- May 30, 2018

A Case for Conditionalism

Chris Loewen

What is conditionalism? Basically, there are three views on hell, and they are all represented within evangelicalism. There is traditionalism, universalism and conditionalism. Setting aside for the moment that there are different varieties among these views, I will speak in general terms about each position:[1]

- The predominant view is **traditionalism** which is the perspective that we are all eternal beings who will live forever either in heaven or hell.[2] Within this view are two alternatives as to the *nature* of hell. Eternal torment is the more "traditional" view where the unbeliever is tormented in *literal* fire. Eternal separation is a softer and increasingly popular view where the unbeliever is eternally separated from God – in this view the fire is treated as a *metaphor*. In either of these, the unbeliever will never die or be freed from this state of punishment. This is the view I grew up with and came to believe for most of my life.
- **Universalism** is the view of hell as a place of burning which is refining and purifying with the ultimate purpose that all will eventually come to a place of repentance and restoration with God and then enter Heaven. The length of time for this purified repentance will vary for each unbeliever, but God's love, according to Universalists, is powerful enough to bring all to repentance and restoration. In other words, hell will eventually empty itself and cease to be.
- And just briefly, because it will be fleshed out more: **conditionalism** is the view that we are not all eternal or immortal beings, unlike God. Eternal life and immortality is "conditional" upon faith in Jesus Christ, and is given only as a good gift, not as a curse. When the condition of salvation is not met, hell is a place of complete destruction and annihilation. In this view, the unbeliever eventually perishes and ceases to be.

Notice that all three views believe in hell. They all believe that hell has a purpose, it is awful, and it is a place to be avoided at all costs. Also, each of these views are historically found in the tradition of the early church.[3] This needs to be pointed out because this discussion can so quickly get muddled in uncharitable language that certain views do not believe in hell or that they are novel ideas and not "historical." They all believe in a hell of some kind – I think we need to at least give them that credit. Just to recap and help give an easy way to remember these four views: (1) traditionalism believes in a fire that *torments*; (2) universalism believes in a fire that *purifies*; and (3) conditionalism believes in a fire that *consumes*.

Like I mentioned earlier, I grew up believing traditionalism for most of my life until I re-examined the biblical text for myself. As you will see, I now hold to conditionalism. I have much respect and admiration for those who do not hold to conditionalism, and I believe they still love Jesus and worship Him as I do. Outside of this discussion, there is so much to learn from these people. Another thing I just want to point out is that scripture alone changed my mind.[4] Yes, there are verses here and there that might suggest something contrary to conditionalism, but when I look at the entire book from cover to cover and seek to understand the goal of scripture, and the heart of God, I have come to the conclusion that conditionalism is best represented by scripture.

I will navigate through my case for conditionalism by examining five main pillars. They are: (1) the question of Immortality; (2) the meaning of "eternal"; (3) the language of death and destruction; (4) the imagery in Revelation; and (5) the goodness of God.

Are We Immortal or Mortal?

Foundational to the more traditional view is the question of immortality. I'm sure you are all familiar with the concept that "*we are all eternal beings who will live forever either in heaven or hell*." This idea that we will all live forever "is the womb from which the [traditional view of hell] was born."[5] However, this is a difficult concept to find in scripture. In Genesis 2:7 we are told about the creation of Adam, "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living *being*." What does it mean that Adam became a "living being"? The word "being" which can also mean "creature" is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh* (also translated as "living soul" in the KJV). It means that when the breath of life entered Adam's nostrils, it animated him and he came alive; he became a *breathing creature*. In fact, in other parts of Genesis (i.e. 2:19 & 9:12), every other living creature in God's new creation are also a living *nephesh*. They are all breathing creatures like we are. What separates us as humans from other living creatures is that we bear the Image of God.

