

A row of lit candles in a dark, textured setting, possibly a church or a memorial service. The candles are lit, casting a warm, orange glow. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a stone or brick wall. The candles are arranged in a row, and their flames are visible. The overall mood is solemn and reflective.

HELL YES...OR HELL NO

WEEK 3

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HELL OF A DISCLAIMER:

We are all Christian brothers and sisters and our conversations will be centered on biblical texts. No one should claim to “know” all of the answers. Our discussion presupposes that Hell is real. We may not always agree but we strive to respect each others points of view

GIVE 'EM HELL:

- Eternal Torment

- Largely held “Traditional” view of eternal suffering
- **Matthew 25:46 (NRSV)**⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

- Terminal Punishment

- Some passages discuss Hell in terms of death and destruction, suggesting a finality
- **Matthew 10:28 (NRSV)**²⁸ 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.^[a]

- a: Gehenna

GIVE 'EM HELL:

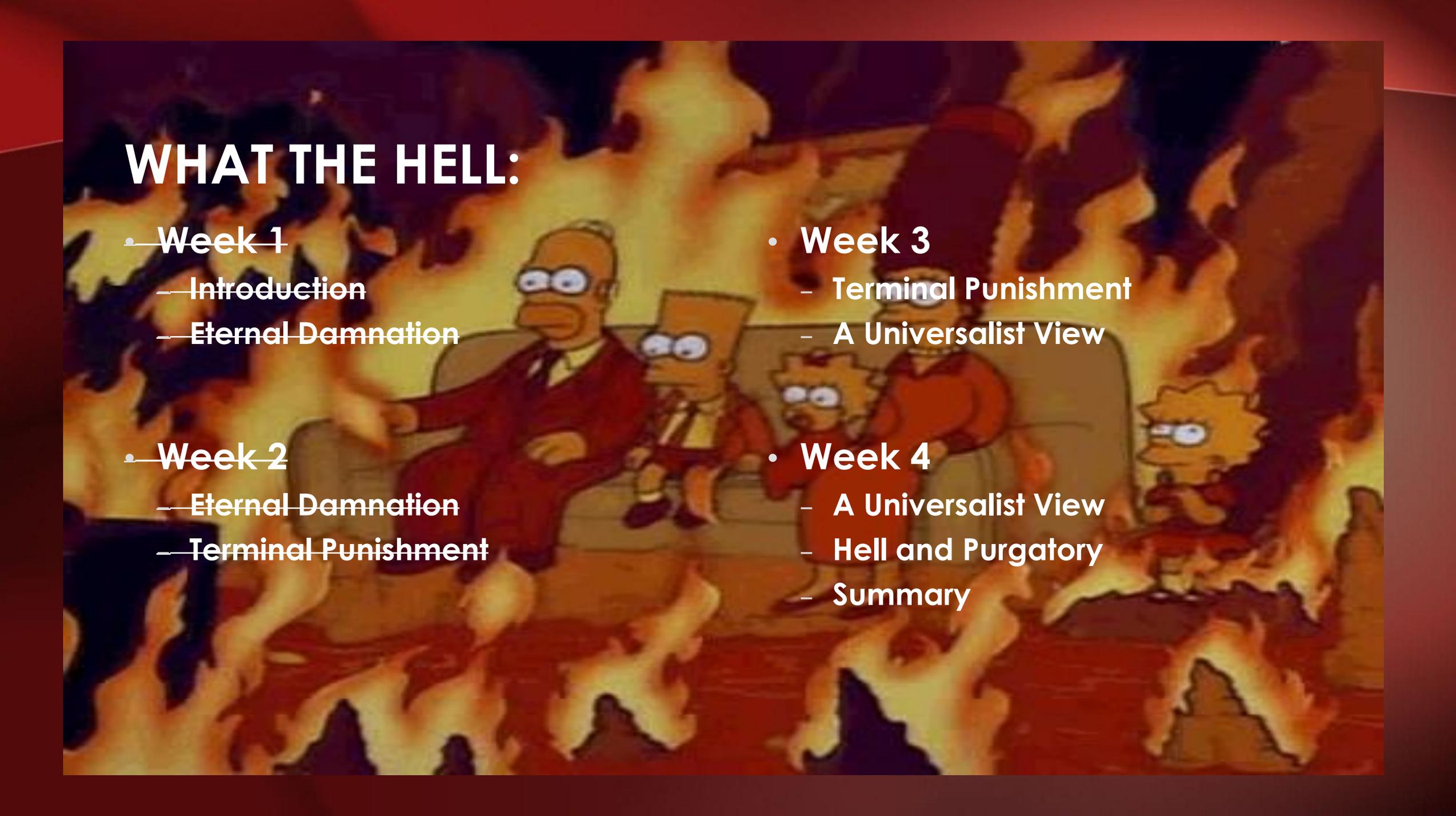
- Universalist View

- Still other passages suggest that everyone will be reconciled with God in the end
- **Romans 5:18 (NRSV)** ¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass (Adam) led to condemnation for all, so one man's (Jesus') act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all

- Hell and Purgatory

- A view largely rejected by Protestants. Yet, the bible does speak of a postmortem cleansing of the soul
- **1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NRSV)** ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. ¹⁴ If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

WHAT THE HELL:



- ~~Week 1~~

- Introduction

- ~~Eternal Damnation~~

- ~~Week 2~~

- ~~Eternal Damnation~~

- Terminal Punishment

- Week 3

- Terminal Punishment

- A Universalist View

- Week 4

- A Universalist View

- Hell and Purgatory

- Summary

TERMINAL PUNISHMENT

- Hell (and why its good)
 - A Destination: by rejecting God (Destruction)
 - Fire: purifies and destroys
 - A dump: Gehenna. A place where those go who reject God
- Terminal: works within the “goodness” of God
 - Our choice, with real consequences
 - Hell itself is eternal but serves to make right, God’s Justice, and eliminate evil
 - Our choice has eternal consequences

TERMINAL PUNISHMENT

- Destruction and Death
 - Generally refers to “termination”
 - Disappearance of the thing in question
 - Psalm and Proverbs are replete with examples of this use of death and destruction
