



HELL

IS A

MISTRANSLATION

*God's Ultimate Plan For Humanity
Revealed In the Accurately Translated Bible*

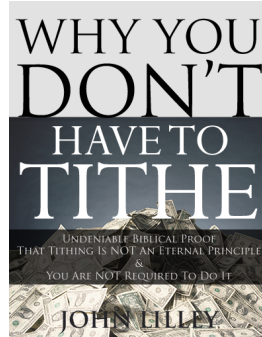
JOHN LILLEY



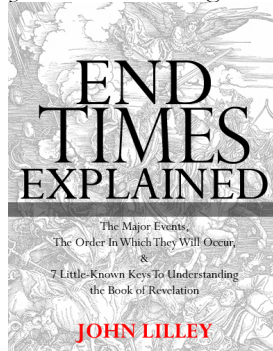
HELL IS A MISTRANSLATION
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Also by John Lilley

WHY YOU DON'T HAVE TO TITHE
Undeniable Biblical Proof That Tithing Is NOT a Universal Law and You Are NOT Required To Do It



END TIMES EXPLAINED
The Major Events, the Order in Which They Will Occur, & 7 Little-Known Keys To Understanding the Book of Revelation



If you live in the Phoenix, AZ area, John Lilley would like to invite you to connect with **The Refreshing Phoenix**, a Bible-based Christian fellowship founded by John and his wife Simona. The Refreshing Phoenix is dedicated to bringing the Word of God, the power of God, and the love of God to the greater Phoenix area, while boldly standing against the two major doctrinal leftovers from Middle Ages Catholicism – tithing and the subject of this book. **For more information visit TheRefreshingPhx.com.**

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This book is dedicated to God, who has had a great plan from the beginning,
and to my amazing wife.

*“When we translate certain key words in the Bible accurately
and think like a Godly person in Bible days, suddenly
dozens of logical and philosophical problems
regarding the Bible and God are instantly solved,
and God’s long-term plans for mankind
make perfect sense.”*

- John Lilley

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INTRODUCTION

If you read a literal, accuracy focused English Bible version like The Concordant Version or Young's Literal Translation, you will not find the word "hell" or phrases like "eternal punishment" or "forever and ever", because they are not found in the original language Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Most English speaking Bible readers don't realize that many of the popular, more loosely translated, readability focused English Bible versions *badly mistranslate certain key words* according to traditional, pagan-originated ideas about the afterlife inherited from Middle Ages Catholicism rather than translating these key words according to the *literal meaning* of the underlying Greek and Hebrew words.

These mistranslations cause massive confusion about God's ultimate plan for humanity as revealed in the Bible. In this book, we will unravel that confusion. We'll translate these key words accurately so we can discover what the Bible really says about God's plan for mankind and return to the beliefs of the early church on this subject. You will learn:

** How several separate and distinct Greek and Hebrew words, none of which mean "hell" as we understand it today, are sometimes mistranslated as the single English word "hell" in our English Bibles because of a tradition that originated in paganism*

** Another extremely important word that is always a mistranslation when you see it in your English Bible; and how the underlying Greek word actually means the opposite of what you read in your English Bible, causing tremendous confusion about God's plan for mankind*

** The simple reason why many modern translators mistranslate these key words so often, despite the fact that they are intelligent and well educated*

** God's purpose and plan for the five distinct ages of human history, and why it is hidden from the view of English-speaking Bible readers by the repeated mistranslation of an important Greek word in the New Testament in many English Bibles*

** The logical reason why God is allowing significant pain and suffering in this age, and how everything God has done and will do throughout the course of history can be easily understood by any loving parent*

** 10 unique characteristics of a worldview based on the accurately translated Bible, and why this worldview combines logic with realistic hope better than any other worldview*

** The astoundingly simple solution to the predestination dilemma (you'll learn why the early church and native Greek speaking early church fathers did not even have a predestination dilemma!)*

and much more.

The accurately translated Bible offers logical reasons to believe in a God that makes perfect sense to both our hearts and our heads. Get ready to learn the most wonderful thing you could ever learn.

Chapter 1

Leftover Paganism In the Church and The Mistranslation of “Hell”

You will not find the word “hell”, or phrases such as “eternal punishment” or “forever and ever”, in literal, accuracy focused English Bible translations like The Concordant Version or Young’s Literal Translation. This is because the word “hell” and words like “eternal”, “forever”, and “everlasting” are nowhere to be found in the original language (Hebrew and Greek) manuscripts of the Bible. In Chapters 2 and 3 I will explain more details about this. But first I want to introduce you to some background information that will give you an overview of the challenge a modern Christian faces when trying to understand God’s grand plan for mankind by reading a typical readability focused, more loosely translated English Bible you might find in a bookstore.

In addition to the massively important translation issues I just mentioned, there is another big problem. Modern Christians have inherited a mindset and assumptions about the afterlife from Middle Ages Catholicism that are very different from the mindset and assumptions Godly people in Bible days had about what happens to a human being at death. I will explain this in detail later in the book, but for now I simply want to point out the fact that the only Bible Godly people in Bible days had was what we call the Old Testament, which does not contain anything remotely resembling the Catholic version of the afterlife, but contains many clear and specific statements that directly contradict it. Therefore, it would never have occurred to Godly people in Bible days to believe in anything like the Catholic version of the afterlife.

What I’m getting at is this: If you didn’t speak English, but were fluent in the ancient Hebrew and Greek languages in which the Bible was written, and you read through the Bible a thousand times in Hebrew and Greek with the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days, you would have no idea what “hell” is. It would never cross your mind that such a place existed.

If you tried to talk to a Godly person in Bible days about “hell”, they would say, “What is this place called 'hell'?” They would be very confused, because **no word meaning “hell” as we understand it today is anywhere to be found in the Bible’s Hebrew or Greek manuscripts, and their mindset would have prevented them from reading into**

the Bible the existence of a nebulous place of spirit-fire/spirit-torture. (They made totally different assumptions about a few key Scriptures than modern Christians trained by Catholicism make; I'll explain this in detail in this book.) If you tried to tell them about dead people suffering consciously in the flames of the afterlife, they would ask you what pagan religion you had been listening to.

The bottom line is, when we translate a handful of key Greek and Hebrew words accurately and consistently according to common sense rules (rather than discarding common sense rules in favor of assumptions Catholicism has taught us), and make the same assumptions about a handful of key Scriptures that Godly people in Bible days would have made (rather than the assumptions Catholicism has taught us), something amazing happens: *hell disappears from the Bible* (because it was never there in the first place), and *we return to the belief and teaching of the early church and the early native Greek speaking church fathers* – the belief that was prevalent in Christianity before Greek ignoramuses like Augustine and the Middle Ages Catholic Church came along. When we jump back in time to the beliefs and teaching of the early church and the native Greek speaking church fathers, completely discarding all the influence of Middle Ages Catholicism and the Latin language, something else amazing happens too: *dozens of logical and philosophical dilemmas regarding God and the Bible (such as the predestination dilemma, and many seeming Scriptural self-contradictions) are solved instantly and effortlessly.* (For example, you'll learn why the early church and the native Greek speaking church fathers didn't have a predestination dilemma.)

I know this is a bit of a mind warp for many of you. But I'm going to unfold it step by step for you in this book. I'm going to start in the next two chapters by explaining a few blatant translation errors you'll find in some of the more readability focused, less accurate, less literal English Bibles in the bookstore, that cause tremendous confusion about God and His plan for humanity. But before I explain the mistranslated words themselves, I want to briefly explain *why* some translators make these blatant translation mistakes. It is not because they aren't smart – these translators are obviously very intelligent, educated people. There is a very simple reason why they make these particular translation errors. Let me explain.

It doesn't even cross the average modern Christian's mind that the English translation of the Word of God they love so much might be so flawed (in just a couple of key areas) as to cause us great confusion. When we buy a Bible in the bookstore we *just assume* the translators are doing everything right. For years it never occurred to me to ever doubt the "experts" who translate the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the ancient documents that make up the Bible into English. But then I began to notice on a couple of smaller Biblical subjects I was studying, that often something that confused me and seemed to have no clear or logical answer, was cleared up instantly and with astounding simplicity when I studied the underlying Greek or Hebrew word and more clearly understood its meaning.

This happened enough times that eventually I began to check the translation and

study the meaning of the underlying Greek and Hebrew words as my first course of action anytime I was confused by anything in the Bible. I still do that, and it has helped me understand many things about the Bible and God that I could not have understood otherwise. How can you possibly understand someone if you think they said one thing, while in reality they said something else? Or what if you don't catch the full meaning of what they say? Maybe a certain word in their language is loaded with meaning, but there is no accurate translation of that “loaded” word into English, or what if something gets “lost in translation”...you see what I mean.

It is important to understand that translating any written document from one language to another so that every single word and phrase can be understood accurately and fully, while still being easy to read, is a very difficult task. This is true in the case of the Bible. Many Greek and Hebrew words are hard to translate accurately into English without making the English sound awkward, or without giving a lengthy explanation. So the translators often simply pick the best English word or phrase they can, and call it a day, trusting that those who really want to understand the passage in depth can study a Greek or Hebrew concordance if they want to. If they didn't do this, many English Bible versions would be a bit more difficult to read and clumsy-sounding when read out loud – and they wouldn't sell.

So because of understandable financial and “readability” considerations, translators of the most popular and well-known English versions of the Bible often tend to err on the side of readability rather than aiming for consistency, 100% accuracy, and 100% literalness.

But there is an even more important factor that comes into play when translating a “religious” document such as the Bible from its original languages into English: *belief*. The translators, like you and me, are human beings with certain beliefs. They cannot simply “turn off” those beliefs and force themselves to be completely objective when they do translation work. And this is where things get dangerous.

A few years ago I discovered for the first time how severely the beliefs of Bible translators could affect their translation work. I had several questions about the Bible, God, and His plan for humanity that seemed to have no answer. I'll give you a list of some of these questions in Chapter 11. In a nutshell, my questions amounted to “God, why hell?” I could not figure out why God would create so many lovely people knowing beforehand that most of them would end up in hell forever, burning and screaming in agonizing pain for trillions upon trillions of years. I couldn't fathom how trillions of years of (endless) torture could be a fair punishment for 100 years or less of sin. Nor could I fathom what the purpose of continuous endless torture might be, why it would be necessary, or why a God of love would have an inner need to see these people tortured forever. Why couldn't He bring Himself to stop their agony or figure out a more humane or merciful solution? Wouldn't a God who has an inner need to see billions of precious people tortured continually without end be considered a monster, Stalin and Hitler and Pol Pot rolled into one times infinity? (Again, see Chapter 11 for other related Biblical, logical, and

philosophical questions and problems artificially caused by the Catholic version of the afterlife.)

