Eschatology: The Study of Last Things

Intro: Why study eschatology?

Views on the Millennium

I. Introductory statements
   A. Each of these views falls within the framework of historic Christian orthodoxy
   B. Many denominations, including the SBC, do not take a position on the millennium. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 states, “God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth.”
   C. Since Revelation 20:1-5 is the only text in Scripture that explicitly identifies a millennial reign, it is the foundational text for this question. Yet one’s view on the millennium affects interpretation not only of Revelation but other apocalyptic and prophetic texts as well (Daniel, Matt 24, 1 Thess 4, etc.)

II. Four Primary Views on the Millennium
   A. Postmillennialism
      1. Classical postmillennialism holds that 1000 years is still a future time, a wonderful coming age in which the gospel will triumph so greatly as to thoroughly transform the world’s societies and cultures.
      2. Christ will then return after the thousand years in which the dragon is bound, he will defeat his enemies, and usher in eternity
   B. Amillennialism
      1. The millennium is symbolic of the present age, the age of the church
      2. When Christ returns, all of the events of the last days (resurrection, judgment, etc.) occur at the same time
   C. Historic Premillennialism
      1. Teaches that Christ will return bodily in power and glory before the thousand years and will set up his reign on earth
      2. Tend to read the recipients and contents of the blessing more literally rather than risk unwarranted symbolism
      3. Thus, 1000 years usually understood as literal, as well as the signs leading up to it and the blessings of it

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D. Dispensational Premillennialism
   1. Christ will return secretly to rapture the church prior to the great tribulation
   2. During the tribulation, the Jewish people will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and come to faith
   3. After the tribulation, Christ will return bodily and publicly in power and glory before the thousand years and will set up his reign on earth
   4. Tend to read the recipients and contents of the blessing more literally rather than risk unwarranted symbolism
   5. Thus, 1000 years usually understood as literal, as well as the signs leading up to it and the blessings of it
   6. Believe Israel will be restored politically in the millennial kingdom

III. Postmillennialism
   A. Historical development of the view
      1. This view is relatively new. Very little of this position is attested prior to the 17th C.
      2. Its roots may come with the “latter-glory” doctrine of John Owen, Thomas Brightman, and other 17th C Puritans.
      3. It was fully developed and popularized by Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the greatest/most influential American theologian ever. This view was likely influenced by the optimistic view of the 18th C American Puritans who saw a nearly universal Christian nation
   B. Details of view
      1. Within this view are advocates of a literal 1000 year reign and a symbolic 1000 year reign
      2. Christ is in heaven for the millennium, not on earth, but he exercises his reign through his Spirit and the church’s preaching of the gospel
      3. First resurrection is believers’ spiritual transition from death to life through union with Christ (Eph 2:4-6)
      4. Because Satan cannot deceive the nations any longer (Rev 20:3), the church’s mission will result in the conversion of all nations and peoples until the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD (Hab 2:14)
      5. Jesus’ victory will be plain as political and legal systems are conformed to God’s righteousness, cultural pursuits such as labor and the arts are redeemed, and increasing quality and length of life are displayed as God’s blessing
      6. After this millennium, God will release his restraint on Satan and wicked humanity will converge in a defiant assault on Christ’s church
      7. Jesus will return bodily from heaven to destroy his enemies and administer his last judgment, then come the new heavens and new earth
   C. Assessment (strengths/weaknesses)
      1. Strengths
         a. The Great Commission leads us to expect that the gospel will go forth in power and eventually result in a largely Christian world
         b. Parables of the gradual growth of the kingdom indicate that it eventually will fill the earth with its influence (e.g. Matt 13:31-32, parable of the mustard seed)
         c. The world is becoming more Christian as it spreads throughout the world to more and more nations and people groups
d. Very optimistic about the power of the gospel to change lives and bring about good in the world