 - Sodom and Gomorrah: Smoke rose forever but it was wiped out
 - In Revelations: audience would have understood the symbolic language

TERMINAL PUNISHMENT

- Finite Punishment and the Cross
 - Suffering and death = the result of sin **Romans 6:23**
 - Payment for sin
 - Jesus full atoned for sin and was resurrected to new life
 - Someone pays for the sin: Us or Jesus
- The goodness of God
 - No one is “let off”
 - Hell is horrible
 - Banishment from God is eternal

TO HELL AND BACK...TO HELL: TERMINAL PUNISHMENT

- Scripture References
 - **Romans 6**
 - **Hebrews 6:1-2**
 - **Psalm 1**
 - **Psalm 37**
 - **2 Peter 2:1-10**
 - **Revelation 20:7-15**
 - **John 3:16**
 - **1 Cor. 15:50-54**

Romans 6: 20-23

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 1 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Psalm 1

The Two Ways

¹ Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;² but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. ³ They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 37 NRSV

...But the wicked perish,
and the enemies of the LORD are like
the glory of the pastures;
they vanish—like smoke they vanish
away...

2 Peter 2:1-10 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

False Prophets and Their Punishment

⁴ For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^[b] and committed them to chains^[c] of **deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment**; ⁵ and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly; ⁶ and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction^[d] and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly;^[e] ⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, **and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment** ¹⁰—especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority.

Revelation 20:7-15 **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)** ⁷ When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. ⁹ They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven^[a] 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 the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged 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 anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

**John 3:16 New Revised Standard Version
(NRSV)**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

BACK THE HELL UP....

- Eternal Rebuttal
 - God's wrath and love at not at odds with each other
 - Hell as fire to "cleanse" and a dump "for sinners" falls short
 - Palatability of Terminal doesn't make it true
 - Finite Sin doesn't imply finite punishment

BACK THE HELL UP...