So I did the only thing I could think of. I asked God about it. I said, “God, why hell?” Then I claimed the promise Christ gave in John 16:13, that the Holy Spirit would “lead and guide into all the truth” about this subject. (Jesus originally spoke this promise to the twelve disciples and 1st John 2:27 confirms that it applies to all Christians.) Little did I know that the astoundingly simple explanation to all my questions had to do with the *translation of certain key words in the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into English, and replacing assumptions I’d learned from the Catholic version of the afterlife with assumptions Godly people in Bible days would have made.* I discovered that when I translated a few important words in the Bible accurately (and interpreted all the related Bible passages) according to common sense rules of communication and according to the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days, instead of according to tradition inherited from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages (as many of our English Bible translators do), all my questions were answered with astounding simplicity. Later on I also discovered that in doing this I had returned to what the prominent early native Greek speaking church fathers believed about God’s ultimate plan for humanity. (See the books I recommend in the Additional Reading section at the end of this book.)

The first master key to solving all my dilemmas was simply to translate a handful of massively important key words in the Bible into English literally and accurately according to the plain meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words as the most literal and accurate (but less popular) English Bible translations (such as the Concordant Version and Young’s Literal Translation) do, rather than translating these important words loosely/creatively/interpretively and/or according to Catholic-inherited tradition as the translators of many of the most “popular” English Bible versions do. When I discovered this was the initial master key to solving several seemingly impossible Biblical, logical, and philosophical dilemmas (as I’ll explain in the rest of this book), I had to come to grips with the fact that many intelligent (and in most cases, truly expert) translators had let me down. But why had they mistranslated such important words so blatantly, with such seeming carelessness?

Leftover Paganism

As I said, the word “hell” is only in many of our English Bible versions because the translators took *various different Greek and Hebrew words, each with its own simple distinct meaning in Greek or Hebrew, and none of which mean “hell”,* and translated these various words as *the single English word “hell”.* (Again, you will not find the word “hell” in strictly literal, accuracy focused translations such as The Concordant Version or Young’s Literal Translation.) As you’ll learn in Chapter 2, the translators know very well that the underlying Greek and Hebrew words do not mean “hell”, but they say to themselves, “Although this word is not ‘hell’, we think it must be referring to hell, so we will take it upon ourselves to ‘help’ the

reader by translating it as ‘hell.’” Folks, the only reason the word “hell” appears in any English Bible is because the translators take it upon themselves to *interpret* for you rather than strictly translate. They are *artificially and creatively adding* the most horrific word in the English language into the Bible! Lord have mercy!

As if this was not enough, as you’ll learn in Chapter 3, modern Bible translators of the less accuracy focused versions also often artificially insert words referring to endlessness such as “eternal”, “everlasting”, and “forever” into the Bible even though there is no word that refers directly to eternity or endlessness in the original language manuscripts of the Bible. (Hasting’s Dictionary of the New Testament states that there is no word in the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible that expresses the abstract idea of eternity. It would be a shock to most modern Christians to read such a statement in a respectable Bible study tool/publication. But the reason Hasting’s Dictionary of the New Testament says it, is because it is absolutely true, as you’ll learn by the end of Chapter 3 of this book.)

Folks, why would intelligent Bible translators take such creative liberties in their translation work, *to produce a blatantly inaccurate translation into English?* What would cause them to artificially insert words such as “hell” and “eternal/everlasting/forever” into many of our English Bibles even though – as I’ll prove to you in the next two chapters – these words are nowhere to be found in the original-language manuscripts?

After much study I finally realized that the only reason intelligent Bible translators would do such a thing is because they *believe* in hell. They assume it exists before they start translating. So, as they are translating, they unconsciously say, “The word ‘hell’ must be in the Bible somewhere. It is ok for us to *interpret* (rather than strictly/literally translate) a few words as ‘hell’ and thus get the word ‘hell’ into our translation somehow, because after all, hell is a real place because *our religion has taught us* it is a real place, and it is our job to communicate that to the people who read our Bible translation.” I’m not commenting on the translators’ heart motives, I’m simply saying that they are members of a religion that believes in hell (it inherited this belief from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages), and therefore *they cannot help themselves* from ignoring the plain literal meanings of several distinct Hebrew and Greek words and creatively/interpretively inserting the single English word “hell” instead. *They cannot help themselves* from ignoring the plain literal meaning of a couple of Hebrew and Greek words and mistranslating them with words referring to eternity or endlessness. I highly doubt most translators knowingly try to deceive or confuse anyone, they just believe in hell and “eternal this, eternal that, eternal everything but the kitchen sink” because their religion believes in those things, so they naturally find a way to put those ideas into their translation.

This brings up another question: If the words “hell” and “eternal/everlasting/forever” are not in the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, then how did so many members of the religion of Christianity end up believing in hell and eternal punishment?

Well, you have to understand that almost as soon as the belief system that came to be known as “Christianity” was founded by Jesus, His twelve disciples, and the apostle Paul, false teachers began to try to combine the Christian belief system with other belief systems. As you can see from the apostle Paul’s New Testament writings, he constantly had to deal with this. He constantly had to fight off different aspects of other belief systems and religions in an attempt to keep them from being combined with the purity of what he was teaching. Jesus Himself prophesied that many people would come saying He was the Christ, yet deceiving many (Matt. 24:5), and told His followers, “See to it that you are not deceived.” This statement reveals that it would take a *purposeful, careful, concerted effort by any believer in the future not to be deceived by the false teachers that would come.*

Obviously, the type of teachings that would be most likely to deceive a believer in Christ would not be those that directly oppose Christianity, but rather those that *combine* Christian teachings with other false ideas. And this is what Paul constantly had to fight off.

The ultimate example of Christian teachings being combined with other belief systems eventually occurred starting around the time of Constantine. During this time period in the Middle Ages, aspects of paganism began to be combined with Christian beliefs by the powers-that-be into what eventually came to be called the “catholic” religion. “Catholic” means “universal”. As the political rulers seized upon the idea of embracing Christianity rather than fighting it, they didn’t want to anger the pagans either. (In case you weren’t aware, the goal of most political rulers is to get as many people as possible to obey them without a fight or a fuss.) So, for example, when they would take over a new land and people group, they would allow the people to keep some of their pagan practices while introducing elements of Christianity as well. I am not trying to make modern Catholics angry or comment on modern Catholicism; I’m not an expert on modern Catholicism and I’m not concerned with denominations or labels, I focus merely on seeking truth and understanding the Bible and God. No matter what group you belong to, it is important for you to understand the simple historical fact that several hundred years after Christ walked the earth, Christianity became intertwined with the state and politics (the politicians decided to make Christianity an “official” religion), and the political people who ruled in the Middle Ages purposefully allowed pagan ideas to be joined with Christianity for reasons of political expediency.

(Also note, I’m not saying a Catholic can’t be “saved” or making a judgment about any modern Catholic, I’m simply pointing out some historical facts about events that occurred during the formation of what became the Catholic Church. Many modern Catholic leaders would be the first to renounce the myriad horrors perpetrated in the name of Jesus through the dark centuries of the Middle Ages.)

At around the same time, the Greek manuscripts of the Bible began to be translated into Latin, and the political and religious leaders began to take the Bible out of the hands of the common people. You see, the early Christians mostly lived in a primarily Greek-speaking area of the world, and thus the Greek manuscripts of the Bible that were passed

around and read could be perfectly understood by most of the common people. There was no confusion whatsoever about exactly what each Greek word in these manuscripts meant, because the people spoke Greek. But when the Catholics started translating these writings into Latin, the opportunity for confusion due to translation issues came in, and the opportunity to artificially introduce pagan ideas into the Bible through creative/interpretive (rather than strictly literal) translation came in as well.

After a while, the common people were not even allowed to have Bibles, and church services and Bible readings were performed in Latin, which the common people did not speak! At this point the leaders could tell the people, “The Bible says this, the Bible says that”, or give declarations and teachings that twisted Scripture or had no basis whatsoever in the Bible, and the common people had no way of checking with the Bible itself to see if what the leaders were saying was true. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see that this was an atmosphere ripe for misconceptions and deceptions about God and the Bible to enter into the culture and become “normal” in people’s minds. And of course this was very convenient for the political leaders who wanted to appease both people with a Christian background and people with a pagan background – the churches could teach whatever pagan nonsense they wanted (worshipping Mary, praying to dead saints, paying money to the church so your dead family members have a better time in purgatory, crawling up and down stairs on your knees to do penance for your sins, scaring everybody into subservience with the threat of hell and the flames of the afterlife, etc.), and then stand up in church and read the Bible in Latin (which the common people didn’t understand) and say that the Bible backed them up! How could the people know for themselves if they were being told the truth about God and the Bible? *They couldn’t. They had no access to any information about God and the Bible outside of what the church leaders and political leaders told them.*

So during this time period in the Middle Ages, the Catholic church gradually discarded the teachings of the native Greek speaking early church fathers about God’s ultimate plan for mankind, and instead seized upon the ideas of Greek ignoramuses like Augustine about “eternal punishment”, putting them on steroids to create what we now know as the doctrine of hell. The prominent native Greek speaking early church fathers, reading the Bible in their native language, would never have dreamed of any such thing as the doctrine of hell or the Catholic version of the afterlife. They would roll over in their graves if they knew that the Greek phrase “eonian chastisement” had been magically transformed into “eternal punishment” by Greek ignoramuses with pagan backgrounds.

You will sometimes hear modern Christian leaders state that prominent early native Greek speaking church fathers like Origen and Clement were “unbiblical Christians” because they didn’t believe in hell or eternal punishment. Apparently it never crosses their minds that Origen and Clement, being *native Greek speakers who lived only a couple centuries removed from Bible days*, might have had a more accurate understanding of Scripture than Greek ignoramus Augustine who came along later and inspired the Catholic church to run with the idea of eternal punishment. These modern Christian leaders must also be ignorant of the fact that only one of the six Bible schools in existence during the first 500 years of

Christian history – a school that also taught secular subjects – taught eternal punishment, while four of them – the four that were strictly theological schools – taught the same basic ideas about God’s plan for mankind that Origen and Clement believed. More on this in Chapter 3.

Fast forward to today. Despite the Reformation, some elements of paganism still remain in large portions what we might call the religion of Christianity. One strong element of paganism that was (somewhat) purged out by Martin Luther and the Reformation was works-based salvation (I will clear up this issue for you greatly in Chapter 9). The Reformation also succeeded in getting rid of some of the ridiculous pagan-originated practices (like paying money so your loved one has a better time in purgatory, Mary worship, praying to dead saints, etc.), and as a result the new “Protestant” church (which “protested” some of the unbiblical pagan/Catholic practices) was much closer to the original truth of Christianity founded by Jesus, the twelve apostles, and the apostle Paul. However, to this day, *some elements of paganism still remain in “Christianity”*.