2. Proposed Weaknesses
   a. The authority of Christ in Matt 28 does not necessarily imply that Christ will use that authority to bring about a conversion of majority of the population of the world
   b. The parables of the kingdom, such as the mustard seed, do say that something small will grow into something large, but it does not tell us the extent. Even now we can say that the seed has grown very large without requiring that we have achieved the state required for postmillennialism to work
   c. The world is becoming more Christian in terms of scope and numbers, but evil is likewise growing exponentially. If anything, the culture of Europe (and likely now America) can be called, as many have, post-Christian.
   d. Several passages seem antithetical to the postmillennial position
      i. Jesus’ words in Matt 7 suggest that believers are few and those who travel the road to destruction are many
      ii. Luke 18:8 asks if the Son of Man, when he comes, will find faith on earth, suggesting it will be dominated by those without faith rather than those with faith
      iii. Rather than becoming better, Paul suggests in 2 Thess 2:3-4 that things will get worse


IV. Amillennialism
   A. Historical development of the view
      1. By the 5th C, amillennialism replaced historic premillennialism as the majority view and remained so for more than a millennium.
      2. This came about because of the emphasis by Clement and Origen of Alexandria on the spiritual rather than literal interpretation of prophecy. Tyconius is the first record we have of an amillennial view, but it is the argument of Augustine in his work The City of God that secures this position as the dominant view.
      3. Moreover, though the Protestant reformers challenged the whole of Catholicism and Martin Luther went so far as to call the Pope the Antichrist, they did not challenge the prevailing amillennial eschatology
      4. It has remained a prominent, though likely not the majority view, to the present.
   B. Details of view
      1. No millennium in the sense of other views, but rather it symbolically represents the church age (now).
      2. Satan was bound through Christ’s death and resurrection, especially in the sense that he is unable to hold the Gentiles in ignorance or gather a worldwide coalition against the church

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2Hodge and Warfield’s positions are quite close in many respects to amillennialism; several charts and publications place one or both of them in that position instead of postmillennialism.
3“I don’t particularly consider myself to be post-millennial though if I had to choose between that and pre- I would obviously take post.” From a May 2004 interview with N.T. Wright.
3. Rev 20:1-2—binding of Satan occurred during Jesus' earthly ministry. He spoke of binding the strong man in order that he may plunder his souse (Matt 12:29) and said that the spirit of God was at that time present in power to triumph over demonic forces. Jesus also speaks of the breaking of Satan's power in Luke 10:18 (I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven). Verse 3 provides the context—the binding is so that Satan should deceive the nations no more, and this binding is evidenced by the rapid spread of the gospel to gentiles.

4. Rev 20:4—John sees saints in heaven, not on earth. The martyrs, called souls, are reigning in heaven with Christ for a thousand years, that is, the church age.

5. Rev 20:5—first resurrection refers to going to heaven to be with the Lord; rest of the dead did not come until after 1000 years means that they do not come into God's presence for judgment until the end of the thousand years. In this way, come to life in both verses means come into presence of God (alternately, some see it as resurrection of Christ and believer's participation in Christ's resurrection through union with Christ).

6. Jesus is not physically present, but the gospel now advances by the Spirit's power through the church's witness, but always amid opposition and suffering; Jesus' reign is the heavenly reign he spoke of in Matt 28:18 (all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me).

7. 1000 years vision is meant to prepare the church for a long era of witness and suffering between the binding and destruction of Satan.

8. Like postmillennialism, Christ will return after the epoch symbolized as 1000 years, and OT prophecies and Revelation's visions are ordinarily to be understood as symbolizing the blessings and trials of the NT church.

9. After this church age, Christ will come and banish sin and the curse and usher in new heavens and new earth (Rev 21; 2 Pet 3:13).

10. When Christ returns, both believers and unbelievers will be raised and stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) but for believers it will determine reward in heaven and for unbelievers it is eternal condemnation.

11. View Rev 19:17-21 and 20:9-10 as complementary perspectives on the same last battle at the end of 1000 years.

12. Simplest view in that all end time events happen at once, immediately after Christ's return.

C. Assessment (strengths/weaknesses)

1. Strengths:
   a. Only one passage, Rev 20:1-10, speaks of a future earthly millennial reign, and that passage is obscure. It is unwise to base such a major doctrine on one passage of uncertain and widely disputed interpretation.
   b. Scripture teaches only one resurrection, when both believers and unbelievers will be raised, not two (believers at millennium and unbelievers after).
      i. John 5:28-29
      ii. Acts 24:15
      iii. Dan 12:2
   c. Answers difficult questions that premillennialism must face.
i. How can glorified believers and sinners live on earth together. It is difficult to imagine and/or accept

ii. If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, then how could people still persist in sin?

