

UNIVERSALISM

Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, October, 2012

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Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Universalism is the teaching that God will eventually “save” all of mankind. Some include all created sentient beings, including Satan and his angels.

Those of you who have followed this website, know that I have never said my version of truth is above all others. I try my best to explain what I believe, and why I believe it. What you find here is my opinion - my commentary. There are thousands of sincere believers who hold opinions contrary to mine. I would never say they will be lost for teaching what they sincerely believe. Jesus will clear up any differences during our 1000 years at the New Jerusalem University. That said, I can tell you that I do NOT personally believe that all of mankind will ultimately be saved.

I need to review a few doctrinal positions which are important to understand as we begin:

First: I believe that death is an unconscious state, during which the Father retains the spirit essence of the person who has died. This spirit essence (like a memory download) is what God will use to resurrect each person with mind intact - the righteous to everlasting life, and the persistently rebellious to judgment and then death without hope of future resurrection.

Second: The end for the persistently rebellious, will be the “lake of fire.” The “lake of fire” is called “the second death”. No third resurrection is mentioned anywhere in the Bible. This means that the “second death” is final.

According to Revelation Chapter 20, Sheol itself - the abode of the dead, will be consumed and destroyed in the “lake of fire”. At the time of the final judgment, Sheol will contain, or consist of, the spirits (spirit essence) of those who refused the healing of Christ. These people will be dead at this point - not conscious. If Sheol is destroyed, then the spirit essence of every person IN Sheol will be destroyed, rendering future resurrection impossible.

Third: The “Israel” of future kingdom prophecy includes all of those who have entered into covenant with the God our Father through Jesus Christ His Son.

Fourth: Salvation is based upon a dynamic living relationship with the LORD. It is not a forensic transaction, where one is promised eternal salvation because one has said the essential formula words - “I believe. Save me.” - unless those words came from a heart overwhelmed by the love of God, with the sincere intent to “follow His ways” going forward.

Fifth: God has predestined all to salvation, but each one must accept that invitation. No one was ever predestined for "Hell."

These positions are set out in the following studies at this website:

1. Where are the Dead?
2. Hell - What It's Not
3. Final Judgment - Lake of Fire
4. "Once Saved - Always Saved?"
5. Predestination - Is this the Security of the Believer?

Let's consider a few arguments for Universalism.

1. God is our Father and any punishment must therefore be for the ultimate improvement of His children - not for punishment only, or for annihilation.

Job 5:17-18 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but he binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole."

ANSWER: It is true. The LORD allows the wayward to experience the results of their own choices, and patiently waits, hoping they will "see the error of their ways." Yet a time will come when some have rejected the LORD's repeated appeals until "their hearts are hard". Further appeals would be useless. The LORD will finally remove His people from the earth. Then He will withdraw His spirit, and those left behind will destroy the earth, and themselves along with it. They will die without hope of resurrection.

Job 22:16-17 "Who were cut down before their time, Whose foundations were swept away by a flood? They said to God, 'Depart from us! What can the Almighty do to them?"

2. [Universalist argument] How can our Father God be satisfied so long as even one is lost? That would be incomplete and imperfect.

Luke 15:4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"

ANSWER: The LORD speaks here of a "lost" animal, meaning one which has simply wandered away and cannot find its way back. We assume that when the animal hears the Shepherd's voice calling, it will run toward the Shepherd - NOT try to get away.

Zechariah 1:3 "Therefore say to them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will return to you.""

ANSWER: The invitation is extended, but those invited must respond. They must come to the Shepherd. They "return" by confessing their sins and repenting. They must act. It's not an "invitation", if folks are forced to come.

Isaiah 5:4 "What more could I have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?"

3. [Universalist argument] The LORD advises us to forgive and forgive and forgive. How can the LORD stop forgiving? He is love. He is forgiveness. How can He then go against His own character?

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

ANSWER: The LORD invites. He pleads. He waits. He continues to bless - hoping that His message of love will provoke a response. But is there a point beyond which He will wait no longer - because He knows that the sinner will never respond? Yes.