But aren't we all immortal? No, we are all *mortal* beings made of dust and the breath of life. We are completely dependent on the mercy of God for every breath and heart beat – in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). We come from the dust of the ground, we received the breath of life in our nostrils, and we became fully alive. If you remember: In the Garden of Eden, in order to live forever, Adam & Eve had to *reach out* and eat from the Tree of Life. They were not inherently immortal but created mortal with the *potential* to live forever – *if* they ate from the tree. But when Adam & Eve disobeyed God, they were banished from the garden because of the possibility that in their sinful state they would "eat from the tree of life and 'live forever' (Gen. 3:22)."[6] God couldn't allow that. What is fascinating is that in Revelation 22, the Tree of Life is back in the New Heaven & New Earth. When Christ returns and restores His creation, we will once again have access to the Tree of Life and live forever.

God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16), and because of Jesus' Resurrection, he offers eternal life and immortality to us mortals as a free gift through the gospel (John 3:16, Rom. 6:23, 2 Tim. 1:10). Many times, throughout John's gospel, we are told that whoever believes in him has eternal life.[7] Luke 20:35-36 tells us that the children of God who will partake in the final resurrection "can no longer die." On the Last Day, "the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). Eternal life is never described as something given to unbelievers, but only to believers. Immortality is not *universal*, but *conditional* upon faith in Christ, hence the term conditionalism.

The Meaning of Eternal

The question lies in the meaning of "eternal/everlasting," and its influence on the understanding of "eternal life" and other words in key phrases such as "eternal punishment" and "eternal destruction." "Eternal life" is first mentioned in Daniel 12:2 and develops over time into a term that refers to the resurrection life of the coming age.[8] We understand that the coming age is eternal – it lasts forever. How are "eternal punishment" and "eternal destruction" related to this coming age? The difference of opinion does not lie in the *length*, but in the *nature* of the punishment in the age to come. It says in Matthew 25:46 – "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Those who hold to the more traditional view of hell tend to view eternal life as *parallel* to eternal punishment, in that they are both destinations that are eternal in length of time.[9]

This might sound logical, neat and tidy, but its not that simple. Conditionalists agree that the word "eternal" often means "everlasting."[10] But they see a more flexible range of meaning for the different words that eternal modifies. In each case of the word "eternal," care has to be given in understanding what exactly it is that lasts forever: is it "the thing or event being described, or its implications?"[11] In other words, we do not understand "eternal" as only meaning a never-ending existence. The word "eternal" is used about seventy times throughout the NT, and there are five times that the word is used to describe "the *result* of an action."[12] That is "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9), "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12), "eternal judgment" (Heb 6:2), "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46) and "eternal destruction" (2 Thess. 1:9). In each of

these cases it should be noted that eternal "does not modify an action-word as if to speak of God as eternally" sav-*ing*, redeem-*ing*, judg-*ing*, punish-*ing*, or destroy-*ing*.[13]

For example, in Hebrews 9:12, it says that when Jesus "entered the Most Holy Place…by his own blood," he secured our eternal redemption "once for all." This does not mean that Jesus is "constantly offering his blood up to the Father for our sins" – he is not constantly trying to redeem us. He has redeemed us once for all, and so he has secured a redemption that lasts forever.[14] Can you see the difference? In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul describes the fate of the wicked as receiving the punishment of "eternal destruction" on the day of Christ's return. Eternal destruction does not mean that God is forever destroying the wicked, but once the wicked are destroyed, they are destroyed forever.[15]

It is the same with "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25. It is an act of punishing that has eternal results.[16] I might be getting ahead of myself here, but it is important to recognize here that the phrase "eternal punishment" by itself tells us nothing about the *kind* or *nature* of punishment this is. We will later see that this punishment is described elsewhere as "death and destruction," thus "eternal life" and "eternal punishment" are not *parallel destinations*, but rather a *contrast* between life and death. Once the wicked suffer their death penalty, they will be dead forever. In contrast, the righteous will be given life that will last forever. It is death or life.