iii. No convincing purpose for a millennium. Why delay eternal state?

d. Either the majority view or at least a prominent one in the past 1650 years of church history

2. Proposed Weaknesses

a. Problems with view of Rev 20

i. Binding of Satan here is much more extensive than in Matt 12 and Luke 10; here it is said that he is buried in bottomless pit and it is sealed over him; seems to suggest a total removal of influence from the earth

ii. Deceiving the nations no more—though there is less deception than there was before Christ, we will must deal with Rev 12:9 that says Satan is the one who deceives the whole world and Rev 18:23 where Babylon deceived all the nations before its judgment comes

iii. Viewing souls as in heaven is problematic because the souls “come to life,” which could refer to the resurrection, and the angel is said to be coming down from heaven in v. 1, suggesting the scene is on earth

iv. The word resurrection (anastasis) always elsewhere refers to a bodily resurrection, but amillennialism requires a spiritual sense

v. Vv. 5-6 speak of the first resurrection, which naturally implies a second. The passages amillennialists use to speak of only one resurrection do not exclude two resurrections, they simply do not specify if there is one or more. Moreover, John 5 speaks of resurrection to life and resurrection to judgment, which could be viewed as a hint at two resurrections.

b. Premillennialism has plausible (and perhaps convincing) responses to amillennial challenges.

i. The Bible only needs to say something once in order to be true and authoritative. That it is unclear, premillenialists don’t see it as unclear at all, because they take a more literal approach. OT speaks of period far greater than the present age but still falls short of eternal state (Psa 72:8-14; Isa 11:2-9; Isa 65:20; Zech 14:6-21; 1 Cor 15:24; Rev 2:27; Rev 12:5; Rev 19:15)

ii. Glorified believers and sinners living together may seem weird, but Jesus lived for 40 days on earth with a glorified body, so there is a precedent for it.

iii. Though it would seem difficult for there to be rebellion against Jesus while he reigns on earth, we see open rebellion in the face of the Son by Satan, Judas, and the Pharisees who see Jesus’ miracles.
iv. There are likely innumerable purposes for the millennium. One would be to show the “outworking of God’s good purposes in the structure of society, especially the structures of the family and civil government” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1121).

D. Notable supporters of this view: Augustine of Hippo, most of the major Reformation theologians, J.I. Packer, G.K. Beale

V. Historic (Posttribulation) Premillennialism

A. Historical development of the view
   1. Historic (or classic) premillennialism is appropriately named because it is the oldest of the four positions
   2. It is attested in Irenaeus, Papias, & Justin Marty in early 2nd C
   3. It remained the majority view until the mid 4th C and the work of Augustine.
   4. Its history afterwards is varied.
      a. There are those who held to an historic view rooted in Scripture.
      b. There are those who turned it into a materialistic view, desiring the physical blessings of the millennial kingdom (this was part of what Augustine argued against)
      c. In the Medieval period, it was part of what sparked the Crusades as many Crusaders felt they must eradicate Islam before the millennial kingdom would come.
      d. A millennial view was maintained in the Reformation period in two traditions:
         i. A non-biblical expression of it was a part of the Munster Revolt in 1534-35 in which John Leyden attempted to reinstitute a version of the Israelite theocracy (complete with polygamy) to usher in the New Jerusalem
         ii. A more historic, biblical version was held by many of the Anabaptists
   5. Interestingly, historic premillennialism made a comeback because of the new details added by Henry Drummond, details which were very much the forerunner of dispensational premillennialism
   6. Thus, the church has never really been without the historic premillennial view, but it was only the majority view in the first 300 years of the church.

B. Details of view
   1. There will arise a great tribulation which believers will endure
   2. Matt 24:29-30 says the return of Christ will be immediately after the tribulation
   3. He will bind, but not destroy, the devil, preventing him from deceiving the nations for 1000 years (20:1-3)
   4. The saints will be raised to their resurrected bodies (Rev 20:4)
   5. During 1000 years the saints will reign with Christ in their resurrected or transformed bodies (1 Thess 4:13-18; Rev 20:4)
   6. Believers in the millennial kingdom will still be infected by sin and sorrow but relieved to a significant degree from sin’s societal and physical consequences (Psa 72:8-14; Isa 11:2-9)
   7. Though death is not eliminated until New Heavens, they will live to extraordinary ages (Isa 65:20-25)
8. When the 1000 years are over, there will be a rebellion, and at that time he will defeat and destroy the beast and false prophet in battle at Armageddon (16:14-16; 19:11-21)