To give you a less important example of this, did you ever wonder why the celebration of Jesus’ death and resurrection is called “Easter”? “Easter” is just another name for the pagan goddess Ishtar, the ancient Babylonian goddess of sexual freedom. The Easter bunny is the same concept as the Playboy bunny – “breeding like rabbits”, etc. What does Easter/Ishtar have to do with Christ? Zero – nothing. *Yet virtually every Christian church has an Easter/Ishtar service.* (You will notice that more and more churches are calling it a “Resurrection Service” and saying “Resurrection Sunday” rather than using the term “Easter”, for this very reason.)

This is a leftover from paganism. You see, *this was the whole idea of the politically expedient “Christianity-paganism-combo” church of the Middle Ages – to combine paganism with Christianity so as to please and appease both pagans and Christians!* An “Easter” service felt familiar and comfortable to both the pagan Ishtar-worshippers *and* the people with Christian backgrounds. And since the Christians no longer had access to their own Bible, as time passed and each generation became farther removed from previous generations that did have access to the Bible, many of these pagan-Christian combinations of beliefs and practices became “normal” and accepted. (Another example of this type of combination was Ishtar-mother-goddess-worship being morphed into Mary-worship. Fortunately, the Protestant church *did* get rid of that one with the Reformation.)

Now, I know modern sincere Christians have no *intention* of celebrating anything to do with Ishtar the pagan goddess of sexual freedom – but *that’s exactly my point*. Millions upon millions of modern Christians *unwittingly and unknowingly* celebrate something, use pagan terminology about something, and even schedule their celebration of it according to *paganism*. They do this without even giving it a second thought! They just assume all is well and that everything they do and believe is correct *just because their religion said so*. My point is simple:

There are still some pagan leftovers in “Christianity”, and many Christians do not detect these leftovers.

Now, calling a celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection “Easter” is not a big deal compared with the primary pagan leftover that still clings to the religion of Christianity. This pagan leftover belief is much more serious because it causes tremendous confusion about God, His very nature, and His plan for the human race. It unnecessarily brings untold anguish to millions of Christians, and unnecessarily keeps millions of unbelievers away from God and the Bible.

In this book I will demonstrate to you how the particular pagan leftover belief to which I am referring is not found or taught anywhere in the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, but is *artificially inserted* into our English Bibles *through blatant mistranslation of certain key words and assumptions about certain key Scriptures that Godly people in Bible days would never have made.*

By now you know what this leftover is.

The most important, harmful, and unbiblical leftover from pagan Middle Ages Catholicism that still clings to the religion of Christianity is the concept of eternal punishment (and its kissing cousin, conscious death).

Now, before you call me a heretic, I exhort you to do as the Bible commands in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 21: *“Test everything, hold on to what is good”*. And Proverbs 18:13 says, *“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”*

The Bible commands you to keep an open mind, listen to what I have to say, and test it, rather than throw it out the window because you’ve never heard it before. I want to set your heart at ease by letting you know that **everything I teach in this book is based on the accurately translated Bible**. Just because something I say may contradict a popular traditional belief or practice of “the church”, doesn’t mean what I say is wrong. The reality is that there are a few popular beliefs and practices in the modern church that were inherited from paganism. I’m simply testing these beliefs and practices against what the accurately translated Bible says.

The simple fact is, when you translate the Bible accurately (without artificially inserting and mistranslating key words due to tradition inherited from Middle Ages Catholicism), and then apply solid common sense based Bible interpretation rules to unravel the confusion caused by these pagan traditions, **the concepts of conscious death and eternal punishment disappear from the Bible**. Keep reading and I will prove this to you.

If you study the early church (for the first few decades after Christ), you will find that the prominent native Greek speaking early church fathers did not believe or teach

eternal punishment. (See the book by John Wesley Hanson that I recommend at the end of this book.) The beliefs of the early church had not yet been contaminated by paganism. Political and religious leaders had not yet allowed political expediency to result in a mash-up of pagan elements with Christianity and a situation where the original languages of the Bible were no longer used and common people had no access to the Bible. In Chapter 3 I will give you a few more details about the historical aspect of this subject in church history; but for the most part in this book I will simply interpret the accurately translated Bible according to common sense communication rules. In so doing, we will return to what the early church believed about God's ultimate plan for humanity.

The Simple Solution to Many “Impossible” Biblical, Logical, and Philosophical Questions and Dilemmas

What I teach in this book is **the astoundingly simple explanation to many things about God and the Bible that seem to make no sense** to Christians and non-Christians alike (really, any thinking person). Did you ever consider the following questions? If you haven't, I invite you to consider them now:

Why would God burn billions of people for trillions upon trillions of years (forever) when most of these people never even heard the word 'Jesus' in their lifetimes, and our own Bible says they can't believe the gospel without hearing it? (Rom. 10:14)

How can trillions of years of (eternal) torture be a fair punishment for 100 years or less of sin?

Why would a Chinese peasant who worked hard to provide for his family, committed some sins like the rest of us, never heard of Jesus, and died, get the same punishment as Hitler – screaming in agony with no end, ever? Remember, the Bible makes it clear that observing nature is enough to realize God exists and removes the excuse for sin, but it's not enough to save you – you must hear the message of the gospel in order to get saved (Rom. 10:8-9, 14). In other words, according to the doctrine of “eternal punishment”, billions are doomed to burn and scream forever – why? Simply because they were never lucky enough to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Is it just me, or does that make no sense whatsoever?

How could God predestine (choose beforehand) certain people not to go to hell, while predestining the others to go to hell? What a horrendous thought! If you believe in hell and eternal punishment, Ephesians 1:4-5 is the most horrific thing you could ever read!

And here's the big one that summarizes them all: *Why would God create billions of precious people in His image, knowing beforehand that the vast majority of them would end up screaming in agony for trillions upon trillions of years – forever? The Bible says that Jesus was the “Lamb slain before the disruption of the world” (Rev. 13:8), which means God knew before He created humanity that they would sin.*

Ask a person who believes in hell, “What is the purpose of eternal torture? What does it accomplish?” Watch them scratch their head and say, “Well, ummmm, uhhhh, I guess His holiness demands it.” Then ask them, “So you’re saying God has an inner need to see billions of people tortured continually without end. How could such a God not be called a monster? How can such a God be called love. Why would anyone want to voluntarily love and serve a God who has an inner need to torture billions of His own most precious creations continuously and endlessly? Especially when most of them never even heard the gospel? (See Rom. 10:14.)” You’ll be met with more head scratching.

For more seemingly unanswerable questions about God, the Bible and Christianity that are **instantly and easily solved** by the simple facts I share in this book, see Chapter 11.

The answer to all these seemingly impossible questions is exceedingly simple:

Hell does not exist. The word “hell” is not in the Bible. It is a mistranslation due to Catholic tradition. Godly people in Bible days and the native Greek speaking early church fathers would never have dreamed of believing or teaching eternal punishment, but would have considered it to be exactly what it is – pagan nonsense. The concepts of eternal suffering and conscious death are nothing more than pagan Catholic leftovers that still cling to Christianity. In this book I will prove this to you Scripturally and logically beyond any shadow of doubt.

I realize this idea is a bombshell to many of you and I don’t expect you to “just believe me”, I expect you to test it in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (“*Test everything, hold on to what is good*”). Throughout this book I’m going to be giving you a lot of detail on this subject so you can test what I’m saying. By the time you’re done reading it you’ll have a full picture of **what the Bible says about God and His plan for the world, when you translate certain key words and interpret key passages accurately according to common sense communication rules rather than according to pagan tradition inherited from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages.**

The pagan-leftover mistranslation-based “hell mindset” takes a little bit of work to unravel, because there are several threads to it – several misconceptions that cling to the minds of most Christians on this subject. That’s why I’m going to ask you to *stick with me* as I unravel the threads one by one. By the time you finish this book, I believe you will realize that everything I’m teaching you is Biblical and makes logical sense when you study and think all the way through it.

The false “hell mindset” leaves us with many unanswered questions about God, and frankly, makes Him out to be not only a weakling who is seemingly less able to convince people of His wisdom than His own creation Satan, but also a monster who would (for some unknown reason) have an inner need to see billions of His most precious creations

burning and screaming continually in unending agony forever. However, when you unravel the false “hell mindset” thread-by-thread, starting with mistranslations of key words, and then sew the threads of God's Word back together again, this time with *accurate, consistent* translations of those key words, using *common sense communication rules* and *the assumptions of Godly people in Bible days (which were based on plain statements in OT Scripture commonly ignored by modern Christians)* to interpret key passages rather than unthinkingly and carelessly defaulting to the pagan/Catholic-inherited interpretation of those passages that originated in the Middle Ages, suddenly we return to what the early Christians believed, a perfectly logical and cohesive picture emerges in Scripture, and God finally makes perfect sense to both the mind and the heart.

If certain Scriptures are coming to your mind right now and you're thinking “What about this verse?” and “What about that verse?” *that's a good thing*, because it means you are *testing* what I'm saying. You're identifying threads of doctrine and Scripture passages that need to be explained in light of the fact that the words “hell” and “eternal/everlasting/forever” are not in the Bible. As we continue and I explain these threads to you from the accurately translated Scriptures, I encourage you to not only test what I say, but *also test what you may have been taught on this subject by other Christians, to see if what you have been taught holds water Scripturally and logically*. Since the Bible commands us to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5:21), you must not only test what I say, but you must also test what other people have taught you.

If you, dear reader, are a Christian (or even if you're not), you've probably spent years listening to well-meaning Bible teachers who are doing the best they can with what they know, and doing much good for the most part. However, any Bible teacher that is starting with a false pagan/Catholic-leftover “hell mindset” is forced to twist many verses and passages in the Bible to try to fit that picture, and to flat out ignore many statements in Scripture. Most modern Christians think of these twisted interpretations as normal *because they've simply never heard anything else, and nobody ever points out to them the many Scriptural statements that blatantly contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife. Yet nagging questions about their faith remain, which they have to push out of their minds.* (Such as the Difficult Questions For Christians that I list in Chapter 11.) The false “hell mindset” artificially creates massive unanswered philosophical questions about God, leaving many Christians with a confusing faith and a confusing God.

