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## **Why I am No Longer an Annihilationist**

For many years I believed that the ultimate fate of those who don't trust in Jesus is to be destroyed forever. I didn't believe a loving Father would allow people to experience the torments of hell forever. Instead, I thought he would put them out of existence (annihilate them). It's not a majority view among Christians and never has been, but in some circles annihilationism is a common belief.

I changed my mind about it when I came to a better understanding of who Jesus is as the Son of God in union with humanity.

The whole human race – and indeed the whole creation – is in union with the Son of God. The Father created us through the Son, he upholds our existence and we live and move and have our being in him (Heb. 1:3, Acts 17:28).

What's more, the Son of God has become flesh and blood (incarnate) in every part of humanity – however dark or sinful that humanity may be (John 1:14, 2 Cor. 5:21).

So, for the Father to annihilate a human being he would have to undo both the creation and the incarnation. He would have to have Jesus withdraw his sustaining presence from a created person *and* stop living in that person through his incarnation.

This is impossible, though, because the Father does not lie. When he makes a covenant with humanity he keeps it – even when we do not uphold our end of it. In Jesus the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have promised to be God With Us, to never leave us or forsake us, and to adopt us into their life forever.

This does raise the fearful specter of some people suffering forever. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says that, in Christ, everyone will be resurrected. So all people will live forever in the incorruptible, imperishable body of the resurrection. But scripture doesn't promise us that everyone will be happy about that. Some may be miserable forever about being children of the Father in Christ.

However, as much as it raises this fearful thought, the resurrection of all humanity in Christ also raises the glorious potential that everyone will have forever to repent. If you always exist and are never annihilated then there is always the chance that you can change your mind and start being happy about being a child of the Father.

As a dad, I think I can understand that. Even if one of my kids grew up to hate me, to never speak to me, and to be miserable, I would still never kill my child! I would, like the Father in the parable of the prodigal son, always be looking, hoping, and praying for his repentance.

*~ Jonathan Stepp*