9. At the end of 1000 years, a second worldwide rebellion against Jesus’ reign will provoke another war in which the dragon (the devil) will be finally defeated and destroyed

10. Wicked will be raised to judgment and eternal wrath (20:6, 11-14)

C. Assessment (strengths/weaknesses)
1. Strengths
   a. Several OT passages seem to fit neither the present age nor in the eternal state (Psa 72:8-14; Isa 11:2-9; Isa 65:20; Zech 14:6-21)
   b. There are NT passages, other than Rev 20, that hint at a future millennium
      i. Rev 2:26-27 speaks of a time when believers will rule with a rod of iron over rebellious people, a statement that makes best sense in a millennial kingdom
      ii. 1 Cor 15:23-25 may suggest that just as there is a time gap between Jesus’ resurrection and our own, there is also a time gap between our resurrection and the end.
   c. Reading of Revelation 20
      i. Binding and imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit imply a far greater restriction than we currently experience
      ii. “Came to life” in v. 4 is best taken as a bodily resurrection for two reasons. 1) the next verse calls it the first resurrection, a word used everywhere else of bodily resurrection; 2) “came to life” is used in Rev 2:8 where Jesus identifies himself as the one who died and came to life, obviously referencing his bodily resurrection
      iii. The reigning with Christ (Rev 20:4) is future, not present (as amillennialists argue), and this fits better with the rest of the NT passages that speak of how we will reign with him (Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor 6:3; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21)
      iv. Those who had come to life and reign with Christ in Rev 20 include those who did not worship the beast. But if the beast of Rev 13 has not yet come, then the scene in Rev 20 has not yet come either, and must refer to a future event.
   d. NT evidence of posttribulation “rapture”
      i. 1 Thess 4:17 is not a secret rapture of church but a public raking up of the church to be with Christ just a few moments prior to his coming to earth with them to reign during the millennial kingdom
      ii. Tribulation is linked with return in several passages
         1. Loud trumpet in Matt 24:31
         2. Sound of trumpet of God in 1 Thess 4:16
         3. Last trumpet at which our bodies are changed in 1 Cor 15:51-52
   e. This position is attested very early and throughout church history

2. Proposed Weaknesses
a. The idea of glorified believers and sinners living on earth together is difficult to accept.

b. If Christ comes in glory to reign on the earth, then how could people still persist in sin?

c. No convincing purpose for a millennium. Why delay eternal state?

d. Scripture teaches only one resurrection, when both believers and unbelievers will be raised, not two (believers at millennium and unbelievers after)
   i. John 5:28-29
   ii. Acts 24:15
   iii. Dan 12:2

D. Notable supporters of this view: Church Fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, etc.), George Eldon Ladd, Douglas Moo

VI. Dispensational (Pretribulation) Premillennialism

A. Historic development of view
   1. The roots of this view could be traced back through historic premillennialism, but its distinctive feature—the distinction between the church and Israel and the future reestablishment of political Israel—makes this a relatively new view
   2. During a time in which premillennialism was less popular, Henry Drummond made certain additions to the historic position that were a precursor to the dispensationalism of John Darby and C.I. Scofield.
   3. Dispensation premillennialism was promoted most efficiently by the Scofield Reference Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible, and the ministry of D.L. Moody.
   4. It was likely the majority position (at least in English speaking countries) in the mid to late 20th C, but its popularity has waned as many recognize significant problems not only with the eschatological view but also the system of dispensationalism in general. Progressive dispensationalism, for example, although maintaining some of the key tenets of classic dispensationalism, largely accepts an historic premillennial view.