The pagan/Catholic-inherited “hell mindset” also artificially creates Scriptural problems and self-contradictions. Modern Christians often feel forced to ignore (or go to ridiculous lengths to try to explain away) many plain Biblical statements because these statements do not fit the Catholic version of the afterlife. I will give you many examples of such Biblical statements in this book. I am willing to bet that even if you've sat in church for years you've never heard a sermon on any of these Bible verses, because it is impossible for the doctrine of eternal punishment to be true if these Biblical statements are true (which of course they are). Some people attempt to “explain away” these Biblical statements, but as you will see, they must blatantly discard common sense rules of

communication in their attempts to do so. And many of these Biblical statements so obviously contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife that there is no hope of even attempting to “explain them away”, so anyone who believes in hell simply never mentions or ponders them. (Just to give you a teaser: Jesus said in John 3:13, “No man has ascended into heaven.” So...where did Enoch and Elijah go?” See Chapter 4 of this book for the simple answer.) By the end of this book you will see that there is no need to ignore these Scriptures or cut them out of the Bible. You will see that all the Bible’s statements about what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for mankind match up perfectly with each other as long as you are willing to translate a handful of key words accurately and interpret a few key passages with the assumptions of a Godly person in Bible days (not the assumptions taught to us by Middle Ages Catholicism).

It is also possible to sit in church for decades and never hear a pastor try to explain the predestination dilemma. Preachers just stay away from the subject because it is impossible to comprehend why God would choose some to be saved (Eph. 1:4) and some not to be saved, if the end of the unsaved is eternal punishment. This classic predestination dilemma is both a Scriptural/logical and philosophical problem, and it remains unsolved (is impossible to solve without either making God into a monster or discarding plain statements of Scripture) when clinging to the doctrines of conscious death and eternal punishment. But when you learn what I teach in this book the exceedingly simple solution becomes obvious. You will see why the early church and the early native Greek speaking church fathers did not have a predestination dilemma.

By the end of this book you will have learned the wonderful and amazing truth that when we translate and interpret the Bible consistently according to common sense rules of communication (rules that no one in their right mind could ever argue with – that is the definition of common sense), suddenly solutions to these seemingly unsolvable Scriptural, logical, and philosophical problems appear effortlessly. Suddenly it is easy to see how the God of the Bible makes perfect sense to the heart and mind, and all the Scriptural statements and passages about what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for mankind complement and explain each other perfectly with no “language gymnastics” required. (“Language gymnastics” is my term for discarding the undeniable common sense rules of communication that humanity uses in all its communication.) In this book you will discover the amazingly simple solutions to dozens of previously unsolvable Biblical, logical, and philosophical problems.

The bottom line is, the concepts of hell, eternal punishment, and conscious death are not found anywhere in accurately translated Scripture. They are nothing but pagan leftovers.

It is sad, and at the same time almost amusing, to listen to the typical “hell minded” preacher fumble around in an attempt to explain the Biblical, logical, and philosophical problems artificially caused by superimposing the ideas of conscious death and eternal punishment on top of the Bible through misunderstanding heaped upon mistranslation.

That is why most Christian preachers, pastors, teachers and leaders rarely if ever touch on the concept of hell and eternal punishment; it is so depressing, horrific, and absurd (because it is a pagan originated idea) that it just leaves everyone with a horrible and confused feeling. Christian leaders can't grow their ministries by making people feel horrible and confused, and they have no idea how to explain God's reasoning behind His supposed plan and inner need to punish the vast majority of His precious creations with trillions of years of torture as punishment for 100 years or less of sin, so they just ignore the subject. In fact, the last several times I have heard hell mentioned by a preacher, it was mentioned *as a joke, in a joking manner*. And this was in a church that I would consider to be wonderful in many ways. Most preachers are afraid to hit the subject head on and speak in a straightforward way about it because it is so horrific to think about (it makes anyone with half a heart feel horrible to think about billions of people burning and screaming without end) and it opens a can of worms the preachers do not know how to clean out (it brings up philosophical, logical, and Scriptural questions most preachers have no idea how to answer). So the preachers just "don't go there", and the Christians sitting in the pew shove it to the back of their minds too. If these preachers truly believed in hell, they would *never ever* mention it as a joke, and they would rarely preach on anything else. Who cares about having "your best life now" if people are in danger of being tortured for trillions of years? Don't shout me down while I'm preaching so good.

There are a few Christians and Christian leaders that do go around trumpeting the hell doctrine all the time; at least they back up their belief with their actions. They may scare the wits out of a few unthinking and naïve people who will turn to Jesus primarily for "fire insurance". (Imagine getting saved merely because God says, "I love you so much that I sent My Son to die for you – and if you don't believe it, your punishment is endless torture!" And don't give me the lame old argument that "People send themselves to hell, God doesn't send them." God created and designed the universe, and if hell existed, it was God who created it and ordained that people who don't believe the right thing soon enough go there as punishment.) But these hell-trumpeters primarily just serve to highlight to any thinking person the absurdity of the doctrines of hell and eternal punishment, making the God of the Bible seem like an incompetent and incomprehensible monster.

Dear reader, it's time for Christians to start addressing the question, "Why hell?" – it's the 10,000 pound elephant in the room that unbelievers point out all the time while Christians just turn their heads and shove it to the back of their minds. Thankfully, there are very simple answers to the "hell dilemma", and when you learn them, the elephant just disappears. You will learn these answers in this book.

Sadly most Christians have never heard a single Sunday morning message that even attempts to address the issue of "why hell"; the issue is completely ignored by most modern Christians because *it has no answer*. (Pagan religious ideas are absurd. The only answer to the question "Why hell?" is to realize that it does not even need to be asked because the accurately translated Bible does not teach the pagan idea of hell and eternal punishment.) This "cognitive dissonance" about hell in the minds of modern Christians and preachers –

a problem in their minds that they don't know how to solve – is due to the fact that they are reading loosely-translated (and in some cases very creatively translated) English Bibles they bought in the bookstore that erroneously contain the words “hell” and “forever/eternal/everlasting”. You will understand this by the end of Chapter 3. Then in Chapter 4 I will explain clearly from Scripture exactly what happens to a human being at death. And in the following chapters I will teach you how to accurately interpret a few other key passages by strictly following common sense rules of communication and the assumptions of Godly people in Bible days (rather than unthinkingly and carelessly interpreting these passages with the assumptions modern Christianity inherited from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages).

By the end of this book you will see that hell does not exist and it is entirely possible to reconcile every single Biblical statement about what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for mankind without ignoring any verse or passage on the subject and without discarding the common sense rules of communication. Poof! Your cognitive dissonance will disappear. You will see that as soon as we translate and interpret all key Biblical words and passages on this subject according to common sense rules of communication, all Biblical statements on these subjects agree with and complement each other perfectly, and we don't have to ignore or explain away any of them, but rather can embrace and logically understand each one.

I believe that after you read this book God and the Bible will make *way* more sense to you than ever before.

I want to say one more thing before I move on. You may be thinking right now, consciously or unconsciously, “If I learn this, study this, test this, and end up being convinced, *I may be at odds with my church, my pastor, and my Christian friends on a major point of doctrine! What will they think of me? What will happen?*” You know what I say to this question?

Who cares?

Isn't knowing God and His Word better worth the risk of losing less important things? I'm not saying you're going to lose your Christian friends if you understand what I'm sharing with you. It's difficult to go through life in this age in 100% agreement with every Christian you know anyway, and God will give you wisdom in your dealings with other believers. I'm simply asking if you're willing to follow Jesus Christ, who *is* the Word and *is* the Truth (John 1:1, 14:6, 17:17), wherever He may lead. If not, why even keep reading?

I'm not trying to upset the apple cart of Christianity with this book. I'm not trying to criticize Christians (even modern Catholics), Christian preachers and leaders, or anyone else (unless you want to call some of what I teach “constructive criticism” of certain doctrines). All I'm trying to do is communicate to you what the accurately translated Bible says about what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for humanity.

This book is divided into four sections. We'll start by unraveling a few important mistranslations (Chapters 2-3), then we'll move on to unraveling a few related misunderstandings of key Scripture passages (Chapters 4-5), and we'll put the whole picture of God's plan together from the accurately translated Word of God in Chapters 6-8. Chapters 9-13 contain a wealth of valuable information that will wrap up a few loose ends and give you even more keys to understanding the Bible and God better than you ever have before. I'll give you a more correct and thorough understanding of the term "the kingdom of God", I'll give you an accurate interpretation of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man by showing you how to strictly follow the common sense rules that all humanity uses to interpret all parables (including all the other parables of Jesus), and I'll list twelve characteristics of a worldview based on the accurately translated Bible that make it unique among all other religions and worldviews.

Lets dive into this fascinating look at what the accurately translated Bible teaches us about God's ultimate plan for humanity.

Chapter 2

3 Greek Words, 1 Hebrew Word, No “Hell”

Before I begin this chapter, you should be aware that the most literal, accuracy-focused English Bible versions (e.g. The Concordant Version and Young’s Literal Translation) agree with my conclusions about the translation issues I discuss in this chapter. In this chapter I will explain why you will not find the word “hell” in literal, accuracy-focused Bible translations like the two I just mentioned.

Most Christians know that the Bible was not originally written in English; the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. (Some scholars argue that at least part of what we now call the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, but the majority of the manuscripts we have are in Greek.) The English Bibles that we read are the result of the painstaking and difficult process of translating the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into English.

In this chapter you are going to continue learning how a couple of errors made in this translation process have caused massive confusion about what the Bible says about what happens at death and the ultimate destiny of mankind. When Bible translators translate a few important words according to their belief system rather than according to common sense rules of communication, errors are introduced into many of the popular, readability-focused, more loosely-translated English Bibles that you might find in a bookstore, making it impossible for you to understand God’s plan for humanity revealed in the Bible.

I want to start unraveling the confusion by repeating a statement I made earlier:

If you didn’t speak English, but only spoke the Hebrew and Greek languages in which the Bible was originally written, and you read through the Bible a thousand times in Hebrew and Greek, you would have no idea what “hell” is and it would never cross your mind that any such place existed.

In this chapter I’m going to explain the various words that our English Bible translators sometimes mistranslate as “hell”.

Let’s start with the New Testament and its Greek manuscripts. There are three Greek words that are sometimes translated as “hell” in many English Bibles. They are:

“hades” (“un-perceived”, “the unseen”),

“tartarusing” (a verb!), and

“Gehenna” (or “Gehinnom”, or “the valley of the sons of Hinnom”).

As you can see, all three of these words are completely different from each other. It is utterly incomprehensible that any translator in their right mind would translate all three of these very different words into one English word. It’s totally ridiculous and makes no sense. As I explained in Chapter 1, the only reason translators do this is because they believe in hell, and before they ever start translating they have the preconceived notion in their minds that hell exists. Thus they take it upon themselves to *interpret* these three words as if they refer to hell rather than *strictly and accurately translating* them. You say, “Aren’t these guys supposed to be translating Scripture and leaving the interpretation up to the reader?” Yes. But they don’t. Yes, you’re allowed to be a little bit angry. The most strictly literal, accuracy-focused (rather than readability-focused) English translations of the Bible like The Concordant Version or Young’s Literal Translation do not contain the word “hell”. You’re about to find out why.

