

## Edward Fudge and eternal salvation, redemption, judgment, destruction, and punishment

by [Matt Slick](#) - October 12, 2018

<https://carm.org/edward-fudge-and-eternal-salvation-redemption-judgment-destruction-and-punishment>

This is a quote from Edward Fudge, one of the best-known annihilationists.

*“We have seen this in regard to eternal salvation (not an eternal act of saving), eternal redemption (not an eternal process of redeeming), eternal judgment (not an eternal act of judging), eternal destruction (not an eternal process of destroying), and eternal punishment (not an eternal act of punishing). This punishment, more specifically identified as this destruction, will last forever. Those who are punished with everlasting destruction will cease to exist.*

“Fudge, Edward William. The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment, Third Edition (pp. 41-42). Cascade Books, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers. Kindle Edition.)

I came across this interesting quote from Edwin William Fudge on my Kindle reader. It had been highlighted over 130 times. This piqued my interest. Also, I was drawn to the way he compared various terms and added small comments in parentheses in order to support his annihilationism. Mr. Fudge, and apparently a whole bunch of others, think that the quote is powerful. So, I thought I would analyze it.

I did a quick search on my computer Bible program in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and discovered that each of the terms “eternal salvation,” “eternal redemption,” “eternal judgment,” “eternal destruction,” and “eternal punishment,” occurs only once in the Bible. Fascinating. I assumed the terms would have occurred numerous times. But they don’t. Just once each.

1. **Eternal salvation:** [Hebrews 5:9](#), “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,”
2. **Eternal redemption:** [Hebrews 9:12](#), “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
3. **Eternal judgment:** [Hebrews 6:2](#), “of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.”
4. **Eternal destruction:** [2 Thessalonians 1:9](#), “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

5. **Eternal punishment:** [Matthew 25:46](#), “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Let’s examine each one.

### **Eternal Salvation**

[Hebrews 5:9](#), “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,”

Fudge says that eternal salvation is “not an eternal act of saving.” Okay, but that depends on what is meant by the act of saving. If fudge is referring to the initial act of regeneration that occurs when a person believes and is delivered from God’s righteous judgment, then he is correct. God’s saving work, which occurs in a moment of time when a person believes, is not ongoing. However, its continued effect of salvation is experienced by the person forever. Now, remember, Fudge is trying to show that just as someone is not eternally being saved, he is not eternally being punished. But there’s a problem because eternal salvation is a continued experience whereas eternal punishment is not. He is conflating eternal punishment with non-existence. They are not the same thing. For more information on this, see Conditionalism and conflating eternal punishment with nonexistence

### **Eternal redemption**

[Hebrews 9:12](#), “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Fudge says that eternal redemption is “not an eternal process of redeeming.” I see his point. However, Fudge is trying to show that just as someone is not being eternally redeemed, he is not being eternally punished. And again, the same problem arises because eternal redemption is a continual experience, whereas eternal punishment is not – according to him it is nonexistence. Remember, he is trying to compare the eternal part of punishment, which he says is nonexistence, with the eternal part of redemption which is continued existence. Therefore, his comparison is flawed. Again, for more information on this, see Conditionalism and conflating eternal punishment with nonexistence

### **Eternal Judgment**

[Hebrews 6:2](#), “of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.”

Fudge says that eternal judgment is “not an eternal act of judging.” He is correct in that God is not eternally pronouncing a judgment. However, I think he’s missing the point of the

text. Notice it says “eternal judgment.” Of course, we understand that God is not eternally pronouncing a judgment. But the judgment that God has pronounced his eternal. What is that judgment? Fudge will, of course, assume the eternal judgment means nonexistence. But, since Fudge believes that an unsaved person who dies will suffer punishment before annihilation, he has a problem.

*“As is the case with any punishment, once a person completes his duration of suffering, no more judgment can be levied against the person. If the conditionalist says that the punishment is nonexistence, then there are two punishments according to this view of conditionalism: suffering and then annihilation. But, if a person’s sin necessitates a certain amount of suffering, and that person completes the law-required sentence, then why does he suffer an additional judgment of annihilation? It makes no sense. Furthermore, why doesn’t the person go to heaven since he has complied with the requirements of the law regarding punishment for breaking the law? There would be no more wrath to be administered. This would mean that this particular view of conditionalism (living on earth, dying, suffering in the afterlife for a while, then annihilation) would be unjust. Furthermore, it inadvertently accuses God of injustice by having Him administer an additional punishment of annihilation after the punishment according to the law has been satisfied.”*

(Matt Slick, If the sinner is punished and satisfies the law, then shouldn’t he go to heaven?)

So, Fudge is inconsistent and unclear in his quote at the beginning of this article.

## **Eternal Destruction**

[2 Thessalonians 1:9](#), “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

Fudge says that eternal destruction is “not an eternal process of destroying.” Well, that would depend on the meaning of the word “destroying.” In the conditionalist position, that means nonexistence. But in the counter position, eternal conscious torment, such destruction is an ongoing event. God uses the term destruction in different ways.

It can be used of people who are presently lost [apollumi] but are still alive ([Matthew 10:6](#); [15:24](#); [Luke 15:4](#), [6](#), [8](#); [19:10](#)).

In addition, the Jews wanted to destroy [apollumi] Jesus ([Matt. 2:13](#); [12:14](#); [27:20](#); [Mark 3:6](#); [11:18](#); [Luke 13:33](#); [19:47](#)) yet he would still be alive –

even in his death, ([1 Pet. 3:18-20](#)). (See Soul sleep, Jesus' human nature, and conditionalism)

Furthermore, if “eternal destruction” means nonexistence, then how is ‘nonexistence’ “away from the presence of the Lord”? Nonexistence can’t be away from anything... it just isn’t anything.

## **Eternal Punishment**

[Matthew 25:46](#), “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Fudge says that eternal punishment is “not an eternal act of punishing.” But, that is what the debate is about, isn’t it? We are discussing what the nature of that punishment is: nonexistence or existence. Nevertheless, Jesus contrasted eternal punishment with eternal life. It would seem that both are equal in that they are each eternal in duration. But, if eternal punishment is *not* something experienced, then shouldn’t that be the same with eternal life? Of course, that makes no sense. The comparison is obviously not one-to-one. So, what Fudge would be saying is that Jesus would be speaking in two different senses within the same statement. He would say that eternal punishment is nonexistence without experience, but eternal life is a blessing with experience. Is that what Jesus was saying? I don’t think so. Fudge’s position is problematic since it appears to be accusing Jesus of being inconsistent in how he uses the word “eternal” in relationship to punishment and life. One is the continued experience of the blessing of life, where the other is a one-time act of nonexistence that is not experienced since nonexistence experiences nothing.

## **Conclusion**

Though this particular article isn’t of any great value in refuting annihilationism, it does, I believe, demonstrate the lack of proper logical thinking by Edward Fudge. Likewise, I have found that conditionalist arguments are not as cogent as they think. And, as is exceedingly common, they beg the question and assume their position is the right one when texts do not necessitate their conclusions. Sorry Fudge, but quips don’t make doctrinal truth.