

UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

What is "UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION"?

Universal Reconciliation (or "Universalism") is the teaching that everyone who ever lived will eventually be saved. This view takes many forms, but usually is based on the following rather clever, but false, arguments:

-- If God is love, surely He will not allow any of His creatures to suffer punishment forever.

-- If Christ died for everyone, then everyone must eventually be saved.

-- If those in hell believe, surely they, too, will be saved.

-- The Greek words translated "forever" and "eternal" do not really mean "forever" in the sense of the English word, but only "age-long" or "for the ages." Based on this translation, when the end, or the climax, of the ages is reached the punishment of the lost will come to an end and they will be welcomed into the presence of God, their penalty finally paid.

There are many other arguments advanced, but this will suffice to give us an idea of what Universalism is all about. We will first look at some general considerations and then take up the texts used to support this unscriptural view.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

What would be the value of the Universalist doctrine?

-- While professing a concern for the lost, it actually results in failure to win the **few**, in a vain hope that there is ultimate safety for **all**. As an illustration, suppose two men are on the same sinking ship. One is trying to get as many of the passengers as possible into the lifeboat. The other one argues, "You cannot get everyone into the life boat, therefore there must be some other mysterious, but not advertised, way that they will **all** be saved -- so there is really no great danger after all." Which man is truly concerned for the endangered passengers?

-- While it professes to give an exalted view of God, in reality it debases Him -- for it exalts His **LOVE** above His **HOLINESS**. Love is not the most basic attribute of God. The angels around the throne do not chant, "Love, love, love" -- but "Holy, holy, holy." Love not based firmly on holiness ceases to be true love.

God protected Noah from this kind of "love." He knew that when Noah's friends saw the waters rising they would want to come aboard the ark -- and that Noah's compassion (not being based on pure holiness, as was God's) would cause him to open the door to them. The result would be the over-loading and sinking of the boat -- or the continuing corruption of the post-flood earth. This would defeat the very purpose of the flood and make another judgment necessary. So **GOD** shut the door (and did not open it when those outside finally believed Noah's message about a coming flood -- because they had seen it). In **TRUE** love for Noah and his family He shut the door to all others, abandoning them to their judgment.

While it professes to exalt grace, in reality it sets it aside. While grace is made possible

(on God's part) by the death of Christ, its application depends on faith (on man's part). We are told (concerning justification and its attendant blessings) "-- it is of faith, that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4:16). Thus faith is not a **WORK**. Instead it is the only thing God could require of man which would **NOT** be a work, making God's response to that faith a **GRACIOUS** provision for believing man. Any spiritual benefit that comes to man apart from faith, then, cannot be coming on the basis of grace. (God's rewarding of the saints, for their works as believers, is gracious, for the whole system of rewards rests upon that basic faith which made them saints, and the walk by faith that produces the works).

It will not do to say that after "*eons*" of judgment men **WILL** finally believe, for faith is the evidence of things **NOT SEEN** (Heb. 11:1). Every unbeliever will become a "believer" five minutes after he dies, but this is **SIGHT**, not **FAITH**. By providing salvation for men apart from faith (faith expressed during this life, at a time when faith is called for and true faith possible) Universalism is not super grace, but a most insidious and repulsive legalism. It is repulsive because if God can save without faith eventually, He would be an ogre not to do it **NOW**.

THE MEANING OF THE WORDS INVOLVED

While it makes a great show of super scholarship, the Universalist movement ignores the most basic consideration in human language. The true meaning of words is based solely on how they are **USED**, even though their derivation is interesting and sometimes helpful. The meaning of the Greek words for eternal, everlasting, etc. must be determined by how they are **USED** in **SCRIPTURE**.

