just like “eternal punishment,” what was in view was not the act, but the result.

Of the 5, one was challenged by Robert Peterson in the book *Two Views of Hell*.

Peterson argued that Hebrews 5:9, which spoke of “eternal salvation,” was not an instance of eternal results. He appeals to Hebrews 7:25, which, in Peterson’s translation, reads as follows: “Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”¹⁰ However, two major issues arise.

Peterson’s reasoning seems to be that since Jesus “always” lives to intercede for the save, he therefore will be doing so “always,” even throughout eternity. But always doesn’t necessarily mean “for ever and ever.” People say “always” all the time in all sorts of contexts. The Greek *pantote* is likewise used in many contexts where it is not speaking of eternal duration (e.g. Matthew 26:11, Luke 15:27, Colossians 4:12). Peterson reads far too much into this passage.

A small handful of translations, such as the NASB, actually say “forever” where the above says “completely.” That sounds more like Peterson’s view, but in light of my next point, as well as the lack of anything in the Greek that actually indicates duration, it is likely that even these few translations meant it in the sense of completion (like how one might say “I have been saved forever because of what Jesus did and what he will continue to do until I am glorified”).

The biggest problem with Peterson’s interpretation is what it requires to be true of the eternal state. He is saying that for ever and ever, Jesus will be in the act of saving us. But why would Jesus need to keep saving us in the next world? Jesus continually interceding right now makes sense; though we are to aim to never sin ever, sometimes believers still sin. Jesus Christ is our advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1). But there will be no sin in the world to come! Peterson’s view means that Jesus needs to keep interceding for us, as a priest does. But there is no need for a priest when there is no sin. Peterson’s view would require an eternal state where there is something we need to be saved from. But that surely isn’t the case when we are glorified and made like Jesus Christ himself! With this in mind, it is all the more likely that completion, not the ever-continuing act, is what is in view. Because of what Jesus did, and because of what He will continue to do for a time, we are saved for ever and ever.

And even if Peterson were right, this would only refute one example. The rest would still stand on their own.

The Alternative View Briefly Discussed

There is an alternative view, that the Greek word *aiónios*, which is translated as “eternal,” does not actually mean “eternal” in the verse in question. It is true that the term does have nuance and other uses besides speaking of eternal duration. Given the fact that annihilationism fits even if the “eternal” in “eternal punishment” means something that lasts for ever and ever, this isn’t a

big point. However, I will draw attention to the flawed logic and reasoning that is often employed against it.

When not referring to something lasting for ever and ever, the term *aiónios* has divine connotations. According to Edward Fudge, *aiónios* “sometimes suggests ‘quality of being,’ almost meaning ‘divine’ rather than enduring.”¹¹¹² So let’s think of it in terms of being divine. What if Jesus was saying that the punishment is not everlasting, but rather, divine in nature?

The argument against this is often along the lines of “if punishment isn’t eternal, then neither is life!” The underlying assumption is that *aiónios* means the same thing in both “eternal life” and “eternal punishment.” Let us assume, for our purposes here, that this the case. Even then, the above traditionalist rebuttal is true to an extent, but it fails to make the point that it attempts to. Against certain arguments, the rebuttal may have some weight, such as when it is used against the argument that the *aiónios* in “eternal punishment” just generically refers to a long time.¹³ The problem is that this response about eternal life not being everlasting is thought to be the magic bullet, the be-all-end-all against all views other than eternal torment. But aside from the fact that the main view I have put forth grants that “eternal” means eternal/everlasting in both “eternal punishment” and “eternal life,” this seeming magic bullet is also misapplied to the alternative argument I have given, that *aiónios* is meant in the sense of divine or other-worldly.

If *aiónios* is meant to say that the punishment (and subsequently, life) is divine in origin, that it has the *quality* of the age to come, then the argument that “eternal life wouldn’t be eternal” is meaningless. This is because this verse wouldn’t be talking about duration in the first place. Jesus would only be speaking about the quality and origin of the punishment and life. True, life would not be said to be everlasting *in this particular verse*, but all that it would mean was that *in this particular verse*, Jesus wasn’t saying that it lasts for eternity. That’s not the same as denying that the life of the saved is everlasting. In this one instance, Jesus would simply be speaking of the quality of both, and not the duration at all. Not saying that life lasts for eternity is not the same as saying that life does not last for eternity. This morning, I made no mention of the earth being round. That doesn’t mean that I deny that the earth is round! It just never came up today in my conversations with others.

Again, I don’t hold to the view that in this verse “eternal” means something other than what we normally think it means. I find my main argument much more likely for reasons largely unrelated to final punishment. Nevertheless, it was worth bringing up, if for no other reason than to emphasize that even this, which I consider an inferior annihilationist argument, is not refuted by the standard objection that denying the eternity of “eternal punishment” also denies the eternity of our life in Christ.

