

# Universalism

Christ Will Save All the Unevangelized

Session 3

# Outline

- I. Intro to Christian Views
- II. Universalism
- III. Biblical Support
- IV. Philosophical Support
- V. Biblical Assessment
- VI. Philosophical Assessment
- VII. Conclusion

# Intro to Christian Views

“The... problem... is located in the tension between these two important beliefs that the church has long proclaimed: (1) God’s universal salvific will and (2) the particularity of salvation in Jesus. Jesus is the only savior, yet God desires all to be saved. What does the creator God, who redeemed humanity through the death and Resurrection of Jesus, do to accomplish this goal? *Does God make the salvation found only in Jesus available to all people? Is salvation universally accessible? If so, how might God work to accomplish this purpose?*”



John Sanders

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- III. Biblical Support

# Biblical Support

- It is God's will to save all people.

# Biblical Support

“[God] desires **all** people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 2:4

“For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of **all** people, especially of those who believe.”

1 Timothy 4:10

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that **any** should perish, but that **all** should reach repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

# Biblical Support

- It is God's will to save all people.
- God's will is always accomplished, so all people will be saved.



# Biblical Support

- It is God's will to save all people.
- God's will is always accomplished, so all people will be saved.
- Christ's atonement is sufficient to cover the sins of all men.

# Biblical Support

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of **the whole world**.

**1 John 2:2**

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for **everyone**.

**Hebrews 2:9**

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for **all** people

**Titus 2:11**

# Biblical Support

- It is God's will to save all people.
- God's will is always accomplished, so all people will be saved.
- Christ's atonement is sufficient to cover the sins of all men.
- Christ's work is fact providing salvation to all men.

# Biblical Support

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** people to myself.”

**John 12:32**

... that is, in Christ God was reconciling the **world** to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

**2 Corinthians 5:19**

“<sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself **all** things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

**Colossians 1:19-20**

# Biblical Support

“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for **all** men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for **all** men.”

**Romans 5:18**

# Biblical Support

“<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam **all** die, so also in Christ shall **all** be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

**1 Corinthians 15:22-25**

# Biblical Support

- It is God's will to save all people.
- God's will is always accomplished, so all people will be saved.
- Christ's atonement is sufficient to cover the sins of all men.
- Christ's work is fact providing salvation to all men.
- What about eternal damnation?

# Biblical Support

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Matthew 25:46

“... but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin...”

Mark 3:29

“... will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...”

2 Thessalonians 1:9



# Biblical Support

“Universalists do not ignore such texts but interpret them in a way consistent with what they see as the overriding theme of the New Testament that God will redeem everyone. The references to eternal damnation must be seen in their proper contexts, they say. Jesus and Paul utilized the strong language regarding eternal loss in order to bring individuals to a commitment to God. They were calling for a serious decision, and the nature of their existential preaching required graphic imagery to portray the importance of the choice.”



John Sanders

# Biblical Support

Three main themes:

- God desires to save all people
- Christ's atonement is sufficient to cover the sins of all men
- Christ's work is indeed providing salvation to all men

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- IV. Philosophical Support

# Philosophical Support

1. Eternal damnation in hell represents the failure of God to triumph over evil.

# Philosophical Support

“If hell were eternal... then there would be an ultimate dualism in the universe—God and evil. Since God’s justice demands the eradication of evil, evil cannot be eternal. The existence of an eternal hell without the possibility for repentance would raise questions about God’s power, justice, and love.”



John Sanders

# Philosophical Support

1. Eternal damnation in hell represents the failure of God to triumph over evil.
2. A loving God would continue to work on people's hearts in hell, eventually winning everyone over.

# Philosophical Support

“What could possibly qualify as a motive for such a choice? As long as any ignorance, or deception, or bondage to desire remains, it is open to God to transform a sinner without interfering with human freedom; but once all ignorance and deception and bondage to desire is removed, so that a person is truly “free” to choose, there can no longer be any motive for choosing eternal misery for oneself.”



Thomas Talbott

# Philosophical Support

1. Eternal damnation in hell represents the failure of God to triumph over evil.
2. A loving God would continue to work on people's hearts in hell, eventually winning everyone over.
3. God must redeem the damned to secure the blessedness of the saved in heaven.