The Greek word "*aion*" is often used of a limited time -- an age. However it is also used to describe: How long the Creator is blessed (Rom. 1:25); -- the duration of Christ's resurrection life (Heb. 7:24); -- the period of time when Christ is "the same" (Heb. 13:8); -- the duration of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23); -- the length of Christ's reign over Israel (going on to say it "has **NO END**" -- Luke 1:33); -- the time during which the believer shall not thirst (John 4:14), see death (John 8:51, 52) or perish (John 10:28); -- and the time during which Christ is blessed (Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 11:31).

With this usage in view, if God did not mean a literal "forever" in the following instances He would seem to be most misleading and cruel in His choice of words:

-- The duration of the darkness reserved for the false prophets is said to be forever (2 Pet. 2:17).

-- The duration of time when there is no forgiveness to those who commit the sin against the Holy Spirit is said to be eternal (Mark 3:29).

An even stronger construction translated "forever and forever" is used to describe the time that glory is ascribed to God (Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21); ---- the length of God's life (Rev. 15:7); -- the duration of Christ's resurrection life (Rev. 4:9, 10; 5:14); -- the extent, in time, of Christ's glory and dominion (1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Rev. 1:6; 5:13; 11:15); -- and the duration of the reign of Christ's servants after the millennial reign is already past (Rev. 22:5).

The Greek word "*aionios*" -- regardless of its derivation -- conveys the idea of eternal, as we understand the **ENGLISH word "eternal."** In every scriptural instance known to the author it could be, and should be, translated "eternal." This meaning of the word would probably never have been questioned if it had not been used to describe the eternal judgment of the lost -- a doctrine repugnant to the natural man. Forty times it is used to describe the life we have in Christ. It describes God (Rom. 16:26); -- the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14); -- the New Covenant (Heb. 13:20); -- the gospel (evidently referring to the heart of all good news, the death and resurrection of Christ -- Rev. 14:6); -- salvation (Heb. 5:9); -- the glory awaiting the believer (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10); -- the Kingdom (not the millennial kingdom here -- 2 Pet. 1:11); -- and our redemption (Heb. 9:12).

But it also describes the fire awaiting the lost (Matt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7); -- their destruction (2 Thess. 1:9); -- their punishment (Matt. 25:46); -- their judgment (Heb. 6:2); -- and their damnation (Mark 3:29).

If this word describes a period of time -- however long -- which eventually terminates, then **AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE LOST CEASE TO BE PUNISHED, THE BELIEVER'S LIFE, REDEMPTION, SALVATION, INHERITANCE, etc., WILL END!** Not only that, but so will the very existence of God and His Kingdom!

If God did not mean, in the fullest sense, "eternal" when warning the lost of their fate, then He stands convicted of failing utterly to tell them what He meant -- in a place where it would be most vital for Him to be crystal clear! Where would be His "love" if He needlessly led them to expect an end that He did not have in view?

IS RECONCILIATION "UNIVERSAL"?

It is imperative that Second Corinthians chapter five be clearly understood.

Consider 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 18, 19. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again ... And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Failure to understand these verses has led to two false positions. The problems arising from the "all" in verse 14 and the "world" in verse 19 have led to either "Limited Atonement" (the view that Christ did not die for all men, but only for those chosen to be saved -- the elect) or "Universal Reconciliation." The expression "were all dead" (or "all died" -- NASB) in verse 14 does not refer to the death mentioned in Gal. 2:20 (as suggested in the Scofield notes). If it did, it would seem reasonable that all for whom Christ died on Calvary must share in the benefits, and be looked upon as themselves having died in the sense of Gal. 2:20.

Interpreting the passage in this way, the limited Atonement man says, "The 'all' for whom Christ died must be the elect -- otherwise everyone would be saved." The Universal Reconciliation adherent would reply, "Everyone must be saved -- otherwise Christ didn't die for all."

Actually the "all died" in verse 14 refers to the death of Rom. 5:12. Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN**, for that all have sinned." When we sinned -- not **LIKE Adam**, but **IN Adam** -- we died the death referred to in Eph. 2:1, 5 ("dead in trespasses and sins") and 1 Cor. 15:22 ("In Adam all die").