B. Details of view
   1. Christ will return secretly to rapture the church prior to the great tribulation (1 Thess 4:16-17; Matt 24:40-41)
   2. During the tribulation, the Jewish people will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and come to faith (Rom 11:25-27)
   3. During the tribulation, many of the signs that were predicted to precede Christ’s return will be fulfilled (Matt 24; Rev 12-19) including the great ingathering of the Jewish people as they trust Jesus as their Messiah
   4. After the tribulation, Christ will return bodily and publicly in power and glory before the thousand years and will set up his reign on earth
   5. Almost exclusively held by those who make a distinction between church and Israel. This view allows the distinction to be made since church is raptured before widespread conversion of Jews

C. Assessment (strengths/weaknesses)
   1. Strengths
      a. Allows people to insist that Christ’s return can happen at any moment and thus does justice to the full force of passages that
encourage us to be ready for Christ’s return (however, this is true of amillennialism also)
b. Some of the arguments in favor of pretrib rapture
   i. Entire period of tribulation will be a time of the outpouring of God’s wrath on earth and therefore would not be appropriate for Christians to be on earth at that time
   ii. Jesus promises in Rev 3:10 that he will keep them from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world
   iii. If Christ returns after the tribulation and defeats all his enemies, then where will unbelievers come from who are necessary to populate the millennial kingdom

2. Proposed Weaknesses
   a. Same weaknesses as historical premillennialism
   b. Pretribulation rapture
      i. Inconsistent with NT to say all suffering during tribulation is due to wrath of God. Much of the suffering is due to the fact that wickedness is multiplied (Matt 24:12)
      ii. Statement to one church that they will be spared trial is a big leap to all church being raptured. It could be only one church, not all, will be spared. Being spared the trial may not mean the tribulation but rather persecution at the hands of the Roman empire
      iii. Defeating his enemies does not mean annihilating them. There are some who will surrender but be unwilling to joyfully embrace Christ’s rule
      iv. NT does not seem to justify the idea of two separate returns of Christ (a secret and public) as required by a pre-trib rapture position
      v. Arguments for a posttribulation “rapture” are more convincing, so the main feature that separates this view from the historic view is weaker
   c. Restoration of political Israel
      i. This view depends upon a strong separation between the church and Israel and a future political Israel that is not clearly taught in Scripture
      ii. This is based on a reading of the Abrahamic covenant that requires literal, future fulfillment of the promises to Abraham in a renewed Israelite state
      iii. However, the Abrahamic covenant itself suggests that the plans for and promises to Israel were for the blessing of all nations, a reality realized by the church rather than a future Israel (e.g. Gen 12:3; Gal 3)

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4I don't aim to provide all of the details of this proposed weakness, but rather include it to show one of the ways in which opponents argue against dispensationalism in general and its eschatology in particular. The dispensational system, unlike most other systems, seems to begin from eschatology and work backwards, which leads to a big divide between the OT and NT, some questionable readings of the OT material (esp. covenants), and more.
D. Notable supporters of this view: John Darby, D.L. Moody, C.I. Scofield, Charles Ryrie, Hal Lindsey, Norman Geisler, Chuck Swindoll

**Heaven, Hell, and the Intermediate State**

**Introduction**
- All four view of the millennium we have discussed have an underlying implication—whenever Jesus returns and finally ushers in eternity, there will be a judgment that separates the believers from the unbelievers. That means there are two different destinies, most often referred to as heaven and hell. It is an extremely important topic, both theologically and practically. Theologically, it affects our understanding of who God is and whether we trust Him or our own notions of “fairness” and “justice”. Practically, it affects how we live our lives. Perhaps more than any other doctrine, our understanding of the nature of heaven and hell is the most significant factor in how urgently we pursue evangelism and missions.

**The intermediate state**
- **Paradise**
  - We often speak of heaven as the place we go when we die. Yet we regularly speak of being in heaven with Jesus for eternity. However, the Bible is clear that where we go at death and where we spend eternity are not the same thing, thus using heaven as the term for both can be confusing. I prefer to speak of paradise (Jesus’ term to the thief on the cross) and the New Jerusalem in the New Heavens and the New Earth. The former refers to the intermediate state for believers, the latter to the eternal residence of the believer.
- **Hades**
  - There is likewise confusion over the various words for hell. Gehenna, Hades, Sheol, etc. The term Gehenna, as we will see, is typically translated hell with respect to eternity. Sheol, though sometimes understood as hell, is better understood as simply the grave or death. It does not have the connotation of a place of punishment as Hades and Gehenna do. I think Hades is best understood as the intermediate state for unbelievers. This is confirmed by Revelation 20:13-15 where Death and Hades give up the dead who were in them and then Death and Hades itself are thrown into the lake of fire, suggesting it was an intermediate place of residence for unbelievers.
  - Hades, though only an intermediate state, seems to be a place of conscious punishment. Scholars typically appeal to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as support for this view (Luke 16:19-31)
    - Details of the parable:
      - Rich man is said to be in torment in Hades (v. 23, 28)
      - Says he is in anguish in the flame (v. 24), and Abraham confirms his anguish (v. 25)
      - There is a great chasm between Hades and Paradise (v. 26) so that none may cross over one to the other. (Suggests that there is no opportunity for second chance after death).
    - Understanding the parable:
      - Jesus’ parables are stories, not historical fact. Nevertheless, he regularly uses examples that are rooted in “real life.”
• The suggestion, then, is that while this is a parable, it likely reflects to some extent the way the intermediate state actually is.

