

Scriptures In Revelation That Support Universal Restoration

Description

This article is the 6th part of a 9 part series on Universal Restoration vs Eternal Torment (hell). I recommend reading [the introduction](#) first if you haven't already.

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God's Presence in Hell

The traditional view of hell is that it's a place where God "isn't", or perhaps a place He doesn't make His wonderful presence felt. The Universalist might agree, but they would also say God does this so people in "hell" can learn that they need Him so they will repent and can be saved.

The Eternal Torment supporters say that's not possible because the gates of heaven and hell are locked after the Judgment. There is no way anyone can cross from hell to heaven because the gates of both are locked tight.

(They would also talk about the "Great Chasm" mentioned in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man)

They maintain that Hell is a place that God "isn't", *(or where His presence can't be felt)* but that doesn't agree with the scriptures.

Revelation 14:9-11

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and **he will be tormented with fire and brimstone 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 (*Aion of the Aion*); they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Isn't that interesting?

The people in “hell” will be tormented “*in the presence of The Lamb*”. From the Eternal Torment perspective, that means that Jesus will be watching most of mankind suffer for all of eternity. This torture will happen “*in the presence of The Lamb*” for all time.

Think about that for a moment.

Really think about it.

Does that sound like the Jesus you know? Is He the kind of person who would choose to watch literally billions of people be tormented *in His presence* for the rest of forever? We're talking about the same Jesus who said:

Matthew 5:44-45

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy’

44 “But I say to you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 “If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

I have trouble reconciling those two passages from an Eternal Torment perspective.

The Universalist has no problem with this though. They would say that Jesus is watching NOT because He enjoys it, but rather so He can pull people out when they repent. From the Universalism perspective, He is there to save people not “enjoy” a torture show.

It's something to think about.

The First Resurrection

While we're talking about those who have the mark of the beast, let's take this opportunity to examine more of Revelation.

Revelation 20:4-6

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and **they came to life** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 **The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.**

6 **Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power,** but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Everyone dies at least once (*the natural/physical death*). After the first death, verses 4-6 make it clear that all dead believers are resurrected, which is the first resurrection. It will be very important in a moment that **all believers are resurrected and therefore not dead**.

Also, if God went out of his way to say that was the “first resurrection”, then there must be a second right? **So where is the second resurrection?** We'll come back to that in second.

Please note, the order of resurrection is given to us elsewhere in the bible.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.**

17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Remember this, the “*dead in Christ will rise first*” (*the first resurrection we just saw in Revelation*) and then “*we who are alive and remain*” will be pulled up. If the dead Christians are resurrected and the live Christians have met the Lord in the air, there are no other Christians left on earth. That will be important soon.

The Dead Judged

Moving on.

Verses 7-10 describe the thousand years’ end and the binding of Satan. It picks up later.

Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

12 And I saw **the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne**, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and **the dead** were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

13 And the sea gave up **the dead** which were in it, and death and Hades gave up **the dead** which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

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.

It specifically states in verse 12 that those standing before the throne are dead. It says “the dead” four times between verses 12 and 13. They haven’t been resurrected (*1st or 2nd version*) because they are still described as being dead. **So getting hauled before the judgment seat can’t be the second resurrection because they’re described as still being dead.**

Remember that all the Christian dead have already been resurrected. Therefore the dead before the

throne here can't be Christian dead because they were resurrected back in verse 4. We know from 1 Thessalonians that it's all the dead. The rest of Christians met the Lord in the air so they can't resurrected because they didn't die.

So where's the second resurrection?

The word resurrection doesn't appear again in the book of Revelation. 20:6 is the last time the word shows up. The first resurrection has all believers coming back as described in verses 4-6 and 1 Thessalonians, and the rest of the believers "who remain alive" meet the Lord without dying. So where is the 2nd resurrection? More importantly, who is it for?

If the first resurrection is for all believers, then who is the 2nd resurrection for?

I can only think of one group that's still described as being dead. In fact, they really need resurrection because they just died a second death in the lake of fire. (*Perhaps Jude was alluding to this when he mentions the "Doubly dead" in his epistle.*)

It's interesting to note that Paul does talk about a resurrection of the wicked in Acts.

Acts 24:14-16

14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that **there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.**

16 "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

So when is this resurrection for the wicked?

(Which I assume would be the 2nd resurrection)

The Eternal Torment position would say that the second resurrection is getting pulled before the Great White Throne. It can't be anything else from the Eternal Torment position.

Universalism would say that being hauled before the Great White Throne doesn't count as a resurrection because Revelation says four times they are (*still*) "the dead".

I tend to agree with the Universalist here because the passage is very clear about everyone before the throne being dead. It's absolutely clear that every person who is mentioned being in front of the throne is specifically stated to be dead. In my opinion, you can't say they have been resurrected without

twisting the scriptures.

And I **HATE** doing that.

But Paul says there is a resurrection for the wicked. So where is it? Revelation 20:6 ("*Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection*") is the last time the word "resurrection" is used in the Bible. So we seem to have a 2nd resurrection and a resurrection of the wicked unaccounted for. Could they be the same thing?

The Eternal Torment position says it's already happened but I'm just not happy with that. The Universalist will say keep reading because the next few verses do offer hope for the resurrection/salvation of the wicked.

"Will Give" (*future tense*) the water of life

For context, we'll back up a few verses to the last verse of chapter 20:

Revelation 20:15

15 And if **anyone**'s name was not found written in the book of life, **he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Notice, the wicked ended up dying the second death in the lake of fire like we saw a moment ago. Universalism doesn't dispute this. They simply say that once you've been in the lake of fire long enough, you'll repent and can be saved.