The Language of Death and Destruction

This language is prominent throughout the NT when used to describe the nature of punishment and the fate of the wicked. For example, there is a common Greek word called ἀπόλλῡμι (*apollumi*) that is used a total of ninety times throughout the NT. In the synoptic gospels, every time this word is used in the active sense with a human being as the one receiving the action, "the meaning is [always] 'to destroy' or 'to kill.'"[17] Examples of this are seen in Herod seeking to *kill* baby Jesus (Matt. 2:13) or when the Pharisees sought to *kill* Jesus (Matt. 12:14; Mark 3:6).[18] This is especially true in "contexts where future judgment is in view"; it always means "to kill."[19] One of our most beloved verses in the bible such as John 3:16 says that "whoever believes in him shall not 'perish' (*apollumi*)." It is very difficult to make these words in their contexts to mean something other than "death or destruction." Another passage is in Matthew 10:28 where it says, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can *destroy* both soul and body in hell." It is difficult to imagine an "inconclusive process of perishing" whereby the person never perishes.[20] How do we say someone suffered destruction if they are not in fact destroyed?

The OT does not speak specifically of hell, but if one wanted to know what the OT has to say about the fate of the wicked, he would be overwhelmed with the evidence. All throughout the OT the language of death and destruction abounds. So much so that there are about seventy metaphors used to describe the fate of the wicked, and "not one of the verbs or word pictures remotely suggests" the idea of Eternal Torment.[21] One example of this is in Psalm 37 where it describes the wicked are like grass and green plants that will soon wither and die away (v. 2), they will never be found again (v. 10), they will perish and vanish like smoke (v. 20), they will be completely cut off (v. 9,22), and destroyed (v. 38).[22] Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi immersed in the Scriptures (the OT), uses the same language when he speaks of the fate of the wicked. Not to mention, he talks about the "unquenchable fire" and the "worm that never dies" (i.e., Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:44, 48), which is unquestionably a direct quote from Isaiah 66:24. We have to keep in mind that when the NT quotes from the OT, we must "begin with the original contextual meaning of the OT phrases and symbols, and then approach the NT quotation with that meaning in mind, *sensitive to any change in meaning by Jesus or the NT writer*."[23] In this case, the context of Isaiah 66:24 is describing a great battle scene on the Great Day of the Lord, when the Lord protects the righteous within the city while utterly slaying the wicked who rebel against Him, by divine fire and sword. Then afterwards, Isaiah says the righteous "will go out and look upon the *dead bodies"* of the wicked, lying just outside of Jerusalem, where "their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind." It is hard to ignore the how plainly Isaiah describes the end of the wicked, and that Jesus quotes Isaiah word for word in Mark 9:48. The fate of the wicked seems to be nothing more than their complete destruction.

But what is an "unquenchable fire"? It has often been suggested that it is a fire that never goes out. Therefore, it is assumed that if the fire never goes out, then what is thrown into it never burns up. But this is highly problematic. If we use Scripture to interpret Scripture, unquenchable "does not mean ever-burning, but irresistible," because it cannot be stopped from doing what it most naturally does. An "'unquenchable' fire ('irresistible fire') fully consumes (Ezek. 20:47-48), reduces to nothing (Amos 5:5-6) or burns up what is put into it (Matt. 3:12)."[24]

Another aspect of OT background in the NT is the way in which NT writers will point to a historical judgment in the OT as an example of what happens to the wicked in the end. Among the many historical events of judgment throughout the OT, the story of the great Flood (Gen. 6-9) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-29) and all of their features are alluded to most frequently. In the story of the Flood, the words are "'perish,' 'destroy' or 'die,' and they are used synonymously with 'cut off' and 'wipe out.'"[25] These words illustrate for us that the wicked in Noah's day met their terrible fate in the great flood. By using the same language, both "Jesus and Peter use [the story of the Flood] to illustrate" what happens to the wicked on the final Day of the Lord.[26]

Not only the Flood, but the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is also alluded to by Peter and Jude. Peter illustrates in harsh language that God "condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:6). Later Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah "serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire." I suggest that we should recognize the historical fact of what happened to these cities. We know that they are not still burning but were completely destroyed and reduced to ashes. Also, because the NT writers tell us that this event is an example of what will happen to the wicked, it cannot mean anything other than a complete and utter destruction and annihilation.