Let’s look carefully at each of these three Greek words. As you will see, none of them means “hell” as we would define it today.

Let’s start with “hades”. We’ll kill two birds with one stone here because as you’ll see, the Greek word “hades”, (“the unseen”, “un-perceived”), is used by the New Testament writers as the equivalent of “sheol”, the Hebrew word that is also blatantly mistranslated as “hell” sometimes in your English Bible in the Old Testament. We will see that neither “sheol” nor its Greek equivalent “hades” means hell.

“The Unseen” Is Not “Hell”

First of all, if you study every time the Greek word “hades” is used in the New Testament, there is never any indication whatsoever that there is any kind of fire there. Whoops! How can it be “hell” if there’s no fire? No fire, no hell.

The Greek word “hades” means “un-perceived”. In a moment I’ll quote Acts 2:31 and Psalm 16:10, which prove to us that the New Testament writers simply used “hades” as a parallel of the Old Testament Hebrew word “sheol”, which also means “the unseen”. When the writers of the New Testament wanted to express the same concept as the Hebrew word “sheol” (“the unseen”), they had to choose a Greek word that was roughly parallel, and they chose “hades” – “the unseen”, “un-perceived”.

Of course, in the ancient pagan Greek mythical religion, Hades was the god of the

underworld and of riches. The fact that the writers of the New Testament used the Greek word “hades” obviously doesn't mean they believed in this false Greek god, it simply means that the New Testament writers were using this word according to its core meaning, “the unseen” or “the unperceived”. Keep in mind that not even in the Greek pagan religion was Hades a place of fire. Even in the pagan Greek religion, “hades” didn't mean “hell” as we understand it today.

Acts 2:31 and Psalm 16:10 confirm for us that the New Testament writers were *not* talking about a false pagan Greek god or a pagan religion's idea of death when using the word “hades” (a ridiculous thought anyway), but were rather simply using the word “hades” **according to its core basic meaning, in parallel to the Old Testament Hebrew word “sheol”,** which also means “the unseen”.

Psalm 16:10 says, *“For You will not abandon my soul to sheol...”*

And in Acts 2:31 Peter quotes Psalm 16:10, *“He (David) looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that 'He was not abandoned to hades'...”*

This tells us conclusively that the writers of the New Testament used the Greek word “hades” as the equivalent of the Hebrew word “sheol”.

As I mentioned, “sheol” is sometimes mistranslated as “hell” in our English Bibles too, in the Old Testament. But is this warranted? As I said, *there is no mention of any fire* in “hades” (the unseen) in the New Testament. Is there any mention of fire in “sheol” (the unseen) in the Old Testament?

Well, the Hebrew word “sheol” is used many times in the Old Testament, but the only mention of fire in connection with it is in Deuteronomy 32:22 as part of Moses' song: *“For a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.”* (I commend the NASB in this case for actually translating “sheol” accurately instead of taking the unwarranted liberty of translating it “hell”.)

If you read the context of this verse, it is obvious that God (through Moses) is speaking poetically and allegorically. If you want to try to use this verse to prove that a fire continually and literally burns in sheol and that it will burn there for eternity, you must also argue that a fire continually and literally burns the crops of the earth and will do so for eternity, and that the foundations of the mountains are literally on fire right now and will be that way for eternity. Just for the sake of argument, even if there was fire continually in sheol, dead people wouldn't be aware of it, because as Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 10 says, *“The dead know nothing... There is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol.”*

As Ecclesiastes 9:5 plainly states, dead people are unconscious. You'll learn more about the state of the dead according to the Bible in Chapter 4, and the meaning of the

Hebrew word “sheol” and its Greek counterpart “hades” will become even clearer to you. (Mentally place all your questions regarding “What about this verse and what about that verse?” in your back pocket for now; they will all be answered by the end of this book.)

If you carefully study all the instances of “sheol” in the Old Testament and all the instances of its equivalent “hades” in the New Testament, there’s simply no such thing as “eternal fire”, “soul fire”, torment, screaming, or suffering in the unseen/hades/sheol. The unseen/hades/sheol is nowhere near, and nothing like, the concept of “hell” in the modern mind.

Therefore, “hades” and “sheol” simply should not be translated “hell”.

Let's move on to the next Greek word that sometimes gets translated “hell” in our modern English Bibles: “Gehenna”.

The Valley of the Son of Hinnom in Jerusalem Is Not “Hell”

Every time you read of Jesus using the word “hell” in your English Bible, the underlying Greek word is actually “Gehenna”. What is “Gehenna”?

Gehenna or the Valley of Gehinnom was, and still is, a physical location in Jerusalem. Saying “Gehenna” to an Israelite in ancient days or during the time Jesus lived, would be like saying “Brooklyn” to a New Yorker today. It never would have crossed their minds that Jesus was talking about a nebulous soul-fire place, any more than a New Yorker would think of soul-fire if you were talking about “Brooklyn”!

2 Kings 23:10 talks about “the valley of the son of Hinnom”, obviously referring to a physical valley. When Jesus used the word “Gehenna” or “Gehinnom”, He wasn’t talking about nebulous soul-fire; He was talking about this physical spot in Jerusalem. Here is a picture of the Valley of Gehinnom:



The Old Testament Scriptures referred to this valley in Jerusalem many times (Neh. 11:30, 2 Kings 23:10, Joshua 15:8, 18:16, 2 Chron. 28:3, etc.). Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem itself would be made like Gehenna and Topheth (Jer. 19:2-6, 11-14). How could a physical city be made like a nebulous spirit-fire? That makes no sense. Jeremiah was referring to a physical valley called “Gehenna”, the same physical valley referred to in 2 Kings 23:10.

“Gehenna” is the word Jesus used in the passage that scares everybody out of their minds about “hell”, Mark 9:43-48 (and its parallel passage Matthew 5:22, 29-30). But Jesus was not talking about “hell” in this passage. As I said, as soon as He said “Gehenna”, His Israelite audience would have immediately known He was referring to the valley of Gehinnom in Jerusalem. Most of them had probably had been there! They had probably walked by it, or through it! It was in their city! Do you think most New Yorkers would know where Brooklyn is?

In Mark 9:43-48 and every other time He used the word “Gehenna”, Jesus was not talking about “hell”. He was warning the Israelites that in the future **earthly** kingdom of God (Jesus ruling over this **physical** earth), evil people will be killed and their **physical bodies** will be thrown in the **physical** valley of Gehenna to burn and rot. (In Chapter 9 I will further clarify exactly why Jesus was warning the Israelites living 2000 years ago about this.)

Besides all the references in Scripture to Gehenna as a physical valley, there is another Bible verse that clarifies and confirms what Jesus meant when He referred to it. We know without the slightest doubt that Jesus was referring to a **physical** location when He used the word Gehenna. How?

Well, when Jesus used the word “Gehenna” in Matthew 5:22, 29-30 and its parallel passage Mark 9:43-48, **He was quoting a prophecy from Isaiah 66:24 which clearly refers to “all flesh” (all physical humanity) looking at the “corpses” (dead physical bodies) of evil people.**

Isaiah 66:23-24 says: *“And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath...”*

This tells us that what will happen as described in this passage will occur under a **physical** moon, the same moon you see when you look up at the sky. It tells us that the time frame for this prophecy’s fulfillment will be while this present earth is still here, before the new heavens and the new earth come into being (Rev. 21:1) – in other words this is a prophecy about the millennium when Jesus returns to reign over the earth for 1,000 years

(Rev. 20:1-6). The prophecy then continues,

“...All flesh will come to bow down before Me, says the Lord. Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

This verse talks about “*all flesh*”, obviously referring to physical mankind in physical bodies walking around on earth, looking upon “*corpses*”. There is no such thing as a “spirit corpse”, my friends. Even if there was, how could “all flesh” (all physical mankind) “look upon” it?

Again, this will happen while the moon is still in the sky – the same moon we look at every night! The moon is physical. The people (“all flesh”) are physical. The corpses are physical. The physical people will look at the physical corpses with their physical eyes. If the people were to take their eyes off the corpses and look up at night, they would see the physical moon. Everything in these verses is physical. *Therefore the worms and the fire referred to in these verses have to be physical too.*

The prophet Isaiah, and Jesus who quoted him, predicted that these events will occur in a physical valley, spoken of several times in the Old Testament, called the Valley of Gehinnom or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom or the Valley of Gehenna.

This proves beyond any shadow of doubt that every single time Jesus used the word “Gehenna” He was simply referring to the physical place in Jerusalem that will be the site of this future prophecy recorded in Isaiah 66:23-24.

Jesus never talked about hell; He only talked about events prophesied in the Old Testament that will occur in a physical valley in Jerusalem in the future. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever in accurately translated Scripture that “Gehenna” or “the valley of the sons of Hinnom” is anything but a physical valley. As if the rest of the obvious references in the Old Testament to Gehenna or the Valley of Gehinnom as a *physical place* weren’t enough, Isaiah 66:24 and Jesus’ quotation of it proves conclusively that all references to Gehenna or the Valley of Gehinnom in Scripture, including those made by Jesus Himself, refer to a physical location on earth, in Jerusalem.

When Jesus spoke of Gehenna, He was talking about the beginning of His future earthly reign (the next age, what we now call the “millennium”, see Rev. 20:3-6), when He will get rid of the blatantly evil and corrupt people who run the world and run rampant in this age. He will get rid of these evil people through capital punishment (the death penalty). The fires of Gehenna will simply be His version of capital punishment, or possibly just the place where the bodies (“corpses” – Is. 66:23-24) are disposed of.

The last chapter of Isaiah tells us that in the next age (the millennium, the 1,000-year

reign of Christ on the same physical earth we're standing on now, see Rev. 20:1-6), being killed and having your body thrown in the Valley of Gehinnom to burn and/or rot will be Jesus' version of the electric chair for evil people. When Jesus begins to rule over the earth in the future, He will kill many evil people, throw their bodies into the Valley of Gehinnom, set them on fire and/or let their bodies rot. These rotting bodies will naturally have “worms that don't die”, or fly larva, which don't die, but turn into flies. The language the prophet Isaiah uses to describe fly larva, “worms that don't die”, is typical of Isaiah's prophecies, very flowery.

“But John, doesn't the Bible say the fire of Gehenna does not die?” No. It says it won't be *quenched*. Big difference! Billions of fires throughout history have not been *quenched*, yet they no longer burn. They are not “eternal fires”. They were not quenched...they simply burned out on their own. The word “quench” means “to purposefully put out”. The physical Gehenna fire that burns during Jesus' future 1000-year reign (the millennium) in fulfillment of Isaiah 66:23-24 “is not quenched” – in other words, nobody sends a fire truck to put out the fire, it is simply allowed to burn until it burns itself out. The corpses of dead evil people will be allowed to burn until the fire burns itself out. Evidently, others will not burn, or will only partially burn, and will rot, which will obviously attract flies and fly larva (“worms that don't die”, but turn into flies – a typical flowery description from the prophet Isaiah).