4. [Universalist argument] God is all knowing. How can the redemption of all humanity be beyond His ability to bring about? It must be within His wisdom to apply just that correction to every human being, in order to reconcile everyone.

ANSWER: Our God is all powerful divine Being - Yes. But He has limited His own power over mankind. He will not manipulate the human mind.

What are His options then?

Malachi 3:7 "Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. (NIV)

He teaches and informs. He blesses, showing us that great benefit is to be obtained in association with Him. He protects. He demonstrates His great power. He warns. He allows the individual to suffer the natural consequences of his own choices (sometimes as a warning to others). He invites the individual to return to covenant relationship. He demonstrates His great love and willingness to forgive. Jesus' incarnation and death was the greatest love letter of all time! Beyond this - what is left?

Love cannot be forced. The demonstration of His power over the gods of Egypt, did not change Pharaoh's heart. The demonstration of His power did not bring Israel to obedience with love, during their wilderness journey. Demonstrations of power may buy time, because of the fear engendered, but they cannot win the heart. Love is awakened ONLY by love. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

5. [Universalist argument] God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9) therefore none will perish - because God has willed it. Who can effectively thwart the will of God? Is evil too strong for God?

ANSWER: God’s “will” is not the same as His “word”. If God speaks a thing - if He says it will happen - then His word will not come back to Him void. It will accomplish His purpose (Isa. 55:11). Where did God say that all men will be saved? He didn’t! In fact, Jesus said, “few there be that find it”.

DEFINITION: “Will” (2307) thelema {thel'-ay-mah} - Meaning: 1) what one wishes or has determined shall be done 1a) of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ 1b) of what God wishes to be done by us 1b1) commands, precepts 2) will, choice, inclination, desire, pleasure what one wants or desires?

ANSWER: No. Evil is not “too strong for God”. But God has set a limit beyond which He will not go. He will NOT manipulate the human mind. He created mankind with FREE WILL. A forced choice is no choice at all.

A most amazing revelation of the character of our God is that He does NOT impose His will over the minds of created sentient beings. We can say “no” to Him. He has actually set the puny “will” of individual human beings, above His own will, when it comes to individual choice - to love and serve Him - or not.

The LORD presents evidence. He allows us to experience the consequences, when we do things our own way. He uses corrective punishment, when He allows us to suffer without His protection. But He does NOT and will not overpower human minds, against their will.

If God would every manipulate human mind, then He should have done it in the first place and skipped all this painful mess! The length of this conflict is the best evidence that He does NOT manipulate minds.

NOTE: Satan, on the other hand does manipulate minds!

6. [Universalist argument] Annihilation is unjust. Man did not ask to be created and had no hand in the creation process, except to beget children at the command of God (“be fruitful”). Man was deceived by a spirit being far superior in power and intellect to the pair in Eden - so newly “born.” Men live a very short time, compared with God, yet if an individual does not respond, within a short lifetime to the influence of the Spirit of Christ - to repent and change his ways, then he must be annihilated? It is unjust.

ANSWER: How many years of life should be granted for any individual who continues to act in selfish and rebellious ways? The LORD gives life. It is through His power that life continues. For the LORD to prolong the life of the selfish and rebellious indefinitely (unless He isolates them completely) is to prolong the pain of those they continue to hurt.

ANSWER: A lifetime of 40, or 80, or 300 or even 1000 years seems “short” compared with the life of God or the life of an angel. The question here is whether a human being can “know” the difference between right and wrong within this life span. Can he recognize the influence of a higher power - the call of God - and respond or refuse? He need not reach perfection, just be heading in the right direction.

ANSWER: I believe that those who died in ignorance of God (and unable to choose concerning Him) will be resurrected at the 8th millennium to continue their lives. They will resume their lives and then will have the opportunity to choose whom they will serve.