The Imagery in Revelation

What do we do with the book of Revelation? Here is where the discussion gets rather intense. Most agree that Revelation is a book of rich symbolism and needs to be treated with care. Where the difference lies is how the symbolism is understood when it specifically refers to the fate of the wicked. The two texts relevant to our topic are Revelation 14:9-11 and 20:10-15. In these passages, we can't help but notice the language that describes the "smoke of their torment rises forever and ever" (14:11), and the beast and his followers being "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (20:10). Many read these verses in a straightforward manner, and we can see and understand how, on the surface, they might see "eternal torment" in those verses.

However, I would suggest an alternative way to interpret these images. First of all, what needs to be acknowledged is that, "no other book of the NT is as permeated by the OT as is Revelation."[27] Not very often does the book directly quote from the OT, but in almost every verse there is a direct allusion to something from the OT.[28] Therefore, I would suggest that in order to properly understand the symbolism in Revelation, one must first recognize how the symbolism in Revelation is used in the OT before making conclusions on what the symbolism means. In using this principle, one can notice strong similarities between the destruction of the beast in Revelation 14:9-11 and the destruction of Edom in Isaiah 34:9-10. When the prophet Isaiah pronounced judgment on the nation of Edom, he said its "streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become a blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever" (Isa. 34:9-10). It is nearly a word for word quotation, and we know from history that Edom was quite literally destroyed, and the smoke "rising forever" points to the *finality* of her judgment. Therefore, it would appear as a strange anomaly to suggest that its meaning in Revelation would be anything other than complete destruction.

A second thing I'd like to point out is how Revelation will sometimes offer its own interpretation of its imagery. For example, earlier in Revelation 1:20 John sees seven golden lampstands, and the angel tells him, "The seven lampstands ARE the seven churches." Can you see what happened there? There we're told what the lampstands are: they are to be identified with the churches. The lampstands are the symbol, and the churches are the clearer reality. Another one is in 5:8, "the golden bowls of incense ARE the prayers of the saints." There are many other examples of this.[29] But I think this is key to understanding the meaning of the Second Death in 20:14. There is says that "the lake of fire IS the second death." The lake of fire and all of its imagery is the symbol, and the second death is the clearer reality. If we were to reverse this and say "the Second Death is the Lake of Fire" we would further shroud the clearer reality in mystery and thus, make the clearer reality less clear than the symbol. It would be like saying that "the seven churches ARE the seven lampstands." Also, throughout Revelation, the word "death" is used a total of 19 times and every time it means nothing other than what we know of death as the end of someone's life.[30] In identifying the Lake of Fire with the second death, John has quite simply said that the wicked will die a second time. It is not temporary but final. This time, it will be an eternal death without hope of another resurrection. The question I ask considering Revelation is this: Is it faithful hermeneutics to take the rich symbolism of Revelation and read backwards into the rest of scripture and re-interpret the plain language of death & destruction? I think not…

The Goodness of God

I believe that the conditionalist view of hell is most consistent with the goodness of God. On the one hand we have God's holiness, moral purity, and hatred "of all that is wrong and his relentless action to make everything right. God is…a *perfectionist*. [Then on the other hand] we have God's kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and self sacrifice. God is… a *lover*."[31] These two attributes reflect a perfectly good God. Scripture tells us that God is patient, "not wanting anyone to perish (*apollumi*), but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "At the end of days, it will be clear that God has done [everything He] can do to draw people to himself."[32] Do we believe this? We say that God is Holy and Just and will perfectly deal with sin, but we also believe He is a God is perfect Love and Righteousness.