Paul's argument in verses 14 and 15 may be put this way, "***The fact that Christ died for ALL [not just for the elect] proves that ALL died in Adam, all need His provision. But His death, though for all, is only effective for 'they which live' [verse 15]. Christ died for all [universal provision] that they which live [Limited acquisition] should ... live ... unto Him.***" The universal **provision** -- the love of Christ for **all** -- constrains us to be concerned for all. The limited **acquisition** -- the need for faith -- constrains us to preach to them, to "persuade men" (verse. 11).

In verses 18, 19 there are two aspects of reconciliation. One of them is universal in its scope (but should not be referred to as "universal reconciliation" as it would be totally misunderstood in light of the way that term is presently used). When Christ died for all (v. 14) He reconciled the world to God. This aspect of reconciliation does not save anyone -- but it does make the whole world savable! If it saved men, then why should we cry out to them, "Be ye reconciled to God!" (Verse 10) when they are already reconciled? A failure to see the difference between these two concepts (reconciliation as wrought by Christ and reconciliation as implemented by believing the "word of reconciliation") leads to error. The Limited Atonement teacher will say, "It must refer to the world of the elect in verse 19, or we have "universal reconciliation." The Universal Reconciliation advocate would reply, "Everyone must be saved or God has failed to reconcile the world to Himself." Both are in serious error. The Limited Atonement believer casts a shadow over the love of God, while the other sets aside His holiness. Both have to wrest Scripture to sustain their false views.¹

WILL GOD FAIL TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE?

The charge is made that if any man for whom Christ died does not share in His salvation, then Christ has failed, to some degree, in His work of redemption.

No one can be considered a failure until it is determined what he intended to do. God never intended to save all men, but only to save those who would believe. It is not His will² that any should perish (which proves that God did not arbitrarily predestinate some men to be

¹ Limited Atonement is actually a kind of universalism. Like Universal Reconciliation it teaches that all who are loved by God and for whom Christ died will be saved. The difference between the two teachings is merely the definition of the "world" that God loved and for which Christ died.

² See the discussion of this verse later.

lost), but it is also not His will that salvation should be forced upon anyone or that all men should automatically be destined to go to heaven. If everyone would be saved because everyone truly believed, none would do more rejoicing than God Himself! But God knew that not all would believe and He has made clear what the prospect of the confirmed unbeliever is. Where did God promise him anything but judgment? (See Heb. 10:10:26, 27 and "no hope" in Eph. 2:12 and 1 Thess. 4:13)

The outstanding offering in the sacrificial system was not the sin-offering nor the trespass-offering (typifying Christ's death as it provided for men), but the burnt-offering. It portrayed Christ's death as the offering up of His perfect and loving obedience to the Father. If not even one sinner had believed the gospel, Christ's death would not have been in vain -- for it was supremely to do His Father's will that He came and died (Heb. 10:7 - 9). His death not only saves those who believe, but vindicates God in the case of those who do not. This requires unlimited atonement, but shuts out universal reconciliation.

That the death of Christ does have this double effect is in view in 2 Cor. 2:14 - 17 (NASB). When His redemption is proclaimed and "manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" some choose life and live forever. Others choose death and perish eternally. In both God is glorified "for we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." Christ's death has saved the former and rendered the latter forever without excuse.

It has been said, "It is better to light a lamp than to curse the darkness." It is also better to reach everyone we can with the gospel than to try to explain away the results of rejecting it -- or of not having heard it.

If we really have a concern for those who face eternal punishment, then let us turn from this false hope for their eventual salvation apart from saving faith, and seek to bring them to the Savior!

SOME OF THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE UNIVERSALISTS

The following passages of Scripture are supposed by some to speak "boldly, clearly, and in striking harmony" in favor of universal reconciliation. Let us look at them carefully to see whether or not this is a valid claim.

