

1-29-26

## **SERMON TITLE:**

**“Eternity After Death: Conscious Judgment or Ceasing to Exist?”**

### **Opening Prayer**

**Heavenly Father,  
We come before You humbly and reverently today. We ask that Your Holy Spirit guide us into all truth. Give us hearts that are teachable, minds that are clear, and ears that are open to Your Word. Help us to handle Scripture faithfully and to understand the seriousness of eternity. May everything said today glorify Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. In His precious name we pray, Amen.**

### **Introduction: Why This Question Matters**

There are few questions more serious than this one:

**“What happens when a person dies without Christ?”**

This is not an abstract theological debate. This is about **eternity, justice, grace, and the gospel.**

**Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) says: <sup>27</sup> Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,**

Every person will die once.

Every person will face judgment.

The question is **what happens next?**

Within Christianity...especially in **evangelical** Christianity...two main views are discussed:

1. **Eternal Conscious Judgment**
2. **Annihilationism (Ceasing to Exist)**

Today we will:

- .Clearly explain **both views**
- .Examine **key Scriptures**
- .Let **Jesus and the Bible speak**
- .Arrive at the best **biblical conclusion**

## I. The Two Theories Explained Simply

### 1. Annihilationism (Ceasing to Exist)

👉 definition: *The lost are punished, but not forever; they are ultimately annihilated.*

This view teaches that:

- .The unsaved are judged
- .They are punished for a time
- .Then they are destroyed completely
- .They no longer exist or are conscious

Supporters often point to words like:

- .“destroy”
- .“perish”
- .“death”

The argument is that eternal punishment seems incompatible with a loving God.

This view is held by many Christian and main religious groups:

- .Some modern evangelical scholars
- .Some Anglican / Church of England theologians
- .Some Evangelical Christians (Minority View)
- .Christadelphians
- .Church of God (Seventh Day)
- .Seventh-day Adventist Church
- .Jehovah's Witnesses
- .Judaism (varies by tradition) non-orthodox
- .Islam

So this is a doctrine that looks important and should be studied.

👉 Your position on this topic will not keep you out of heaven. But **not** knowing Jesus Christ will.

This doctrine does not determine **salvation** for the **believer**, but it carries eternal weight for those who are **not born again, saved, converted** and are **not heading for heaven**.

So this doctrine of “annihilation” of non-believers sounds merciful, but the question is not:

“What sounds merciful and reasonable to us?”

The question is:

“What does Scripture actually teach?”

## **2. Eternal Conscious Judgment (Historic Evangelical View)**

This view teaches that:

- .Every human has an eternal soul
- .After death comes judgment
- .The saved enter eternal life
- .The unsaved enter eternal separation from God
- .This judgment is **conscious and everlasting**

This has been the **historic teaching** of:

- . Roman Catholic Church
- . Eastern Orthodox Church
- . Most Reformed / Calvinist churches
- . Most Baptist confessions
- . Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations
- . Calvary Chapel (historically)
- . Lutheran Church (official confessions)

Now let us examine the Bible.

## II. Jesus' Teaching on Eternity

Jesus spoke about hell **more than anyone else in Scripture.**

**Matthew 25:46 (NIV)<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”**

This verse is foundational.

Notice:

- .Eternal punishment
- .Eternal life

The **same word** is used for both: *aiōnios* “Greek” meaning (eternal). The Greek word **aiōnios** (αἰώνιος) is very important in biblical theology, especially in

discussions about **eternity, judgment, and eternal life.**

If eternal life means **never-ending**, then eternal punishment must also mean **never-ending.**

If punishment ends, life would also have to end.

Jesus makes no distinction in duration.

***Mark 9:47–48 (NIV) <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> where***

***“the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”***

Unquenchable fire  
Undying worms

This is **not language of extinction.**  
This is language of **ongoing condition.**

### **III. Conscious Awareness After Death**

One of the clearest passages comes from Jesus Himself.

***Luke 16:22–24 (NIV) <sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’***

What do we observe?

The man:

- .Was conscious
- .Could see
- .Could feel torment
- .Had memory
- .Had awareness
- .Had regret

Even if this is a parable, **Jesus never taught false theology to explain truth.**

This passage alone **rules out non-existence or unconsciousness.**

**Special Note:** 🙌 However this passage is speaking of Abraham's bosom...a temporary place...rather than the lake of fire, which is introduced later in Revelation chapter 20. Two separate places...

## IV. The Final Judgment: The Lake of Fire

***Revelation 20:10–15 (NIV) <sup>10</sup> And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.***

### *The Judgment of the Dead*

***<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had***

***done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.***

**Look:**

***“They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”***

The phrase ***“for ever and ever”*** is the **strongest expression of eternity in Greek.**

It is the same phrase used to describe:

.God’s reign (Revelation 4:9–10)

.Christ's kingdom

If it means endless for God, it means endless for judgment.

## V. What About 'Destroy' and 'Perish'?

Annihilationists often quote:

**Matthew 10:28 (NIV) <sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

The word "destroy" does **not** mean "cease to exist."

It means:

- .Ruin
- .Loss

- .Separation
- .Total devastation of purpose

Example:

- .A “destroyed” car still exists
- .A “lost” sheep still exists

**John 3:16 (NIV)<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

Perish does not mean extinction.  
It means **eternal loss**.

## VI. Everlasting Separation from God

***2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 (NIV) <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might***

Everlasting destruction =  
**Everlasting separation from God's presence, not non-existence.**

## VII. God's Justice and God's Mercy

God does not delight in judgment.

**Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV) <sup>11</sup> Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’**

Hell exists because:

- .God is holy
- .Sin is serious
- .Love must be freely accepted

**C.S. Lewis said:**

*“The doors of hell are locked from the inside.”*

People are not sent to hell because God rejects them.

They are there because **they rejected Christ.**

## VIII. Why This Doctrine Matters

This doctrine:

- .Magnifies the cross
- .Explains the urgency of salvation
- .Shows the depth of Christ's sacrifice
- .Calls people to repentance today

**John 14:6 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

## IX. Final Biblical Conclusion

As much as I would want for the "unbeliever" who enters eternity without Christ and ends up in Hell would finally stop existing at some point due to mercy on

them, I honestly believe the scriptures say otherwise.

## **According to Scripture and Evangelical theology:**

👉 The unsaved do **not** cease to exist

👉 The unsaved do **not** lose consciousness

👉 Judgment is **real, conscious, and eternal**

👉 Heaven and hell are equally eternal

👉 Eternity is decided by response to Jesus Christ

## **X. Invitation and Hope**

The message of hell is not to scare...it is to **save**.

**2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

Today is the day of salvation.

## **Closing Prayer**

**Father God,  
We thank You for Your Word and for its truth. We thank You for Your justice, but even more for Your mercy. Thank You for sending Jesus to bear our judgment on the cross. I pray for every heart listening, if anyone does not know You, draw them to repentance and faith today. Help us to live with eternity in view and to share the gospel with love and urgency. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, Amen.**