Throughout the OT, we see a just God who hands out punishment that always fits the crime. "Punishments are all limited in duration and intensity [with the worse punishment being] capital punishment (ie. Death)."[33] We never see ongoing torment as a method of punishment that God sanctions. "In fact, any excessive punishment is strictly banned, and exceeding that limit is to degrade the person, which is not permitted (Deut. 25:1-3)."[34] The purpose of the punishment is for debts to be paid and for guilt to be purged, it does not serve the purpose to shame and torment. The view in the OT and NT is that "when the truly good God finally judges sin, that judgment is truly final." In the end of all days, we can rejoice in the final victory of God when the New Creation is finally the home of righteousness where sin and evil are nowhere to be found. "God will have permanently eradicated [all evil] by making all things new" (Mal. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:13).[35] When the entire cosmos is purified of all evil, including all evildoers, then "God can truly be 'all in all'" (1 Cor. 15:28).[36]

Conclusion

Ever since coming to embrace the Conditionalist view of hell, the grace and mercy of God has become so much more real to me. God is full of grace and mercy and deeply desires that all will turn to him. He is not vengeful in that he repays those who do not repent by keeping them alive forever in torment in the fires of hell. No. He honors the dignity of their human will and leaves them to the terrible results of their sin – and that is death. Conditionalism beautifies the gospel as truly Good News. The good news is that Jesus has won the victory over death, and now lives forever as the rightful Lord over creation, and he offers us the gift of eternal life. The gospel is not a threat, it is good news.

Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is ***death***, but the gift of God is ***eternal life*** through Jesus Christ our Lord." The choice before everyone is life or death. The wages of sin is death – nothing more. God does not punish the unbeliever more than what is absolutely necessary. As I understand this, eternal torment flies in the face of our beloved text of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not ***perish*** but have ***eternal life***." Our good Lord offers us, as mere mortals, the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The choice before all of us is life or death – it is that simple. My prayer is that we will all choose Resurrection life. Amen.

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This article is based on a sermon by Chris Loewen given at *The ConneXion*, Arborg, Manitoba, on May 27, 2018. Click below to watch!

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References

↑1 Most seem to believe in a form of "*separationism.*" Along with this is a form of "*lewisianism*" in which all who are in hell, ultimately choose it, and hell's door is locked from the inside (C.S.Lewis). Yet there are those, like N.T.Wright, who suggest a kind of "*dehumanization*," that those who refuse to respond to the gospel, and only worship themselves, "that after death they become at last, by their own effective choice, beings that once were human but now are not," but however, he admits that this is wandering into "territory that no one can claim to have mapped" (N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* [New York, NY: Harper One, 2008], 183.). To illustrate this,

some point to Smeagol's ghastly transformation into Gollum in the LOTR Trilogy. Yet, ironically, Gollum is eventually annihilated in the volcanic fires of Mount Doom.

↑2 The label "traditionalism" suggests that the alternate views are not found in church tradition, which is untrue.

↑3 Of course, with the exception of *eternal separation*. On this note, see Joseph Dear's excellent series of articles: "The Not-So-Traditional View" Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3.

↑4 The reason I make this claim is in response to the repeated charge laid on conditionalists that they only came to the view because of an emotional abhorrence with the Eternal Torment view. John Stott has been repeatedly misrepresented in this regard. After he admits, "emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with [Eternal Torment] without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain," he wisely points out, "But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it. As a committed evangelical, my question must be – and is – not what does my heart tell me, but *what does God's Word say*?" (John R.W. Stott, "Judgment and Hell," in *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism*, eds. Christopher M. Date, Gregory G. Stump, and Joshua W. Anderson [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014], 51.).

↑5 Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment,* 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 19.

↑6 Richard Middleton, "Humans Created Mortal, with the Possibility of Eternal Life" in *Sapientia*. May 17, 2018. Accessed May 23, 2018. http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2018/05/humans-created-mortal-with-the-possibility-of-eternal-life/.

↑7 See also John 6:48-51; 6:58; 8:51; 11:25-26. Outside of John's gospel, see: Acts 13:46; Romans 2:6-8; 8:11; 1 John 2:17.

↑8 Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 428.