I believe that IF further knowledge of any kind would reconcile an individual - one who has already died, the LORD will resurrect that person at the 8th millennium, and will give him further instruction, until every avenue is exhausted. Only then - if that individual continues in rebellion, will he be judged worthy of annihilation in The Lake of Fire.

See the studies at this website: “The 8th Day” ; “A Kingdom of Priests” ; “Gog and Magog”

In the final judgment, the Father and the Son must demonstrate that everything divinely possible was done to reconcile each individual. Only then can the redeemed put the loss behind them, and go on into eternity.

ANSWER: The creation of Adam and Eve followed the great war in heaven. If there had already been a rebellion in the spirit realm, where every created being was forced to choose a side, then it seems only right that mankind ALSO should have to choose.

Adam and Eve had a very limited knowledge of the character of God. (The true character of Satan was not fully unmasked until He murdered Christ.) The first pair were deceived by Satan. These circumstances are the reason why they were granted probation, rather than immediately banished from God’s kingdom forever.

The process by which some are at last reconciled to the Father, has brought to light the depth of the Father’s love. Our suffering is not wasted. We are a lesson book to the entire universe of sentient created beings. I believe we will be rewarded for our contribution.

7. [Universalist argument] Death will be abolished at the end of the ages (eons). Those within the “lake of fire” will then be reconciled with God, who becomes “all in all” (1Corinthians 15).

ANSWER: The “lake of fire” is “the second death”. The dead “know nothing.” They can make no choices. “Those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for Your truth” (Isaiah 38:18). No third resurrection is mentioned in the Scriptures. They will not live again. Sheol with all of its dead, will be destroyed in the “lake of fire.” These people will then no longer exist. The “Lake of Fire” IS annihilation.

The only beings described as tormented “to the age of the ages” in the Lake of Fire, are Satan and his fellow rebellious spirit beings.

8. [Universalist argument] Two Greek words are translated “punish” or “punishment.” They are “kolasis” - used by our Lord, and “timoria.” “Kolasis” came from a root meaning “to prune,” as a tree. This speaks of a corrective punishment, NOT one intended solely for vindication of law and justice.

“Timoria” refers to punishment which is intended solely for the vindication of law and justice.

ANSWER: The LORD has pruned His vine - Israel. God has also “broken off” branches from His tree - Israel. The word for execute was to “cut off.”

Psalm 37:34 “Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.”

Psalm 37:38 “But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; The future of the wicked shall be cut off.”

Matthew 25:46 “And these will go away into everlasting punishment (kolasis), but the righteous into eternal life.”

NOTE: Two outcomes are presented: life or death (eternal life or eternal death - from which there is no resurrection).

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (To “perish” is to die.)

Deuteronomy 30:19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”

Psalm 1:6 “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Proverbs 10:25 “When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, But the righteous has an everlasting foundation.”

ANSWER: Some would say that man has no choice. We are predestined. They cite passages such as John 15:16, to show that men do not have any choice. I disagree. Christ chose the first disciples - but they did not have to respond to His call. Their response was a choice! And Judas was called "a devil" because he chose to betray Him.

Joshua 24:15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,"

9. [Universalist argument] Christ is Savior of ALL.

1 Timothy 4:9-10 "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe."

ANSWER: Jesus Christ came with the purpose of saving all. All are invited. Not all will accept the invitation to "come unto Me".

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world (all men) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

ANSWER: God loves the whole world. Yes. But only those who believe in His Son will "not perish". Loving and saving are two different things. God is not able to save everyone He loves. Why? Because He has allowed them free will. We find life only in Jesus.

10. [Universalist argument] If death came upon ALL men because of the sin of Adam, then ALL will be given life in Christ. They will be "vivified" or "made alive" at different times, according to their class.

1 Corinthians 15:21-23 "For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead. For even as in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be made alive. Yet each in his own class..."

ANSWER: Let's continue the verse. The "all" refers to "all" of "those who are Christ's."

[continued] "... even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Paul was writing to believers at Corinth - not to the general public.