# Comprehension Questions

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- V. Biblical Assessment

# Biblical Assessment

Three main themes:

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# Biblical Assessment

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... that is, in Christ God was reconciling the **world** to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

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# Biblical Assessment

“Throughout the passage, Paul's concern to maintain parallelism between Adam and Christ has led him to choose terms that will clearly express this. In vv. 15 and 19, he uses "the many"; here he uses "all [men]." But in each case, Paul's point is not so much that the groups affected by Christ and Adam... are coextensive, but that Christ affects those who are his just as certainly as Adam does those who are his. When we ask who belongs to, or is "in," Adam and Christ... Paul makes his answer clear: every person, without exception, is "in Adam" (vv. 12d-14); but only those who "receive the gift" (v. 17...) are "in Christ."”



Douglas Moo



# Biblical Assessment

“<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam **all** die, so also in Christ shall **all** be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

**1 Corinthians 15:22-25**

# Biblical Assessment

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

2 Corinthians 5:10

# Biblical Assessment

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 3:16, 18, 36

# Biblical Assessment

<sup>27</sup> ... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Hebrews 9:27

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Matthew 7:13-14

# Biblical Assessment

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’ <sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46

# Biblical Assessment

Is God's will always accomplished?

# Biblical Assessment

“... but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by [John the Baptist].)”

Luke 7:30

“<sup>9</sup> remember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
<sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose,’”

Isaiah 46:9-10

# Biblical Assessment

Is Hell for eternity?



# Biblical Assessment

Missions: What is the Point?

# Biblical Assessment

“Universalists respond that just because we can trust God to work things out in the future life does not mean we should shirk our responsibilities in this life to show others ‘a more excellent way.’ Furthermore, ‘the work of Jesus Christ is the only point in history where the characteristics of God [as love and wisdom] are concretely demonstrated and revealed.’ Informing our fellow human beings about the love of Jesus will help bring them into God’s family sooner.”



John Sanders

# Biblical Assessment – The Gospel

- Jesus spent his ministry preaching the gospel.
- Jesus commanded his followers to preach the gospel everywhere.
- Preaching the gospel was the life of Paul.
- People's response to the gospel will save their lives and bring eternal life.
- But disobedience will bring terrible judgement.

# Biblical Assessment – The Gospel

- The gospel declares the glory of Christ.
- Through the gospel, Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality.
- The gospel comes with the power of the Holy Spirit behind it.
- Any corruption of the gospel preaching brings condemnation.
- And the preaching of the gospel brings about the end of the age.

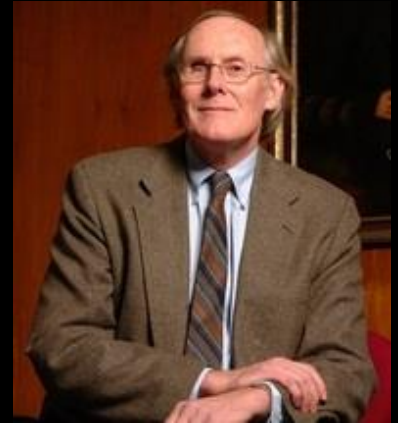
# Biblical Assessment – The Gospel

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Romans 1:16

# Biblical Assessment

“... there are too many warnings about divine judgment falling on people to be ignored, warnings that suggest that rejection is possible. These warnings do not sound like idle threats, but like real danger to be avoided. When Jesus speaks of an unforgivable sin (whatever it is), he must be indicating that a person can place himself outside God’s kingdom (Mk 3:28-30). What else can the following warning mean? “But unless you repent, you too will all perish” (Lk 13:5). The so-called universalist texts may not speak of a universalist outcome at all but rather of a universal opportunity to be saved. In the light of all the warnings, this would seem likely.”



Clark Pinnock

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# Philosophical Support

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2. Universalists underestimate sin.
  - Free-will entails the ability to sin.

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1. Hell IS God's triumph over evil.
2. Universalists underestimate sin.
  - Free-will entails the ability to sin.
  - Sin is irrational.