-- **Rev. 5:13.** "And every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

This verse does not say that every creature will be saved, but only that they acknowledge that the Lamb deserves "blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and forever." This verse must look forward to the end situation, for at the time indicated in the context (see the following chapter of Revelation) there are hosts of men on earth who are not yet willing to admit this. The final result as foreseen in vision is that even the enemies of Christ will have to recognize His place in His universe -- though it does not indicate that such recognition will bring them salvation.

There are several other verses that are related to this one. Col. 1:20 is a case in point. "And having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself -- by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Whatever the interpretation of this verse, it is most significant that the expression "under the earth" found in Rev. 5:13 is omitted) This reconciliation is of all things. The word is neuter gender. Even if one considers fallen man as included in the "all things" it would be presenting the fact that the responsibility of God in reconciliation has been fully met (as in 2 Cor. 5:19). That this aspect of reconciliation does not meet the responsibility of man to be reconciled is evident in the following verses (as is also true in 2 Cor. 5:19). He goes on to say, in effect, "You who were alienated and hostile in mind, He has reconciled -- **IF** indeed your faith is real and not spurious [as would be indicated by turning from the hope of the gospel -- Col. 1: 23]."

John 6:39, 40 makes a similar comparison between things and people. In verse 39 it is things (neuter) and the promise is universal. "And this is the Father's will ... that of all that He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." In verse 40 it is people and limited to those who believe. "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone who seeth the Son and believeth on Him, I will raise him up at the last day."

-- **2 Cor. 5:19.** "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." That this reconciliation of the world does not mean that everyone will be saved is obvious from the context.

There are two aspects of reconciliation noted here. In verse 19 it is God who is doing the reconciling. In verse 20 it is man who is called upon to reconcile himself. Notice it is always man reconciled to God, never God reconciled to man. The enmity between God and man is all man's fault, and the change must come in man's position and condition before he can enjoy the peace with God that means salvation. The Cross took away all obstacles to this peace except man's unbelief: man himself must remove this one. God is satisfied with what Christ did at Calvary, making salvation possible. When man also is satisfied with that work, salvation becomes actual and personal.

If the Cross alone completed the full reconciliation in the sense that man is saved, then why the urgent call, in the same passage (v. 20) for man to be reconciled? Verse 21 fits with the above, for Christ became sin for us (His part in reconciliation) that we might (pending our part -- to believe) become the righteousness of God in Him.

The context goes on to speak of salvation. It indicates that the believer (the co-laborer in 2 Cor. 6:1) will have received the grace of God (the message entrusted to him -- the "word of reconciliation") in vain (i.e. God's purpose in entrusting it to him, the salvation of others, will be frustrated) if he does not effectively minister it to others. He is warned that the matter is urgent from the point of time, for **NOW** (not at the end of the ages) is the acceptable time, **NOW** is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1, 2).

-- **Phil. 2:10, 11.** "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

These verses do not say, or even imply, that every person shall be saved. It is not universal salvation, but universal subjugation that is in view. It is not reconciliation, but

capitulation on man's part. The bowing of the knee and confession of the tongue is not, "to the salvation of the soul" but "to the glory of God the Father." God is glorified not only by the salvation of those who voluntarily bow the knee and confess with the tongue, while the day of salvation is still here, but also in the enforced submission of those who go into eternity without having trusted Christ. That God is glorified in both the salvation of the saved and the perdition of the lost is shown in 2 Cor. 2:15, 16 as has been noted before. To Paul the grave responsibility of a ministry that could either bring salvation or additional condemnation (depending on the response to it) was too great. He was not "adequate for these things." But he did not seek to dodge the responsibility by "corrupting" the Word of God. He did not try to soften the message by promising ultimate salvation to the unbelievers. Instead He left the responsibility for results with the God who gave the message (2 Cor. 3:5), and preached the message faithfully depending on His adequacy.