With that in mind, verse 6 of the next chapter gets interesting. The next verse is Revelation 21:1, and the New Heavens and New Earth are described through verse 5. Next is this:

Revelation 21:6-8

6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. **I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.**

7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

It's important to note that Revelation 20:15 saw all unbelievers without exception throw into the lake of

fire. At this point, there are no unbelievers whatsoever anywhere but the lake of fire. None.

That makes verse 6 very interesting.

God says that He “**will give** to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.” Notice the tense in that sentence. It’s not the past tense “have given” and it’s not the present tense “gives”. It’s the future tense “will give”. (*It’s in the Future tense in the original Greek too, so there’s no translation issue.*)

So who will God give the water to?

Universalists would say that the future tense here gives hope that the wicked in the lake of fire could receive the “water of life”. Of course, the Eternal Torment response would be that God could be talking about giving the water of life to believers.

The Universalist response is to quote John.

John 4:14

14 but **whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst**; but **the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water** springing up to eternal life.”

The argument is that since the water is Spiritual and represents salvation, believers have no need to drink the water of life again.

Further, the Universalists point out that those who drink the water “shall never thirst”. The Universalist argument goes that since believers don’t need it because they already have a well of water within themselves. And since they aren’t thirsty anyway, then the phrase “will give” is intended for the unbelievers currently in the lake of fire.

The Eternal Torment position might respond “*that’s a lot of doctrine to pin the tense of a single word*”. Notice, that doesn’t answer the verse.

Heaven’s Gates will Never be closed

Moving on.

Revelation 21:9-10

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, **I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**”

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**

From that, I think it's fairly clear that the New Jerusalem is either the place the Bride of Christ (*the Church*) lives, or some say that the city *is* the bride. I don't want to get tied up on that point, but the City is where believers are.

Interesting fact about this city:

Revelation 21:25

25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) **its gates will never be closed;**

Contrary to what most believers think, the gates of heaven will ***not*** be locked after the final judgment. If the city is where believers are, and it's gates will never be closed, that might seem to indicate that others can enter.

“But Sinners never enter.”

Now, you might point out two verses later where it says:

Revelation 21:25

25 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Amen.

However, the Eternal Torment position needs to consider a verse in Corinthians before they shout “gotcha” at the Universalists.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 **Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Without the cleansing blood of Jesus' sacrifice, **nobody** would make it into this New Jerusalem. In fact, every single Christian was once a sinner and "*dead in our trespasses and sins*".

The Universalist would say that unbelievers could be washed after death. The Eternal Torment position says they can't.

Who's right?

If only Revelation had a clear verse that gives of hope that unbelievers could be saved and have access to the Water of Life that Jesus offers. Some verse that allows for unbeliever's robes to be washed so they could enter the city through the gate.

Well...

Entering by the Gate

Revelation 22:14-15

14 **Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.**

15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Please don't miss this: **they enter by the gate**. This is *incredibly* significant. We saw in chapter 21 that the Bride (*bride = all believers*) doesn't "enter through the gate". Instead, they take a "celestial elevator". ?

Revelation 21:9-10

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues

came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, **I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**”

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**

So if believers don't “enter by the gate”, then who is entering by the gate? The Universalist would say it's unbelievers after being saved. And notice, it's only *after* they repent and are saved. Revelation 22:15 makes it perfectly clear that the immoral/unrepentant will never enter the city.

Revelation 22:14-17

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

15 **Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.**

16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

17 **The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.**

Verse 17 sounds a lot like an invitation to salvation to me, but to whom?

Humans divide neatly into two groups from God's perspective: Believers and unbelievers. The Universalists would say that Believers (*the Bride*) and God (*the Spirit*) are giving out the invitation. The only logical recipient of that invitation is the last group. (*unbelievers.*)

We know the gates of the city are open and will never be shut. There seems to be a 2nd resurrection and a resurrection of “the wicked” unaccounted for. If I was being tormented in a lake of fire for my sins, the water of life would sound pretty appealing.

I think going from “spiritually dead” in the lake of fire to “Alive in Christ” would count as a resurrection, fulfilling both of our missing resurrections. I think verse 14 might allow for that.

Revelation 22:14-15

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Verse 15 makes it clear that the wicked/unbelieving will never get in. God really and truly hates sin. Anyone who remains in rebellion against Him will never cross into the city.

The Universalists would say to notice verse 14. They need to “*wash their robes*” so they can get to the “*tree of life*” and “*enter by the gates into the city*”

Question:

- if all the believers are already clothed in white robes, (so they don't need to “*wash their robes*”)
- if all the believers are already in the city (so they don't need to “*enter by the gates*”)
- if all the believers already have the “right to the tree of life” (but unbelievers don't)
- Then can verse 14 be talking about unbelievers?

Can it?

Verse 15 makes it clear that those who remain ungodly and unrepentant will stay outside the city.

But what if they repent?

We know from 1 Peter 3-4 that Jesus preached the Gospel to the dead “*who were disobedient*”. We also know from Ephesians 4:8-9 that at some point when he descended into the lower parts of the earth (*hell?*). We also know that He brought back a whole host of “*captives*” when He ascended on high (*into heaven?*).

It makes sense that those two groups are the same. I'm not saying they are, but it makes perfect sense.

Conclusion

If those in the lake of fire are being tormented “in the presence of the Lamb”, that seems like a perfect opportunity for Jesus to preach the Gospel to them.

Don't you think?

Wouldn't that be just like Him?

It sounds like God to never – not even once – let a single unrighteous person enter into heaven

because of His holiness. Yet, because of the rightness of His judgement and depths of His mercy, to bring all men to repentance anyway (*without ever violating their free will*). These verses in Revelation seem to allow for this position.

The next article in this series is: [So why did Jesus die if not to save us from hell?](#)