• There are various ways to understand the nature, then, of the intermediate state.

  ▪ Interpreting the parable

    ▪ In my view, Jesus is confirming the Jewish understanding of the day that Abraham’s bosom (paradise) is a place of comfort for the faithful, whereas Hades is a place of torment.

    ▪ Moreover, Jesus teaches not only that one cannot change his mind after death, but also that those in Hades had sufficient evidence in life to lead them to Paradise but they chose death instead.

    ▪ There is a chasm between Hades and Paradise suggests a clear demarcation/separation between the two; we do not coexist with unbelievers in the intermediate state.

    ▪ I don’t think we should extend our understanding of the intermediate state, however, to suggest that those in Hades can communicate with those in Paradise. Though possible, I think this is where Jesus moves beyond the way things are to a story that illustrates a point. The communication between the rich man and Abraham is not literal, but rather provides Jesus the opportunity to highlight the points made above.

❖ Hell

➤ What is Gehenna?

  o The Greek word *gehenna* is typically translated as hell in the NT

  o Many suggest that *gehenna* was the garbage dump that was constantly on fire, and thus this is the appropriate cultural backdrop for the phrase

    ▪ However, we must be careful not to mistake the source of an idea for the idea itself

    ▪ Moreover, some suggest that this historical context lacks adequate support to begin with

    ▪ Gehenna is the Greek equivalent of the OT Hebrew Valley of Hinnom, and therefore the proper context is not the garbage dump outside the city but the reference to judgment in Jeremiah 7:32

    ▪ Jer 7:32 speaks of the day when the Valley of Hinnom will be called the valley of slaughter. Jews picked up on this idea and used *gehenna* to refer to the fiery place of end times judgment on the wicked.

    ▪ It is thus appropriately understood as hell.

➤ Biblical Passages on Hell

  o Daniel 12:2
- And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
  o Matthew 5:22
    - But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.
  o Matthew 5:29
    - If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.
  o Matthew 8:11-12
    - I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
  o Matthew 10:28
    - And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
  o Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
    - He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’”
    - But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.’ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” […]Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- Matthew 18:8-9
  - And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

- Matthew 22:13
  - Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- Matthew 24:51
  - and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Matthew 25:30
  - And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- Matthew 25:31-46
  - "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?"
Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Mark 9:47-49

And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. For everyone will be salted with fire.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

2 Peter 2:1-22

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they
blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 

12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. 

14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 

15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. 

17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. 

18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. 

19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. 

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 

21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment deliverèd to them. 

22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

Jude 5-16

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 

6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. 

7 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. 

9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said,
“The Lord rebuke you.” 10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 11 Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error and perished in Korah’s rebellion. 12 These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. 14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” 16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

**Jude 23**
- save others by snatching them out of the fire

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

**Revelation 20:7-15**
- And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is
the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in
the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up
the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who
were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to
what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the
lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if
anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was
thrown into the lake of fire.

- Revelation 21:8
  - But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for
    murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars,
    their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which
    is the second death.”

- Revelation 22:15
  - Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and
    murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices
    falsehood.

