
FAQ

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
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Annihilationism (eternal punishment)

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Do you believe that the condemned suffer eternal torment in the Lake of Fire or are destroyed?

We believe that the condemned who do not receive Yeshua the Messiah as their Personal Savior will spend a conscious eternity separated from God. This period will be never-ending and is described all throughout Scripture by a number of descriptions such as separation, outer darkness, torment, banishment, etc. It is possible that Biblical language describing fire and smoke in the Lake of Fire may be figurative, or would only be part of the scenery of the dimension that those who are condemned are consigned to. Many conservative Bible scholars who defend an ongoing eternal punishment actually consider the diverse images we see in Scripture to point to them serving as metaphors—so while the punishment goes on forever, the idea that sinners will writhe in fire and brimstone, and have to drink molten lead, would be an inaccurate or an exaggerated conclusion of the wider picture.

We consider an annihilation or extinction of the condemned to not be a viable punishment because it does not substantiate a viable penalty for sinners. Atheists and agnostics who deny the place of an Eternal Judge do not believe in an afterlife or that they will face any kind of penalty or reward for their deeds. They simply believe in eternal non-existence. And, eternal non-existence is precisely what annihilation advocates.

Exegetically speaking for Messianics, saying that “eternal punishment” is not eternal is also problematic. Messianics who advocate that the Sabbath, the Biblical holidays, the kosher laws, and that God’s Torah is eternal and relevant, meaning never-ending, but then who advocate that eternal punishment is not eternal, are being inconsistent with the word “eternal.” If they were consistent in their application of something being “eternal,” then it would mean that the Torah and punishment for sinners are *both* never-ending. This selective usage of the term “eternal” reveals that Messianic annihilationists do not like the concept of a never-ending and ever-lasting punishment for the condemned, and that they are probably applying their own humanistic character traits to God.¹

¹ For a further discussion, consult William V. Crockett, “The Metaphorical View,” in *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp 43-76.