-- **Rom. 14:11.** "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

Both in this context, and in Isa. 45:23, from which it is quoted, a general truth is used to back up a more specific one. The general truth is that all men will appear before God -- not the gods of the heathen (the emphasis in Isa. 45:23) -- and that they will appear there in judgment for their own works (the emphasis in Romans). If all are to be judged by God for their own works, then whatever of judgment is left (after John 5:24 and Rom. 8:1 are applied) will be a matter of each man answering for himself, not for his neighbor. To make Rom. 14:11 teach that all men are saved would be to place all men at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- far from the thought of this or any other passage. The expression "every tongue shall give praise to God" (Rom. 14:11 NASB) does not necessitate the salvation of the individual. The lost will have to praise God that He went to such lengths to save them, though they will spend eternity blaming themselves for their blindness and unbelief. They will praise Him for His perfect justice, for no lost soul will suffer, in intensity, one whit beyond what he richly deserves.

Also notice Psa. 145:14 - 21 (NASB). Here it plainly says (vs. 14 - 16), "The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. Thou dost open Thy hand, and dost satisfy the desire of every living thing." In verse 21 it continues, "-- all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever." But does this teach that all will be saved? God carefully guards against this uncalled for conclusion by adding clearly, "**BUT ALL THE WICKED HE WILL DESTROY.**" The loving care described in verses 14 - 16 and 21 is only for His own, as is shown in verses 17, 18, 20-a. The Lord is "near to those who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love Him --." There is no universal reconciliation here!

-- **1Tim. 2:3, 4.** "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

The word "will" in verse 4 does not reflect the purpose of God, but the longing of His heart, His desire. See its use in Luke 8:20; 10:24; 13:34; Gal. 4:20; etc. But is God limited and not able to do what His heart desires? While man cannot limit God, He is self-limited. There are things God cannot do. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13); He cannot break His word (Num. 23:19; Jer. 4:28); He cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13); nor can He, obviously, act in violation of His holiness. He is also bound by principles that are the

very laws of existence itself, and have stood for eternity -- flowing out of His eternal nature as God. He must act consistently with His nature. "God does not always do what He pleases, but He always does what is right." ³

That God longs for all men to be saved is clear in this verse and many others. But how does this longing manifest itself? By exercising His sovereignty ruthlessly to bring it to pass? No indeed! His longing manifests itself in His work at Calvary to make it possible (John 3:16 and many other passages) and in His longsuffering patience. "-- Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa. 30:18). God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Both of these verses indicate that God must wait upon man for his repentance (a waiting accomplished in this life, not in eternity) and that, failing this repentance, He will not be able to be gracious, but must allow them to perish.

He shows His compassion in 1 Tim. 2 by requesting prayer for all men. Why are they to pray for them (that they might be saved) if they will all be saved anyway? God's purpose (unalterable and sure of accomplishment) is that all who believe will be saved! He has given His word to this effect. For Him to save the rest of mankind without the faith (faith can only be valid during this life -- before it becomes sight -- Heb. 11:1) would be to make the necessity of faith for salvation, now, meaningless. Beyond this, moreover, He has given His word that "He that believeth not" shall be condemned (Mark 16:16); shall perish (John 3:16); shall not see life (John 3:36); and shall be thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15; 21:8). He is bound by His own word!

-- **1 Tim. 4:9 - 11.** "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach."

Even if the statement had closed with "-- who is the Savior of all men" it would only indicate that He is able to save any who will place their faith in Him. As far as the validity of His work is concerned He stands as the Savior of all men. For those who refuse Him there is no other Savior to turn to. This same thought is found in 1 John 4:14, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." To take this to mean universal reconciliation is to ignore the rest of First John, where warning after warning is given against a false sense of security on the part of those who do not really know Him as Savior. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12) is no idle threat! See also John 3:36.

But the statement goes on to say, "-- specially to those that believe." Christ was set forth to be the Savior of all men, but He **IS** Savior in a special way to those who believe, for they receive and enjoy the salvation that others have failed to lay hold on. "The Savior of all men" answers Limited Atonement. "Specially of those that believe" answers Universal Reconciliation.