#### Descriptions of Hell
- Utter darkness
- Everlasting fire
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth
- Second death
- Cut in pieces
- **Away from the presence of God**

#### Nature of Hell
- Retributive, not corrective
- Everlasting, not temporary
- Fire is symbolic, not literal (eternal fire and utter darkness are hard to
  reconcile as literal, and fire and darkness are each regularly used
  metaphorically in Scripture)
- I think the main point of hell is that they are “outside” the New Jerusalem.
  Whatever type of punishment fire, darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth
  refer to, I think the most significant punishment of hell is being cast outside
  the gates of the New Jerusalem, and therefore being separated from the
  presence of God’s love and blessing.
- I think Christopher Marlowe got it right in his classic play, Doctor Faustus.
  The demon, Mephistopheles, describes hell not as a place but as a state of
  existence:
    - “Think’st thou that I who saw the face of God,
      And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,
      Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
      In being depriv’d of everlasting bliss?
    (Scene 3, Lines 75-78)

#### Proposed Alternatives to Traditional View of Hell:
- Universalism:
  - All individuals will eventually be saved. Various forms, but usually
    universalists take a position that individuals must be saved through
    Christ, and this will happen some time during eternity, even if it
    takes a long time for some to abandon their resistance.
- Biblical support:
  - Philippians 2—all will bow
    - Response: Phil 1:28 says those who oppose gospel will face destruction; Phil 3:19 says enemies of Christ end in destruction
  - 1 Corinthians 15—in Adam all die, in Christ all made alive (cf. Rom 5:12-21)
    - Response: context doesn’t support universalism; vv. 22-23 clarify the coming alive as those who belong to Christ; vv. 25-26 speak of destruction of those who oppose Christ
  - 1 Timothy 2—God desires all people to be saved
    - Response: all people refers not to every individual but to all types of people (cf. 1 Tim 2:2-1-2; Rom 5:12-21)
  - Revelation 21—v. 25 speaks of open gates
    - Response: This passage is part of the blessings of the New Jerusalem and speaks of kings bringing tribute. This better reflects passages like Isa 2//Mic 4 in which the kings of the nations will bring tribute to the Messiah. The point, then, seems to be to reiterate that all nations are represented and all kings submit to Jesus’ rule, rather than an idea that unbelievers can change their mind and come in.

- Biggest issue is that not one biblical passage speaks of a second chance after death
- The Bible is clear on dozens of occasions that there will be judgment that will not be reversed.
- However appealing it might be to think that everyone will end up in “Heaven,” it is against the teaching of Scripture.
  - Annihilationism
    - The final judgment is not everlasting torment, but rather the destruction of unbelievers—their souls are annihilated from existence.
- Biblical support:
  - Matt 10:28
    - “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
    - Jesus says that souls are destroyed in hell, not consciously in torment.
  - Philippians 3:18-19a
    - For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction
  - 2 Thessalonians 1:9
    - “they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction”
  - Hebrews 10:39
• "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed"  
James 4:12  
• “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.”  
Revelation 20:14-15  
• “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”  
• Unbelievers have the same fate as the Devil and his angels, and they are cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are also cast into this lake of fire. If Hades ceases to exist when cast into the fire, as it may be natural to understand given it was temporary, then everything else cast into the lake of fire is destroyed along with it.

Preliminary Assessment:
• There are, then, several passages in which the word destruction is used rather than everlasting torment.  
• Moreover, annihilation would still be understood as everlasting judgment since there is no returning from it.  
• Annihilation would fit descriptions of hell that refer to utter darkness  
• Since their end comes through being cast into the lake of fire, one could argue that annihilation is consistent with the imagery of everlasting fire  
• Traditional views often accept that fire and darkness are metaphorical, not literal, so it is not a huge leap (in their view) to view them as metaphorical as outlined above  
• Annihilation still allows for conscious torment during the intermediate state, thus it is not inconsistent with Jesus’ parable in Luke 19  
• Annihilation agrees with the traditional view, against universalism, in maintaining God’s justice in his eternal judgment of the wicked  
• In light of these points, annihilationism is possible and could be held by an evangelical Christian.

Recommended for further reading:
• Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism edited by Christopher M. Date, Gregory G. Stump, and Joshua W. Anderson  
• http://rethinkinghell.com  
• Series of posts on Scot McKnight’s Jesus Creed blog (http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/)
Heaven, the New Jerusalem, and the Resurrection

❖ How does the Bible use the term heaven/heavens?

❖ What is the New Jerusalem? (Revelation 21-22)

❖ What is the Resurrection and why does it matter? (1 Corinthians 15)