OTHER “all” PASSAGES:

Romans 5:18 “Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”

ANSWER: The “free gift” was Christ Jesus. He was made available to “all men”. But a gift can be rejected. Otherwise it is not a “gift”. If it is forced upon us, then it was not a gift. We must acknowledge the gift, and accept the gift. We do that by believing and then by allowing Him to change us.

Hebrews 2:9 “. . . that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

ANSWER: He did “taste death for everyone”. What Jesus did - He did for everyone. But that doesn't mean everyone will accept His gift.

Those who believe that Jesus' death somehow literally “paid for” our release from death, have a forensic understanding of salvation. You know. God has a law. His law says that death is the penalty for sin. Jesus paid the penalty - for us, therefore God cannot punish anyone. He must let everyone live. I don't understand Jesus death in that way.

When we say that a soldier “paid the ultimate price for our freedom”, we are not saying there is a book somewhere with a debit column - so much freedom for so much blood - or a divine being somewhere with a cash register, ringing up sins vs payment. We are saying the soldier died while fighting for our freedom.

This world was enslaved by Satan. Jesus died while fighting for our freedom - from Satan and certain death. Jesus died, fighting to regain dominion of this earth. Only by perfect obedience to His Father, could Jesus regain dominion of this earth. With dominion, comes the right to judge, to rule over, to heal, and to restore this earth. Also the right to destroy Satan. With dominion comes the right to resurrect - to give life! THAT is what Jesus was fighting for - with His last breath. In the process, Jesus delivered a powerful message. “This is how much God loves you. If God loves you this much. Allow Him to heal you.

John 3:17 “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

NOTE: It does not say that the whole world will be saved. It “might be saved.” All are invited. Few will accept the invitation.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away [bears] the sin of the world!”

Jesus carried the sin of the world. This won Him the right to forgive any who would come to God through Him.

John 12:32 "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw ALL men unto myself."

ANSWER: All men feel the drawing power of God's love. Some resist and their hearts are hardened. These texts demonstrate that no man was ever predestined for Hell.

2 Corinthians 5:19 "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

ANSWER: God is not reconciled to us. He has always loved us. We are reconciled to Him, when we see His great love for us. Some resist the drawing power of His love, and refuse to be reconciled - to Him.

Colossians 1:20 " . . . and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Once again: God's will (desire) is to reconcile all things to Himself. He sent His own Son to plead His case. But not every man will be convinced.

The angels also, have been fully reconciled to the Father, because of the evidence provided (Satan and his angels excepted). Satan was unmasked. Every sentiment in his favor, still held by those beings of the spirit realm, was turned to utter contempt as he inspired men under his control to torture the Son of God hoping to break Him before He died. Satan failed.

11. [Universalist argument] God swore by Himself, that "every knee shall bow" before Him.

Isaiah 45:23 "I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath."

ANSWER: In context, the words here were spoken to "you who have escaped the nations." Isaiah is writing during a time of great apostasy in Israel. Many worship idols. He wonders whether Israel will ever be brought back to oneness with the LORD. These words would be very reassuring to the prophet. A time will come, when those who "have escaped" will enter into covenant with the LORD and every knee will then bow to Him.

ANSWER: Romans 14:11 references Psalm 22:29. Every knee will bow before the judgment seat of Christ - of those living and those who have died. Those two verses do not say the ones who kneel, are doing so because they love the LORD, just that they will acknowledge Him. The vanquished knee to the victor.

12. [Universalist argument] The “lake of fire” is a cleansing fire, which will consume only the sin from those thrown in. They will come forth from that “fire” reconciled, humbled and ready to do God’s will.

Isaiah 33:14-15 “The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil:”

ANSWER: The ones who survive “the everlasting burnings” are those who serve and obey God. God Himself IS the everlasting fire. His glory will consume what He does not indwell. He does not “go out”. He is everlasting. If we are indwelt by His spirit, we can survive in His presence.

Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.”

ANSWER: This is a promise to the righteous - not to the wicked!

