

# CHRISTIANITY IN A RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE WORLD

## Session 3

### Universalism: Christ Will Save All the Unevangelized

#### Outline

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- I. Intro to Christian Views
- II. Universalism: Christ Will Save All the Unevangelized
- III. Biblical Support
  - a. Three themes that lead to Universalism
    - i. God desires to save all people (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10, 2 Peter 3:9).
    - ii. Christ's atonement is sufficient to cover the sins of all men (e.g., 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11).
    - iii. Christ's work is indeed providing salvation to all men (e.g., John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:19-20; Romans 5:18; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28).
  - b. Jesus and Paul used the strong language regarding eternal loss in order to bring individuals to a commitment to God (e.g., Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)
- IV. Philosophical Support
  - a. Eternal damnation in hell represents the failure of God to triumph over evil.
  - b. A loving God would continue to work on people's hearts in hell, eventually winning everyone over.
  - c. God must redeem the damned to secure the blessedness of the saved in heaven.
- V. Biblical Assessment
  - a. "Universalistic" passages actually speak of Christ's universal efforts, not universal results, or the context actually narrows them down to just believers.
  - b. All face a final judgement at the end of time (2 Corinthians 5:10).
  - c. The only way to avoid condemnation is by believing in Christ (John 3:16, 18, 36).
  - d. The time to make the right choice is now (Hebrews 9:27).
  - e. The eternity of life in heaven is contrasted with the eternity of condemnation.
  - f. Many will not choose to accept the salvation God offers (Matthew 7:13-14).
  - g. Christ himself will enact judgement on all. This same Christ describes the judgement of the unrighteous as eternal fire (Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46).
  - h. Several passages also speak of the unending quality of hell (Mark 3:29; Mark 9:48; Matthew 3:12; Matthew 12:32; Daniel 12:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:10-11; Revelation 20:10).

- i. God remains sovereign though his will is not always accomplished (e.g., people continue to sin; Luke 7:30).
- j. God remains sovereign by directing history toward where He wants it to go, working with the bad decisions people make, rather than by forcing those people to make the decisions He would prefer they make.
- k. Universalism undermines missions and does not give the preaching of the gospel the same significance that the New Testament does.
  - i. Jesus spent his ministry preaching the gospel (Matt. 4:23; 9:35).
  - ii. Jesus commanded his followers to preach the gospel everywhere (Matthew 28:19-20).
  - iii. Preaching the gospel was the life of Paul (Rom. 1:1; 15:15-16).
  - iv. People's response to the gospel will save their lives and bring eternal life (Mark 8:35; 10:29-30; Eph. 1:13; 3:6).
  - v. But disobedience will bring terrible judgement (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).
  - vi. The gospel declares the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4).
  - vii. Through the gospel, Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality (2 Tim. 1:10).
  - viii. The gospel comes with the power of the Holy Spirit behind it (Acts 10:44-46; 1 Thess. 1:5).
  - ix. Any corruption of the gospel preaching brings condemnation (Gal. 1:8).
  - x. And the preaching of the gospel brings about the end of the age (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)

#### VI. Philosophical Assessment

- a. Hell IS God's triumph over evil.
- b. Universalists underestimate sin.
  - i. Free-will entails the ability to sin.
  - ii. Sin is irrational.
  - iii. The sin of desiring complete self-autonomy.
- c. God's justice demands eternal punishment.
- d. The blessedness of the saved remains secure (e.g., the Beatific Vision)
- e. Universalism makes our 2-phase existence ultimately meaningless.

#### VII. Conclusion

- a. We can wish Universalism was true, but the Bible does not support it.

*Advanced Further Reading:*

- **A critique of Universalism:** “No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized” by John Sanders (pages 81-130).
- **A series of papers arguing for and against Universalism:**
  - "No Other Name": A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ by William Lane Craig found in the journal Faith and Philosophy
  - Providence, Freedom, and Human Destiny by Thomas Talbott found in the journal Religious Studies
  - The Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment by Thomas Talbott found in the journal Faith and Philosophy
  - Talbotts Universalism by William Lane Craig found in the journal Religious Studies
  - Craig on the Possibility of Eternal Damnation by Thomas Talbott found in the journal Religious Studies
  - Talbotts Universalism Once More by William Lane Craig found in the journal Religious Studies