↑9 Robert Yarbrough explains, "the blessed state of eternal life is logically opposite to the condemned state of eternal destruction. If Salvation and conscious bliss are everlasting, so are perdition and conscious torment," [Robert W. Yarbrough, "Jesus on Hell," *Hell under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan & Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 74; italics mine.].

↑10 "Eternal" can also mean "of the age" which is the age that goes on forever – thus the meaning is still "everlasting."

↑11 John Stackhouse, "Terminal Punishment," in *Four Views on Hell*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 69.

↑12 Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes*, 38; italics in original. Chris Date, from Rethinking Hell, pointed out to me that not all nouns are of the type that can be read either as a process or result. While many are (i.e., translation, destruction, salvation, redemption), many aren't (i.e., bowl, man, house). Just because the noun "punishment" should be read as the result of the verb "punish" it does not necessarily mean the noun "life" should be read similarly.

↑13 Ibid., 40; italics mine.

↑14 Stackhouse, 68.

↑15 Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes*, 41.

↑16 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 2007), 967.

↑17 Kim Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 54.

↑18 Sprinkle, 200; italics mine. See also Matthew 10:28; 21:41; 27:20; Mark 3:6; 9:22; Luke 6:9.

↑19 Ibid.

↑20 John R.W. Stott, "Judgment and Hell," in *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism*, eds. Christopher M. Date, Gregory G. Stump, and Joshua W. Anderson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 51.

↑21 Edward William Fudge, "The Final End of the Wicked," in *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism*, eds. Christopher M. Date, Gregory G. Stump, and Joshua W. Anderson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 31.

↑22 See also examples such as: Ps. 1:4-6; 2:9; 58; 68:2; 73:18-19; Isa. 1:31; 33:12; 66:24; Eze. 20:47-48; Amos 5:5-6; Mal. 4:1-3.

↑23 Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes*, 79; italics mine.

↑24 Ibid., 77.

↑25 Ibid., 60.

↑26 Ibid., 61. **Jesus** – Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27. **Peter** – 2 Peter 2:5,9; 3:3-37.

↑27 D.A.Carson & G.K.Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 1081.

↑28 Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18.

↑29 In the OT, we see other examples of this in **Genesis 40** when Joseph interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker. He says, "The three branches ***are*** three days" and "the three baskets ***are*** three days" (**40:12,18**). Later, he interprets Pharaoh's dreams and says, "the seven good cows ***are*** seven years, and the seven good heads of grain ***are*** seven years…they ***are*** seven years of famine" (**41:26-27**). Also, the device is used by Daniel when he tells King Nebuchadnezzar about the great tree in his dream, "which grew large and strong," and then he says, "you, O king, ***are*** that tree!" (**Dan. 4:20-22**). Later, in **7:17**, the angel interprets Daniel's dream and says, "the four great beasts ***are*** four kingdoms that will rise from the earth." Again, another dream of Daniel's in **8:21** is interpreted when the angel says, "the shaggy goat ***is*** the king of Greece." In Revelation, there are more examples not already mentioned where John explicitly identifies his symbolism with a clearer reality. The angel told John, "the waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, ***are*** peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" (**17:15**). The "fine linen ***is*** the righteous deeds of the saints" (**19:8**, ESV). The reigning with Christ for a thousand years "***is*** the first resurrection" (**20:5**).

↑30 See 1:18; 2:10,11; 2:23; 6:8; 9:6; 12:11; 13:3,12; 18:8; 20:6,13,14; 21:4,8.

↑31 Stackhouse, 61.

↑32 Ibid., 80.

↑33 "Clark Pinnock, Hell and the Holiness of God" in *Rethinking Hell*. December 20, 2014. Accessed May 9, 2018. https://rethinkinghell.com/2014/12/clark-pinnock-hell-and-the-holiness-of-god/.

↑34 Ibid.

↑35 Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 153.

↑36 Stackhouse, 80.

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https://www.creationismonline.com/TSK/Immortality.html