-- **1 John 2:2.** "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Vincent says (according to Kenneth Wuest) *"The sins of' (A.V.) should be omitted; as in the revised, 'for the whole world.' Compare 1 John 4:14; John 4:42; 12:32. 'The propitiation is as wide as the sin' (Bengal). If men do not experience its benefits, the fault is*

³ "Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans" by C. S. Stam, page 51.

not in its efficacy."

The word "propitiation" here is the noun form of the verb used in Luke 18:13 -- translated there "be merciful." The word refers to the Mercy Seat in the temple where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled. (See the note at Rom. 3:25 in the Scofield Reference Bible) Christ came to make propitiation (Heb. 2:17) and was Himself that propitiation (1 John 2:2), that offering for sin whose blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. When the two men (both Jews) came into the temple (Luke 18:10 - 14) there was a Mercy Seat sprinkled with blood available to both. The one prayed, in effect, "When you look on me remember the Mercy Seat [be propitiated]." The other ignored the propitiation, which was available to him as a Jew. Only the one depending on the sprinkled blood went forth justified. John's point in 1 John 2:2 is that today Christ is both that Mercy Seat and the sacrifice whose blood is upon it. Those trusting in Him as the propitiation have been justified, and now know Him also as the advocate when subsequent failures occur. As the Mercy Seat (the propitiation) He is now available not just to the Jews (as in Luke 18) but to the whole world. Those in the world not turning to this wondrous provision go away just as lost as the Pharisee in Luke.

1 Tim. 2:6 has the same thought. "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Christ's death was potentially for all. If all had believed it would have been effective for all. (Being provided with a ransom does not necessarily result in salvation, as is shown in 2 Pet. 2:1 where false teachers who will be judged, and are surely not saved, are said to deny the Lord that **BOUGHT** them) God has already paid the ransom for all men, it is His desire that they be saved, and He asks us to join with Him in making that salvation an accomplished reality in their lives. His death made their salvation possible: our witnessing and intercession make it available: but they will still miss the salvation unless they believe to make it personal.

-- **John 1:29.** "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

There are three great revelations in this verse. First, Christ is to be the great anti-type of the Old Testament sacrifices -- the Lamb of God. Second, sins are to be taken away, not merely covered. Last of all, this offering is to be available to the whole world, not only to Israel.

It is clear that not everyone individually is to experience the personal taking away of sins. This is evident when, for example, the Lamb Himself says to some unbelieving men, "-- unless you believe that I Am ... you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Much later, in a book that majors in judgment, Christ is referred to at least 26 times as "the Lamb." Why the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16) if everyone's sins were effectively taken away by His death on the Cross?

-- **Dan. 9:24.** "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy."

This verse very specifically has to do with the nation of Israel and Jerusalem, not with all men. The time delineated takes us to the end of the Tribulation period where the transgression of Israel against her God will be finished, for they will enter into the New Covenant. It will be an end of sins, for God will write His laws on their hearts (Jer. 31:33). Atonement will be made for iniquity, for it is the fulfillment of the "Day of Atonement" -- a day when all Israel shall be

saved (Rom. 11:26, 27). ⁴ Everlasting righteousness shall be the possession of every believing Jew -- the righteousness they were ignorant of in Rom. 10:3, and that is the end of the Law to everyone **WHO BELIEVES (not EVERYONE, period! -- Rom. 10:4).**

-- **John 12:32.** "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The emphasis in this verse is that Christ will die on the Cross-, as the next verse tells us plainly. It is true that all men will be drawn to Him. Some will be drawn by the gospel to put their trust in Him. The rest will be drawn by the power of God bringing them to stand before Him for **JUDGMENT**. No one can escape having a confrontation with Christ.

-- **1 John 3:8.** "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy [render powerless] the works of the devil."