# Philosophical Assessment

“[Universalists] typically underestimate the irrationality of sin. Sin does not make sense... If Plato was correct in asserting that “to know the truth is to do the truth,” then the problem of sin could presumably be solved through education. God, the master teacher, would not have any failing students. But sin is irrational. There is no good reason to sin, no good reason for not trusting God.”



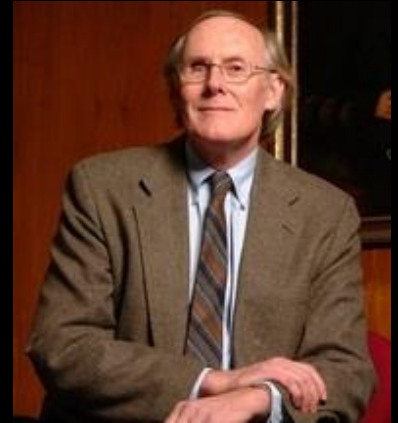
John Sanders

# Philosophical Support

1. Hell IS God's triumph over evil.
2. Universalists underestimate sin.
  - Free-will entails the ability to sin.
  - Sin is irrational.
  - The sin of desiring complete self-autonomy.

# Philosophical Assessment

“... heaven is not a bribe or extrinsic reward. It is not like receiving a million dollars for being good, or for returning the right answer to God’s appeal. No, heaven is an intrinsic kind of reward—the way that marriage is the intrinsic reward of love and its very goal. It is not self-seeking to want to marry the one you love. Marriage would not even be desirable if one hated the other person. Such a union would be like hell. A prize is intrinsic when it offers consequences homogeneous with the actions being rewarded; it is extrinsic when it differs in kind from them. In essence, to desire heaven, which is life in the presence of absolute goodness, implies a love of goodness. Otherwise heaven would be hell.”



Clark Pinnock

# Philosophical Assessment

“Admittedly, it seems insane that some people should resist every solicitation of the Holy Spirit and every offer of God's grace and perhaps even prefer damnation to submission to God's will, but that is the mystery of iniquity, a measure of the depth of human depravity.”



William Lane Craig

# Philosophical Support

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3. God's justice demands eternal punishment.

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3. God's justice demands eternal punishment.
4. The blessedness of the saved remains secure.



# Philosophical Assessment

“[First, perhaps] God obliterates from their minds any knowledge of lost persons so that they experience no pangs of remorse for them. Talbott objects, [calling this an] immoral deception. But I see no reason to think such shielding of His redeemed people from this painful knowledge is immoral deception. We can all think of cases in which we shield persons from knowledge which would be painful for them and which they do not need to have, and, far from doing something immoral, we are, in so sparing them, exemplifying the virtue of mercy.



William Lane Craig

# Philosophical Assessment

[Second, it] is possible that the very experience itself of being in the immediate presence of Christ (cf. the beatific vision) will simply drive from the minds of His redeemed any awareness of the lost in hell. So overwhelming will be His presence and the love and joy which it inspires that the knowledge of the damned will be banished from the consciousness of God's people. In such a case, the redeemed would still have such knowledge, but they would never be conscious of it and so never pained by it."



William Lane Craig

# Philosophical Support

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2. Universalists underestimate sin.
  - Free-will entails the ability to sin.
  - Sin is irrational.
  - The sin of desiring complete self-autonomy.
3. God's justice demands eternal punishment.
4. The blessedness of the saved remains secure.
5. Universalism makes our 2-phase existence ultimately meaningless.

# Philosophical Assessment

“The defender of [Universalism] may have no answers to these questions. The lack of an answer does not, on its own, serve to undermine the view. But the lack of answers would, I think, imply that the earthly phase of human existence is an enigma for universalists. It points to the fact that part of the philosophical plausibility of this non-traditional view hangs on the advocate of [Universalism] being able to make sense of the evident truth that God sees fit to start off each human existence with a stint in the earthly phase. This fact is both strange and unexplained on [Universalism].”



Michael Murray

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# Next Week

Inclusivism: Most of the Unevangelized are  
Saved

# Questions