When Jesus punishes evil, corrupt people and satanic former world leaders (Luke 4:5-6) by giving them capital punishment publicly, it will probably be shown on TV so the whole world can see it (it's the only way “all flesh”, all physical mankind could “look upon” the corpses as Isaiah 66:24 predicts). As a result, the whole world will realize there's a new game in town! That's exactly why Jesus will execute these evil people and satanic former world leaders – as a public example of what will happen to those who behave in a blatantly corrupt manner during His earthly millennium reign.

When Jesus was speaking about this future event 2,000 years ago, not a single Israelite who heard Him quote Isaiah by referring to “worms that don't die” or “fire that is not quenched” would have dreamed that Jesus was referring to some nebulous spirit-place. Such an idea would never have crossed their minds. They all would have immediately known He was referring to capital punishment for evil people whose bodies will be thrown in the Valley of Gehinnom in Jerusalem during the next age on this physical earth. Israelites back then would have been familiar with Isaiah's prophecy about future events on this physical earth (see Chapter 9 for more evidence of this), and they had no Catholic-inherited “hell mindset” to tell them otherwise, so they understood Jesus perfectly.

Now, if you're sharp, you may be asking yourself why Jesus would warn Israelites living 2,000 years ago about something that still hasn't happened yet. The simple answer is that although *today we know* that Jesus' earthly reign will not begin until the millennium (because we can read Revelation 20:1-6), the Israelites back then *didn't* know that, because Jesus didn't tell them (and the book of Revelation had not yet been written).

Jesus didn't tell them it would be over 2,000 years before He would rule the earth. He didn't even tell His own disciples – not even after His resurrection (Acts 1:6-8). Why? Because one of the goals of His first coming, besides dying on the cross for all mankind's sin, was to *give Israel a chance to accept Him as Messiah, which if they did, would have brought Jesus' earthly kingdom to earth during their lifetimes. Israel didn't accept Him as their Messiah and didn't meet the conditions, so it didn't happen back then.* This is an important concept worthy of its own chapter, and I will explain it to you in Chapter 9. (Understanding the information in Chapter 9 is not only important for understanding Gehenna and the warnings Jesus made to the Israelites of His day about it, but it is also vital historical and Biblical background information that will enable the modern Christian to understand the point of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man the way Israelites in Bible times would have understood it.)

The bottom line is, it made perfect sense *back then* for Jesus to warn the Israelites about the judgment that would occur in the valley of Gehenna at the beginning of His earthly reign, because the purpose of the message God gave Him to preach to Israel was *to give them a chance to see His earthly reign begin in their lifetimes.* Because Jesus' message to Israel was all about the possibility of the kingdom of God coming to earth *in their lifetimes if they would shape up*, it made perfect sense for Jesus to warn them about the capital punishment of the valley of Gehenna that He will enforce when He begins to rule the world. Again, you will learn more details about this in Chapter 9.

So, we modern Christians, who have a very different mindset than the Israelites 2000 years ago (see Chapter 9), read our English Bibles and see Jesus supposedly talking about "hell", **never suspecting that the underlying Greek word is just "Gehenna" – a physical valley!** Nor do we take the time to check, study, and realize that **Jesus was directly quoting the prophecy of Isaiah 66:23-24**, which tells us clearly that in the future reign of Christ on earth, the **physical** location of the Valley of Gehinnom will be a place where **physical** bodies will be discarded, disposed of, burned and allowed to rot as an example to **physical** mankind, underneath the same **physical** moon that shines on us every night now.

Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 to warn the Israelites that if His kingdom did come to earth in their lifetimes, they should be careful that their deeds were not evil, so they would not end up in the capital punishment body pile! His Israelite audience would have been familiar with this prophecy in Isaiah, and they would have understood this warning perfectly.

Modern Christians however, are at a huge disadvantage in understanding Jesus' statements about Gehenna because

a) we are not as familiar with Old Testament prophecies as the average Israelite listening to Jesus that day,

b) our preachers do not point out to us that Jesus was directly quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 which clearly refers to a physical setting and physical events,

c) our preachers do not point out to us that Gehenna is only referred to in Scripture as a physical valley and never as some type of nebulous spirit-place,

d) we mistakenly think that Jesus was constantly preaching about heaven vs. hell to Israel, when in fact He was preaching to them about taking part in “the kingdom of God” (the next two ages of life *on earth*) and warning them not to be evil so they would not be killed and thrown in the future physical fire of Gehenna *on earth* when He began to rule the earth (I’ll explain more about the future earthly kingdom of God in Chapter 9),

e) many of our English Bibles mistranslate “Gehenna” as “hell”, and

f) a pagan-leftover Catholic-inherited “hell/eternal-punishment/every-thing-is-about-heaven-and-hell” mindset dominates the thinking of most modern Christians, which is a very different mindset than the “we are waiting for the future earthly reign of the Messiah” mindset that dominated the thinking of Israelites living 2,000 years ago.

So modern Christians read Jesus’ statements about Gehenna and think He is talking about a nebulous spirit-fire with nebulous spirit-worms, when in reality He is talking about a physical fire, physical worms (fly larva), physical corpses, and physical people looking at it all in fulfillment of Isaiah 66:23-24.

In fact, *both* “fire-events” that Christians are so scared of – Gehenna, and the lake of fire referred to in the book of Revelation – can be easily proven to be *physical* fires that will burn/kill/destroy *physical bodies/corpses*. Neither fire is “eternal” or “everlasting”, or lasts “forever” or “forever and ever” – as we’ll see in the next chapter, those words are blatant mistranslations anytime you see them in an English Bible. The Isaiah 66 fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem to which Jesus referred will occur at the beginning of the millennium, and the physical lake of fire referred to in the book of Revelation will burn after the millennium (I’ll give you more details on the lake of fire in Chapter 5). These fires will be physical – they can both be proven beyond any shadow of doubt from Scripture to burn physical, mortal human bodies/corpses. (Please *read all the way through Chapter 5* before judging what I’m saying – there’s a logical reason why the antichrist, the false prophet and Satan will remain conscious after their physical bodies are destroyed in the lake of fire, in direct contrast to full human beings who will die – become unconscious, see Ecc. 9:5 and Chapter 4 of this book – when they are killed and their bodies are thrown into the lake of fire.)

Christians have no reason to fear these two fire-events anyway, because by the time they happen, Christians will already be in immortal bodies! (Again, see Chapter 9 where I explain the difference between Jesus’ message to Israel and Paul’s message to the whole world later, to see why Jesus warned Israel about the fire in Jerusalem in the next age, but that warning does not apply to Christians today. Please don’t judge what I’m saying until

you read Chapter 9.)

So it is absolutely correct to take Jesus' words about Gehenna literally – it's just that to understand Jesus correctly you must realize He was directly quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 which proves He was referring to a *literal physical location in Jerusalem* where during His future earthly reign there will be a *literal physical fire* and *literal physical fly larva* (not some type of nebulous spirit-fire" or spirit-worms) *literally burning* the *literal rotting physical bodies* of evil people given capital punishment by Jesus, while *literal physical people* watch with their *literal physical eyes*.

Now, some people correctly point out that Gehenna was a trash dump back then, where fires would burn periodically, and they claim that this means we are allowed to take Jesus' warnings about the future fire in Gehenna figuratively as if He was referring to a nebulous spirit place. But the ground we've already covered debunks this notion beyond any shadow of doubt. Gehenna to an Israelite 2000 years ago would be like mentioning Brooklyn to a modern New Yorker, not in the sense that Brooklyn is a trash dump of course, but in the sense that the Israelites knew that Gehenna was a physical location and knew exactly where it was (in the same way that a New Yorker knows exactly where Brooklyn is), and that Israelites back then would not have thought of the Valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem as a nebulous spirit place any more than a modern New Yorker would think of Brooklyn as a nebulous spirit place. And even more importantly, the fact that Jesus directly quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 when giving His warnings about the future fire in Gehenna (all the events in Isaiah 66:23-24 are clearly physical and occur on this physical earth) trumps the "we can take it figuratively because it was a fiery trash dump" argument. Scripture interprets Scripture clearly in this case. Isaiah 66:23-24 interprets Jesus' warnings about Gehenna as warnings about a physical fire in Gehenna in the future, because Jesus *directly quoted that passage* when warning about Gehenna. *Scripture interpreting Scripture must always trump artificially-introduced or speculative ideas*. In this case Scripture interprets Scripture with absolute clarity, plainly telling us that Jesus' warnings about Gehenna were regarding the literal physical events Isaiah 66:23-24 predicts to occur on this physical earth in the future (at the beginning of the millennium reign of Christ on earth). It is airtight – we have no choice as to what to believe on the matter because Scripture itself tells us beyond any shadow of doubt. Jesus' quotation of Isaiah 66:23-24 regarding the future fire of Gehenna totally eliminates the possibility of considering the artificially introduced, creatively invented idea that Jesus might have been figuratively referring to a nebulous spirit place of eternal torment.

And don't be confused by Matthew 13:42. Some English Bibles translate this verse as, "They (angels) will throw them (evil people) into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." They have creatively added the word "where"! More accurate translations like Young's Literal Translation and the Concordant Version do not invent and artificially insert the word "where". (The KJV and ASV, for example, also refrain from artificially adding the word "where".) The Young's Literal translation of this verse reads like this: "...and shall cast them to the furnace of the fire; there shall be the weeping

and the gnashing of the teeth.” Semicolon! Not “where”! And the Concordant reads like this: “...and they shall be casting them into a furnace of fire. There shall be lamentation and gnashing of teeth.” There is a *period* after the word “fire”! Not the word “where”! The totally uncalled for, massively confusing artificial insertion of the word “where” in less accurate translations makes it sound like the weeping and gnashing of teeth is going on *in* the fire! That is not what the passage says! It just says that there will weeping and gnashing of teeth without specifying exactly where it will be going on or even who is doing it (it could be the loved ones of those whose corpses will be thrown into the fire, or the people going into the fire before they are killed or before they are thrown there, we don’t know).

You will see why this distinction is so important when we get to Chapter 4 where I explain what the Bible says about what happens at death. As you’ll see in that chapter, the idea that people *in* the fire would be weeping and gnashing their teeth would contradict everything else the accurately translated Bible teaches about death. The Bible does not say that anyone will be weeping or gnashing their teeth *in* the fire. It just says that at some point during the period of time when people are getting killed and their physical corpses thrown in the physical fire (Is. 66:23-24 + Mk. 9:47-48 + Matt. 13:41-42), some people (we don’t know who, or exactly when, or exactly where) are going to be seen weeping and gnashing their teeth. This is a very different and much less specific thing than the idea of people *in* the fire weeping and gnashing their teeth as the word “where” ridiculously added by some careless English translations implies.