Conclusion

There just isn’t a good argument that this passage refutes annihilationism. It is one thing to say that this passage is consistent with eternal torment (it is, at least in isolation). But there is no getting away from the fact that, as Part 1 made clear, annihilation is consistent with “eternal punishment.”

Notes for part 1:

1. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations I give are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.[↵](#)
 2. Alan Gomes. “Evangelicals and the Annihilation of Hell: Part One,” *Christian Research Journal* (Spring, 1991), 14-19, n.d., <http://www.bible-researcher.com/hell4.html> (accessed on December 16, 2013).[↵](#)
 3. Chris Date. “‘Punishment’ and the Polysemy of Deverbal Nouns.” *Rethinking Hell* [blog], posted June 19, 2012, <http://www.rethinkinghell.com/2012/06/eternal-punishment-and-the-polysemy-of-deverbal-nouns> (accessed January 2, 2014).[↵](#)
 4. Fortunately, to be in the position as these Pharisees would be rare. Even those who blaspheme God can be forgiven if the person acts in ignorance, as Paul did ([1 Timothy 1:13](#)). You have to really know what you are doing (like one who would have just seen Jesus cast out demons). If you think you may have committed the sin of [Mark 3:29](#), and you give a darn about it, then I think it is safe to say that you haven’t committed the eternal sin.[↵](#)
 5. Some manuscripts vary and do not refer to an “eternal sin,” but even if the alternative rendering is correct and it does not say “eternal sin,” it is still the case that the idea of something like “eternal sin” made perfect sense to the 1st or 2nd-century scribe who copied it wrong.[↵](#)
 6. For one instance of a traditionalist arguing that Jesus will be eternally in the act of saving us, see Part 2.[↵](#)
 7. Of course, this is complicated somewhat if there is a conscious intermediate state, especially in the case of someone who is punished with death but has found Christ and therefore enters into his presence upon death. For them, death would actually lead to glory. But this complicates all sides, since surely that is not the intention of those who inflict the punishment. They aren’t going into it with the plan of sending the person to heaven as punishment! Rather, this would be demonstrative of the imperfections of earthly action, since humans can only kill the body. But God can destroy body and soul ([Matthew 10:28](#)).[↵](#)
 8. Augustine of Hippo. *City of God* ed. Phillip Schaff (Veritatis Splendor, 2012), 21:23, 629.
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Notes for part 2

1. To be fair, this lack of stronger responses isn’t totally the fault of past traditionalist writers; before the internet, there was not a lot of published conditionalist literature that was easy to find that would have refuted these ineffective arguments. Nevertheless, knowing this will help explain why I am not rebutting stronger, better arguments that are not directly or indirectly dealt with by the material in Part 1.[↵](#)
2. Douglas Moo. “Paul on Hell.” *Hell under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment*. (Zondervan, 2004), 106.[↵](#)
3. Edward Fudge. *The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*, 3rd ed. (Wipf & Stock, 2011), 38-39[↵](#)

4. Robert Peterson. "A Traditionalist Response to Conditionalism." *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* (IVC Academic, 2000), 97↵
5. Joseph Dear. *The Bible Teaches Annihilationism* (n.d.), Section XVI, Subsection D, found at *3-Ring Binder*, n.d., http://3-ringbinder.weebly.com/uploads/1/9/1/0/1910989/the_bible_teaches_annihilationism.pdf (accessed on December 1, 2013).↵
6. Technically, it doesn't have to be the case that *aiónios* means the same thing in both cases; language is simply not that rigid. However, I believe that it probably does have the same meaning in both phrases, and it is simply easier in this case to agree with the traditionalist and show how it doesn't matter than it is to speculate about how "eternal" could have a different meaning in each phrase.↵
7. Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle. *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity, and the Things We Made Up* (David C. Cook, 2011), 93-94.↵
8. I am simplifying here, as Chan and Sprinkle did. In [Matthew 25:46](#), the word used is actually transliterated as *kolasin*; it is the same word as *kolasis*, just spelled differently for grammatical reason, like how we turn the verb "write" to "writes" when we go from "I write" to "she writes." The actual meaning stays the same.↵
9. In the actual passage, it ends in *-sin* (when transliterated), like how *kolasis* is in the form of *kolasin* in [Matthew 25:46](#).↵
10. Peterson, 97↵
11. Fudge, 36.↵
12. Fudge also makes the same main argument I do in Part 1, that annihilation can be considered eternal punishment in any sense – Fudge, 38-39.↵
13. The argument that *aiónios* means a long time but not eternity stems from the root of the word, *aión*, which roughly means "age."↵