This is not given to assure everyone that they will eventually be saved, but to warn against claiming salvation while revealing by the life that they are of Satan. What warped thinking could lead one to think that if Satan's works are to be destroyed, the consistent and persistent unbeliever (Satan's masterpiece) will be saved? It is a grim warning to the false professor, not a ray of hope. The writer of Hebrews says, " -- that through death He [Christ] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil" (Heb. 2:14). This does not indicate that the Devil ceases to exist any more than the Law of Moses ceases to exist when it is rendered obsolete by grace (2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13, 14 -- the same Greek word). Nor does he mean that death ceases to exist -- but that Satan is rendered impotent in a realm where he once had power. It will be **GOD, not SATAN**, who casts men into the second death!

-- **2 Tim. 1:10.** "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

It is not said that death in every form ceases to exist. "Abolished" is the same Greek word which is translated "destroy" in 1 John 3:8 and Heb. 2:14. Death loses its power over those who have been called with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9) and have been granted grace because of the gospel (v. 10). Those who have not believed the gospel are not covered in this verse.

-- **Phil. 3:21.** "Who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

No doubt all things will be subdued to Christ, but this involves voluntary subjection of the saved and enforced subjugation of the lost. However this verse does not have in view universal salvation, nor even universal enjoyment of a body like the body of His glory. It declares His power to bring about the resurrection unto life for those who believe, against whatever difficulties might be encountered, or whatever forces might be lined up to oppose it.

-- **Rev. 1:18.** "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death."

Having the keys to a place may mean a door opened or one closed and locked -- at the will of the one carrying the keys (see Rev. 3:7). What Christ does when He empties out death

⁴ The term "all Israel" here does not mean every Jew who ever lived. This is sure from Ezek. 20:34 - 44 and Zech. 13:8, 9.

(the grave) and hell (Hades), as far as the unbeliever goes, is to cast them into the Lake of Fire, which is the second **DEATH** (Rev. 20:14). This is after the close of the Millennium and the second resurrection. What evidence is there that there is hope after this final act? Where is there the promise of a third resurrection -- from the second death? The expression in Rev. 21:4, "there shall be no more death" must refer to physical and spiritual death, not the second death. The second death has just begun on the part of the lost, and is again referred to as still existing in verse eight of the same chapter. That there is still the Lake of Fire after all that is said in Rev. 21:1 - 7 leaves no possible hope for those who have been cast into it!

-- **Rom. 5:18, 21.** "Therefore, as by the offense of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ... That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord."

The parallel in this passage has to do with two men who stand as federal heads of their respective creations. All men are under the curse because they are related to Adam by birth. So those (and only those) who are related to Christ by birth are partakers of the benefits listed in this passage. Hence the stern edict, even to the religious, "Ye must be born again!" The "all men" in each case (v. 18) are the "all men" who are related to the federal head in question. Verse 17 indicates clearly that the "all men" who receive the "justification of life" are they "who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness."

-- **Rom. 8:21.** "Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In this passage we have a clear distinction made between man on the one hand and the creation (apart from men) on the other. Man came under the curse by his own choice, in Adam, but the creation was different. It was put under the curse not by its own choice, but by God's direction. As it automatically came under the curse, so it will automatically share in the adoption of sons and the glory to be revealed in them. The "whole creation" in verse 22 may or may not encompass lost men (lost men are probably not even in the picture here) but the creation in verses 20, 21 does not involve man at all. Man did come under the futility of the curse by his own choice (Adam's choice here was our choice, for we were in him -- Rom. 5:12).