Obviously, some Bible translators simply assume that this fire mentioned in Matthew 13:42 is “hell”; thus it makes perfect sense in their minds to artificially add the word “where”, artificially changing the meaning of the verse to make it sound as if the people *in the fire* are gnashing their teeth when the verse doesn’t actually say that. Only God knows why these careless translators haven’t bothered to check the simple fact that Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 when talking about the fire in Gehenna, which proves beyond any shadow of doubt that it will be a *physical* fire. How on earth are people whose corpses (Is. 66:23-24) are burned up and rotting in this physical fire supposed to weep and gnash their teeth while their bodies/corpses are dead, burned to a crisp, and rotting/decomposing? That would be literally impossible. Thus we know, simply by putting Isaiah 66:23-24 together with Mark 9:47-48 and all the times Jesus warned the Israelites about this same physical fire, that *it cannot possibly be the people in the fire weeping and gnashing their teeth, while they are in the fire*. It must be, according to simple logic and the simple exercise of putting a couple of clear Scriptures together, *people outside the fire, and/or before they are killed, and/or before they go into the fire* who will be weeping and gnashing their teeth. The accurate translation of Matthew 13:42 (with a semicolon or period rather than the word “where”), of course, can easily be interpreted this way without contradicting anything else in Scripture. On the other hand, interpreting it as if the people who are in the fire are weeping and gnashing their teeth while they’re in the fire would blatantly contradict Isaiah 66:23-24 and Mark 9:47-48, not to mention – as you’ll learn further by the end of this book – the Bible’s clear and cohesive teaching about what happens when a person dies.

Nor should you be confused by James 3:6, which says, “The tongue is a fire...and is set on fire by Gehenna.” James is obviously not speaking literally here; he’s obviously not saying that our tongues literally burst into flames. He’s speaking figuratively, saying, “The evil force (sin) that will cause people to be thrown into the fire of Gehenna is the same evil force (sin) that causes us to misuse our tongues and say things we shouldn’t say.” The figurative language James uses in James 3:6 would work well to get his point across whether Gehenna is a nebulous spirit place where nebulous spirit-fire is burning, or whether Gehenna is a physical location where a physical fire will burn in the future. Either way, as long as “Gehenna” is associated with fire and sin in his audience’s mind, he gets his point across perfectly.

The question is *how* “Gehenna” would have been associated with fire *in James’ audience’s mind 2,000 years ago*. James’ audience 2,000 years ago had not been subjected to centuries of Catholic paganism clouding their minds; they knew the Old Testament Scriptures far better than the average modern Christian does, and as such it never would have crossed their minds to think of Gehenna as a nebulous spirit-place, because Gehenna is only mentioned as a physical location in the Old Testament and most Israelites would have been very familiar with it as a physical place in Jerusalem. And as you will see in Chapter 9, the Israelites’ obsession was with the Messiah coming back to rule *the earth*, and thus the idea of Gehenna as a future place of physical fire to kill evil people *on earth* at the beginning of the Messiah’s reign as described in Isaiah 66:23-24 made perfect sense to them.

The modern Christian, on the other hand, sees the word “Gehenna” in the same sentence with the word “fire” and – due to the fact that we’ve inherited centuries of pagan nonsense about hell from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages – automatically jumps to the conclusion that this verse is talking about “hell”. The problem is, there is not a single shred of evidence in the Bible that Gehenna is a nebulous spirit-place. James 3:6 does not prove whether Gehenna is a nebulous spirit-place or a physical location on earth – James’ point and symbolism works perfectly either way. So we must *look to the rest of Scripture* to tell us whether Gehenna is a physical location or a nebulous spirit-place. And as I’ve abundantly proven, Gehenna is *always, with no exceptions*, referred to in Scripture as a physical location on earth, both in the past (all the Old Testament verses I quoted that mention the valley of Gehinnom etc.) and in the future (Jesus quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 which proves he was talking about future physical events on this physical earth).

What I just explained to you about James 3:6 (and Matthew 13:42) is the perfect example of a massively important concept: If you insist on superimposing ideas onto Biblical statements that are not actually contained in the statement and cannot be proven by the rest of Scripture to be part of the meaning of the statement, you will never be able to understand the Bible’s teaching on any subject. To put it simply, if you falsely assume that Biblical statements and passages say something they don’t actually say, you create confusion. If I say to you, “I’m going to Chicago, I’m leaving at 8 AM”, you do not know whether I’m going by car or by plane or by train or by foot. *I have not stated which method of transportation*

I'm using; I've only stated the fact that I'm going and what time I'm going. If you take it upon yourself to assume I'm going by car, you could be wrong! You could create massive confusion! What if I'm going by plane? If you don't bother to double-check my meaning, you might say to yourself, "I'm going to take a road trip with John to Chicago by car", and show up at my house at 8 AM ready for a road trip. Whoops! I'm not at my house anymore – I'm already boarding the plane at the airport! Confusion!

You see what I mean. It is absolutely incomprehensible to me how supposedly "expert" Bible translators take it upon themselves to translate Gehenna as "hell", when there is not a single shred of logical evidence that this word is ever used to refer to a nebulous spirit-place in Scripture, but in fact every single reference to Gehenna in the Bible is clearly talking about a physical location on earth. (James 3:6 is the one not-perfectly-clear-on-its-own exception, so its use of the word Gehenna must obviously be interpreted using the other references to Gehenna in Scripture.) I simply cannot understand the translators' thinking process when they change the meaning of the word Gehenna to make it mean something that is totally different than how it is used in Scripture – until I remember that the translators are translating according to their *traditional beliefs (preconceived ideas)* instead of according to *common sense*. Common sense tells us that we are not allowed to make stuff up and superimpose it on top of the Bible just because we want to! We are not allowed to look at a verse where the word "fire" is used with the word "Gehenna" and just automatically assume it is talking about a nebulous spirit-place! We must look at the rest of Scripture to tell exactly what this place Gehenna is and exactly what the fire there will be like. (Scripture clearly tells us that Gehenna was, is, and will be a physical place in Jerusalem on earth, and that there will be physical fire there in the future; this is the fire Jesus often warned the Israelites about – see Isaiah 66:23-24 and Mark 9:47-48.) We must use *common sense* and use *Scripture to interpret Scripture* instead of taking it upon ourselves to make stuff up.

This concept of using common sense rules to translate and interpret Scripture is so important to understand because *the entire typical belief system of modern Christianity about conscious death and eternal punishment is based on discarding common sense rules when translating and interpreting Scripture, in an attempt to match belief that did not originate with the early church but with the paganism that was combined with Christianity in the Middle Ages.* It is extremely important that you grasp this point, so let me explain it a bit further before we move on to the third word that is sometimes mistranslated as "hell" in English Bibles.

The Importance of Translating and Interpreting the Bible With Common Sense Rules Rather Than Tradition Or Preconceived Ideas

I've inserted this section here in Chapter 2 rather than in the Introduction or Chapter 1, because by now you have an idea of how I use common sense to translate and interpret the Bible – you've now seen real-life examples of how I (and the most literal and accurate English Bible translations such as The Concordant Version and Young's Literal) translate a

couple of very important Greek words into English. You will find throughout this book and in all my teachings that I make every effort to stick to common sense rules when translating and interpreting Scripture. I try to follow what I call “common sense rules of communication” *without exception*, because these common sense rules are followed *without exception* in all human communication. (I will explain this concept further in a moment.) When we stick with the same common sense rules all humanity uses in all its communication when we translate and interpret Scripture, something amazing happens: every single Biblical statement and passage about what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity fits together perfectly with no contradictions; every statement complements and explains the other statements perfectly. (And – surprise, surprise – all the most difficult philosophical questions about God just disappear into thin air!) That is what I’m explaining to you in this book.

You see, the Bible’s teaching on any major subject, including the subject of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity, is like a jigsaw puzzle. In order to understand the subject correctly and fully, you have to take every single piece of the puzzle (every single Biblical statement and passage on the subject) and figure out how they fit together in a way that makes logical sense, where none of the puzzle pieces fail to fit, and where none of the Biblical statements and passages contradict each other, but rather they all complement each other perfectly and paint a perfectly cohesive picture.

I arrived at the jigsaw puzzle picture of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity that I share with you in this book *by refusing to break the common sense rules of communication* when translating and interpreting every Biblical statement and passage on this subject.

What do I mean by “the common sense rules of communication”? Well, all of humanity uses common sense rules when we communicate with each other. We use these rules 100% of the time, usually without even realizing it. The human writers God inspired to write down Scripture would have naturally, automatically, and unconsciously used these same rules when writing down Scripture, and would have naturally, automatically, and unconsciously assumed their audience would follow those same rules when interpreting what they said. (And every person that is recorded speaking in Scripture must be assumed to have been naturally, automatically, and unconsciously using these same common sense rules to communicate, and to have been assuming that their audience would follow these rules when interpreting what they said.)

As you will see in a moment, the rules humanity uses to communicate with each other are so obvious and such simple common sense that breaking them seems absurd in everyday life; but modern Christians have been trained to break these rules whenever they want when interpreting Scripture, and Bible translators of the “popular” Bible versions sometimes break these rules when translating Scripture.

I am not going to list or explain every “common sense rule of communication” in

this book, just the pertinent ones. When it comes to translating the word “Gehenna”, for example, two “common sense rules of communication” come into play.

The first is a simple rule that could be stated as: “When a communicator says something that makes perfect sense taken literally, we *must* take it literally; we are *not allowed* to take it figuratively or symbolically.” If we ever broke this rule when interpreting what people say or write, we would be giving ourselves permission to change the meaning of anything anyone says. For example, if I say to you, “Can you get me some coffee and milk?” you have no permission to take the words “coffee” and “milk” anything but literally; if you come back to me with dark chocolate and white chocolate, or a brown car and a white car, or a dark-skinned woman and a light-skinned woman (or whatever you want to figuratively interpret my words “coffee” and “milk” to mean), I will look at you like you are from Mars. You have broken a common sense rule of communication: you have taken something that makes perfect sense literally and have given yourself permission to take it figuratively.