- Universalist Rebuttal

- If God can deliver all people without violating their freedom but sends them to hell, does God love sinners?
- If God cannot deliver all people without violating freedom, then God is forever thwarted, is that likely ?
 - So either God is love or God completely wins but not both
 - Like winning an election by killing all that voted against you
- Death isn't necessarily interchangeable with non-existence or vanishing
- Termination is often followed by restoration (Sodom and Gomorrah) **Ezekiel 16:50-59**

BACK THE HELL UP...

- Purgatory Rebuttal
 - Traditional interpretations should be given benefit of the doubt unless you can show false beyond reasonable doubt
 - More fitting punishment
 - Human Freedom
 - Final destruction doesn't allow for resurrection

UNIVERSALISM

- In the end, God will reconcile himself with ALL people
- Must understand that the Bible is contradictory
- Sin is taken seriously
 - Rots creation
 - Only God can rescue us from it
 - Absolutely there is eschatological punishment
- God manifest in Christ: through his incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and return. At the heart of everything is – Christ: Christ is the norm for interpreting Scripture

HELL OF A STORY: SCRIPTURE

- **Scripture**
 - **Romans 5:18**
 - **Romans 11:32**
 - **1 Corinthians 15:22**
 - **Philippians 2:11**
 - **Colossians 1:20**

Colossians 1:16-20 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁶ for in^[a] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in^[b] him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

HELL OF A PICTURE: UNIVERSALISM

Creation

- All things are from Him and for Him
- **All** humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:24-26)
- Humanity has a destiny, to be like Christ (Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 15:12-57, 1 John 3:2)

The Fall

- **All** humans have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)
- Deserve Punishment: Yes
- Deserve Rescue: No
- But hating creatures created in his image would be a form of self hatred. God loves us

HELL OF A PICTURE: UNIVERSALISM

Redemption

- Incarnation: Jesus become flesh, fully human
- Death: Jesus died for **all** people in order to save **all** people (1 John 2:2, 2 Cor. 5:14, 1 Tim. 2:3-6, Heb. 2:9)
- Resurrection/Ascension: Not just for Jesus but for humanity (part or **all**)
- Church: We live between Jesus resurrection and resurrection of the dead (us). Forecasting a time to come
- Consummation: Then at Jesus' name, every knee will bow- in heaven and on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:9-11)

HELLUVA GOD

- God is good. God is love
- God loves all of his creatures, not just some
- God desires to bring all people into union with him
- God continues to love those in Hell (if God is love)
- God is just. Must not set divine love in opposition to divine justice

HELL: ABANDON HOPE?

- Divine Judgement:
 - Some punished because they deserve it (retribution)
 - Retribution doesn't undo harms
 - God's justice, with respect to creation, is about putting wrongs right.
- Punishment
 - As deterrent (Deut. 13:11)
 - Warning (Rev. 14:7)
 - Deliverance (2 Thess. 1:6-7)
 - Corrective (1 Cor. 5:1; 11:29, Titus 2:11-12, Heb 12:5-11, Rev. 3:19)

HELL: ABANDON HOPE?

- Propose that Hell works the same way:
- Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail...For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone. Lam. 3:22, 31-33)

HELL OF A STORY: SCRIPTURE

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 - **Philippians 2:11**
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Romans 5:18-21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹ For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification^[a] leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 11:32-36 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

³² For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

³³ O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end,^[a] when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Philippians 2:9-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

ETERNAL HELL REBUTAL

- Not sound Hermeneutic argument
- Definition of sin is incorrect
- Where is the Wrath of God?
- Postmortem judgement is speculative: God's Judgement is final

TERMINAL REBUTTAL

- The Old Testament clearly paints a picture of destruction of God's enemies
- Jesus and Paul were Old Testament Scholars and so nothing they would say or write would contradict this
- Misleading rhetorical questions like, "does Christ undo all sin or just some of it?"

PURGATORY REBUTTAL

- Although agree on the post mortem reconciliation to God, eternal torment exists due to the fact that some will just not accept Christ, by choice
- God's love is immense, but reciprocating this love can not be coerced, programmed or determined. It has to be by choice, given to us by having free will
- The biblical story is clear that we may choose to love or not to love God and/or each other