“Fire” was also used as a metaphor for persecution. Peter called persecution, “the fiery trial which is to try you” (1Peter 4:12). Many followers of Christ were burned at the stake or in the arena. Their bodies were consumed. But their eternal lives remained safe - in God.

Zechariah 13:9 “I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

Satan rebelled and took one-third of the angels with him. This verse suggests the LORD will take back one-third of mankind from Satan.

Isaiah 38:18 “For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.”

NOTE: Those thrown into the “lake of fire” are DEAD. There is no mention of another resurrection, after the “lake of fire.”

The following is the prophecy of the angel messenger to Daniel.

Daniel 12:1-2 “. . . at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [of life]. And multitudes of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (KJV)

NOTE: One does not recover from “everlasting contempt.” This is forever judgment!!

Jeremiah 23:40 “And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.”

NOTE: This was a curse upon false prophets in Israel.

NOTE: Divine “fire” consumed Nadab and Abihu, and the 250 princes who rebelled against Moses. Those men were not “cleansed”. They died. This “fire will also consume the Horde of Gog, when they come to attack the City during the coming Kingdom of Messiah.

On three occasions, “the fire of God” - divine fire, consumed the sacrifice on the altar in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. Psalm 37 tells us that the wicked will all be consumed into smoke by this same divine “fire.”

2 Thessalonians 1:8 [At the Second Coming] “. . . in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

NOTE: The “vengeance” of “everlasting destruction” does NOT suggest a good outcome for those so dispatched.

Psalm 37:9 “For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

V.20 But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the LORD, Like the fat of (sacrificed) lambs, shall vanish into smoke. They shall vanish away.”

Continued next page

13. [Universalist Argument] God created this problem. He created Satan, and then allowed Satan to deceive Eve. Satan dug the pit, but the LORD allowed it. Satan is the “violent bull” but the LORD did not keep him penned, so he could not kill anyone. God is responsible for the problem of sin, therefore He should rescue everyone.

Exodus 7:3 [God said to Moses] “I will harden Pharaoh's heart.”

1 Kings 22:19-23 God allowed Satan (“a spirit” v. 21) to lie through false prophets.

2 Thessalonians 2:11 “God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

2 Samuel 24:1 “He (God) moved David to number Israel.”

1 Chronicles 21:1 “Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel.

God accepts responsibility for allowing Satan to tempt the king.

Isaiah 13:5,6,11,17 God himself takes responsibility for the destruction of Babylon by the Medes.

Jeremiah 6:8,11-12; 7:14-16,20,34 God takes responsibility for the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people. He says “I make thee desolate” (Isaiah 10:5-6).

Isaiah 45:7 “I form light and create darkness: I make peace and create calamity:
I the Lord do all these things.”

There are 500 similar texts in which God takes responsibility for what happens to those people who forfeit His protection and become victims of Satan or of evil men under Satan's control. Ultimately God is responsible, because He gave free will to His created beings. He knew this would someday result in suffering.

Answer: The LORD has accepted the responsibility. Over and over he has taken responsibility for calamity and darkness. It was (in a sense) His crime. And it IS morally His responsibility to provide for the deliverance of those wounded by the sin problem.

Has HE paid a penalty? Yes. He has suffered the greatest penalty one could imagine. His Son gave up being an all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present divine being. Such is beyond our comprehension. He had to watch as evil men to torture His own Son - until He died. I would say the LORD has paid a price for creating angels and human beings - with FREE WILL.

And there is another aspect to all of this. God feels our pain. “In all their affliction He was afflicted (Isa. 63:9). He knew - before He created us, that He would feel our pain. He created us knowing that. He wanted us so much. He must have known that it would turn out for good - that it would all be worth it.

Isaiah 53:11 “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.”

THE ULTIMATE QUESTIONS ARE:

Does God manipulate minds.
Do men (and angels) have FREE WILL?

My personal belief is that our God does NOT manipulate minds.
We do have FREE will to choose.

Some will choose to accept the gift of LIFE. Most will not.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
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