-- **1 Cor. 15:22.** "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

If this verse refers to physical life only, as a result of physical resurrection, it would not teach universal salvation, but only that there is a physical resurrection even for the unsaved ("In Christ" then would have to be understood as the equivalent of "by Christ"). This is not to be denied. As a matter of fact the Bible clearly teaches that all men will be raised from the dead. But there are **TWO** resurrections, not just two in number but two in **KIND**. There is a physical resurrection for the unbeliever, but it is a resurrection unto condemnation (John 5:29) and the second death (Rev. 20:12 - 15) -- not unto **LIFE!**

However it seems this verse has in view the resurrection of life (John 5:29) for it specifically says, "In Christ shall all be made alive." This would be a confusing way to refer to a resurrection that resulted in the second death. That this is the case is indicated when the resurrection Paul has in view is described in verses 35 - 49 of First Corinthians fifteen. How can a body that is "imperishable" -- a "spiritual" body that has been raised in glory and power

(vs. 42 - 44) be cast into the Lake of Fire, the second death? This resurrection unto life is for those who are "in Christ." The expression here has in view being in Christ by the new birth, not being in the Body of Christ by the Spirit's baptism. Of course, in this Age of Grace, anyone who is in Christ by the new birth is also in the Body, and Paul often uses the expression "in Christ" to cover both concepts. But, as used here, it has a wider scope (as it does in Rom. 16:7). It most certainly does not take in the whole human race!

-- **Col. 1:16.** "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers -- all things were created by Him and for Him."

This verse merely states that Christ is not only the originator, but the focal point and purpose of creation. The subject is not the salvation of men, but the preeminence of Christ. Rev. 4:11 says, "-- Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created" (NASB). Is this truth the basis for telling us that all will be saved? No. On the contrary, it is the background and justification for the judgments that are poured out in the succeeding chapters! The book whose opening is described in chapter 5 of Revelation is filled with the judgments of chapter 6 and at least part of chapter 8.

-- **Eph. 4:10; 1:23.** "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." Then back to 1:23, "Which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

These verses that speak of Christ filling all things and filling all in all have to do with His omnipresence and total authority, but do not tell us anything at all about the salvation of a single soul.

-- **1 Cor. 15:28.** "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Here the topic is the subjugation of all things to Christ, and His voluntary subjection to the Father (once His special work of putting down the rebellion in the universe is complete). It does not indicate necessarily whether the "all things" are subject to Him voluntarily, as a response to His grace, or involuntarily, as a demonstration of His power. When everything in a country is in subjection to the government it includes both the law abiding citizens and the inmates of its prisons. Notice all His ENEMIES under His feet (v. 25)! How does anyone get salvation out of that?

CONCLUSION

One dear brother who argues eloquently for the ultimate salvation of all men, jumping from misinterpreted verse to misinterpreted verse, speaks of this teaching as the "**GREATER HOPE.**"

It is interesting that no verse of Scripture uses this expression. It speaks of a "better hope" in Heb. 7:19, but this is the redemptive work of Christ under the New Covenant in contrast to the Law. We who believe today have a "blessed hope," the expectation of Christ's coming in the Rapture. But those who are still just Gentiles in the flesh, who have not been made nigh by the blood of Christ and are without God in the world, have "**NO HOPE**" (Eph. 2:11 - 13). I Thess. 4:13, 14 makes a contrast between "we [who] believe that Jesus died and rose again" and

"others who have **NO HOPE.**"

In closing it would be well to take a close look at 2 Thess. 2:10 - 12. Here are men, during the great Tribulation, who are perishing because they "received not a love of the truth, that they might be saved." Does God then, in some way, bring them to faith later? No! Instead, God Himself sends them (by allowing the Man of Sin to hold sway) strong delusion that they should believe -- yes, **BELIEVE** -- **THE LIE!** Not that they might be saved eventually, but "that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The nature of that judgment is made clear earlier in this epistle (2 Thess. 1:7 - 9). Christ "shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of **eternal** destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (NASB).

God does not gloat over the eternal punishment of the lost -- nor should we. But He makes it clear that there **IS eternal punishment** for the **unbeliever**, and does everything in His power (consistent with His holiness and His word) to bring them to Himself in faith. What He said concerning the threat of physical death hanging over the heads of the men of Jerusalem just before it was destroyed (Ezek. 33:11) He can say of the eternal condition of the lost. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn from your evil ways; for **why will ye die?**