You’re probably thinking, “That’s a ridiculous example. It’s so silly! No one would ever do that!” Yes, but this is exactly what Bible translators of many “popular” Bible versions do when translating the word “Gehenna”! (End time Bible prophecy “experts” break this rule all the time too, as you’ll see if you read my book on the end times.) When Jesus used the word “Gehenna”, it makes perfect sense to take Him literally as using the word the same way the rest of Scripture uses it, to refer to a physical place in Jerusalem. The Old Testament Scriptures (with which Jesus was intimately familiar) only use this word to refer to a physical place in Jerusalem, and Jesus was quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 which clearly refer to physical events that will occur in the future on this physical earth. *Because it makes perfect sense to take this word “Gehenna” literally when Jesus used it, we have no permission to take it any other way; we are not allowed to take it figuratively. To take it as figuratively or symbolically referring to a nebulous spirit-place would be the same as taking the words “coffee” and “milk” figuratively in the example above.*

Hopefully a light bulb has come on in your brain over the last couple of minutes. *All Scripture is a matter of opinion until the common sense rules all humanity uses to interpret all communication are used to translate and interpret Scripture.* The reason there are so many doctrinal divisions in the body of Christ is because we do not agree on the rules we are using to interpret (and translate) Scripture...or more accurately, most Christians do not even use any rules when interpreting Scripture, or realize that rules must be used. And many if not most Christian leaders, preachers, pastors, and even the Bible translators of the “popular” versions break the common sense rules of communication at times (without even realizing it) when interpreting and/or translating Scripture. Christians who have had formal Bible school or seminary training may talk about and generally apply certain basic Bible interpretation rules in most cases, but their application of the rules can still end up being inconsistent particularly in areas of doctrine where tradition has a strong grip on their minds.

As I mentioned, the common sense rules of communication used by all humanity at

all times must also be taken into account when *translating* Scripture, not just when interpreting it. I have just given you an example of how translators of some “popular/readable” English Bible versions blatantly break one of these rules when translating the word “Gehenna”. (Really they are *interpreting* the word Gehenna – incorrectly – for their readers. The translators know the word is “Gehenna”, not “hell”, but they think, “Our modern readers won’t know what Gehenna is, so since we think it’s Jesus’ way of referring to hell, we’ll *interpret* this word for our audience and put it as ‘hell’ in our translation.”)

As you can see, the translators of many of these “popular” English Bible versions at times give themselves permission to *interpret* when doing their translation work, rather than strictly *translating*. If they were strictly translating, they would simply translate the word “Gehenna” as “Gehenna” and let the reader interpret. You will notice that the strictly literal translations like the Concordant Version or Young’s Literal Translation translate this word as “Gehenna”, not as hell. (You will also notice that literal translations like the Concordant Version and Young’s Literal agree with how I translate the other massively important Greek word I will discuss in the next chapter. This is because they, like me, are interested in translating Scripture with strict accuracy rather than in making a more readable translation like the “popular” English Bible versions.)

Translators of some “popular” Bible versions break another common sense rule of communication (while again giving themselves permission to interpret) when they translate “Gehenna” as “hell” in James 3:6. There is another common sense rule we all use 100% of the time when communicating with each other, which could be stated as: “When a word or phrase is used or a statement is made by a communicator in a certain instance, but the meaning of that word, phrase, or statement is not made perfectly clear as to its full meaning by the immediate context, we must look to the rest of that communicator’s communication to tell us the full meaning; we are not allowed to fill in the rest of the meaning from any other source (such as our own preconceived ideas, assumptions, or mindset).” Again, this is just simple common sense. It is not rocket science. No one in their right mind would ever argue with this rule.

But when translators of some “popular” Bible versions translate the word “Gehenna” as “hell” in James 3:6, they are not only giving themselves permission to interpret rather than strictly translate, they are also blatantly breaking the common sense rule I just outlined when they do their translation/interpretation work on this word! Instead of looking at the way the word “Gehenna” is used in the rest of Scripture, and instead of noticing that Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 when He used the word Gehenna, which proves He also meant it to refer to a physical location on earth, these translators of “popular” Bible versions discard how the rest of Scripture and Jesus use the word and freely insert their own interpretation. Again, James’ point and symbolism works perfectly whether the word “Gehenna” refers to a physical fire or a nebulous spirit-fire; as long as the word “Gehenna” is associate with fire somehow in his audience’s mind, James gets his point across perfectly. So we must *look to the rest of Scripture* to tell us whether Gehenna is a

physical location or a nebulous spirit-place (and thus, whether the fire there will be a physical fire or a nebulous spirit-fire). The rest of Scripture is absolutely clear in this regard.

So now you understand what I'm talking about when I refer to "the common sense rules of communication". When we understand the same common sense rules of communication used by all humanity at all times without exception, and use them at all times without exception when translating and interpreting Scripture (when we translate and interpret Scripture using the same exact rules we'd use to translate or interpret any other piece of communication)...the jigsaw puzzle of the Bible's teaching on what happens at death and God's plan for mankind suddenly becomes perfectly cohesive (and causes all sorts of philosophical problems with God to disappear), as I'll explain in the rest of this book.

On the other hand, the typical modern Christian's (pagan/Catholic-inherited) jigsaw puzzle picture (conscious death and eternal punishment) can only be pieced together by leaving a lot of puzzle pieces (Biblical statements and passages) out of the puzzle, artificially coloring several puzzle pieces to fit a preconceived idea of what they want the picture to look like, and cutting several puzzle pieces up and duct taping them back together in an attempt to make them fit into their puzzle the way they want. In other words, the only way you can arrive at the conclusion that death is conscious, people go to hell or heaven consciously the instant they die, and unbelievers will burn in hell forever, is to *do creative slicing, dicing, and painting with your puzzle pieces – to routinely (over and over again) discard and butcher common sense rules of communication when translating and interpreting the Bible.*

After you read this book, I will leave it up to you to decide whether my jigsaw puzzle picture is right, or the typical modern Christian's Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited jigsaw puzzle picture is right. I encourage you to read a book called *Erasing Hell* by Francis Chan, which should be called "Defending Hell" because it does about as good a job as can be done defending the traditional, Catholic-inherited ideas of conscious death and eternal punishment. "Test everything" according to 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Compare Chan's book to my book, and decide whether it is me or Chan who is breaking common sense rules of communication when translating and interpreting the Bible on this subject. Decide whether it is me or Chan who is ignoring, slicing/dicing, and painting over puzzle pieces. *The only way you will be able to decide who is right is by deciding whether you are going to allow yourself to throw the common sense rules of communication used by humanity at all times, out the window.*

The word "Gehenna" is the perfect example of this. When you see the word "Gehenna" in Scripture, you are going to have to decide whether you think this refers to a nebulous spirit-place or a physical location on earth. There is only one way to figure that out: common sense. We must apply a common sense rule of communication used by all humanity at all times in all our communication with each other! We must look at how the word is used in the rest of Scripture! Look at every verse and passage where the word is used, and see what you find out! It is not rocket science. Are you going to stick to common sense, and say, "Well, since the Bible only refers to Gehenna as a physical location and never

as a nebulous spirit-place, and since Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 when talking about the future fire of Gehenna which proves it will be a physical fire that burns physical corpses as physical people watch under a physical moon, I'm going to use common sense and realize that when the word Gehenna is used in Scripture it is referring to a physical location." Or are you going to throw out common sense in favor of a traditional religious idea you inherited from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages (which got it from paganism), and say, "I want Gehenna to refer to hell, so I'm gonna say it refers to hell." The correct answer is obvious when you simply stick to common sense by insisting upon using the same common sense rules of communication all humanity uses all the time, when translating and interpreting Scripture.

Although I will not explain every "common sense rule of communication used at all times by all humanity" to you in this book, you can take what I've taught you here and use it when translating or interpreting any part of Scripture in the future. The key is to take the emotion (and tradition, and any preconceived ideas) out of the way, and instead think, "If what I'm trying to translate or interpret here in the Bible, was not in the Bible, what unspoken but obvious common sense rule or rules would I use to translate or interpret it? What common sense rule or rules used at all times by all humanity apply to what I'm trying to translate or interpret here in the Bible?" That is the basic concept behind using "the common sense rules of communication" to translate and interpret Scripture.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is another classic example of the importance of interpreting consistently according to common sense rules rather than according to preconceived ideas or tradition. Modern Christians tend to use a totally different set of rules to interpret this parable than they use to interpret all of Jesus' other parables (and any other parable or illustrative story). They do something with this parable that they do not do with any other parable of Jesus: they assume the fictional setting (the made-up story) is a literal teaching! Is the parable of the seed and the sower a literal teaching about agriculture and farming techniques? If you can prove to me that the parable of the seed and the sower is a literal teaching about farming techniques, then I will be willing to concede that the parable of Lazarus and the rich man might be a literal teaching about conscious death (the flames of the afterlife and heaven being within shouting distance of each other, a guy supposedly suffering in "this flame" who asks for a mere drop of water on his tongue instead of a swimming pool to jump into, etc.). But if you cannot prove to me that this parable should be interpreted like every other parable (a parable *by definition* has a *fictional* setting and details), then I've got to assume the setting of the parable, like the setting of every other parable, is *fictional*, and the point of the parable, like most parables, *is not a literal teaching about the fictional setting and details*.

In Chapter 10 I will quote directly from the Pharisees' pagan Talmud, and you will see that Jesus lifted the *fictional* setting of this parable from the pages of the Pharisees' pagan Talmud, *not from Scripture*. He did this for a reason I'll explain in Chapter 10 (He was mocking the Pharisees and their pagan Talmudian beliefs, and the fact that they put the Talmud above the Scriptures). I'll explain how He went on to make a true point with the

fictional story He had just told; His point was (as you'll see if you read what He said after He told the fictional parable): "Listen to the Scriptures!" His Israelite audience that day would have perfectly understood an additional point He brilliantly made with His clever choice of a pagan Talmudian setting for the illustrative story: "Put the Scriptures *above the Talmud and its ridiculous pagan ideas about the afterlife!*" When you read Chapters 9 and 10 of this book, you'll see that the point(s) Jesus was making with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man had nothing at all to do with the afterlife or conscious death, but rather had to do with *mocking the Talmud's pagan teachings about the afterlife while commanding His audience to listen to the Scriptures rather than the Talmud and prophesying that the Pharisees who had it good at that time would not listen to Him or the Scriptures even after He rose from the dead.*

That's another common sense rule of communication that all humanity uses when interpreting all parables and illustrative stories: *You can't just make up your own point to the parable, you have to look at the point(s) the communicator himself made!*

Jesus' audience back then would not have been tempted to discard the points Jesus made with the parable and make up their own, because unlike modern Christians they did not focus on (and they didn't even believe in) "the afterlife" (conscious death). Rather, they were focused on the future *of earth*. After you read Chapter 9 you will better understand the mindset of Jesus' Israelite audience that day 2,000 years ago, and you will realize how the parable of Lazarus and the rich man fits in with the subject all Jesus' preaching to Israel was about: the next age of life on earth. (This is another common sense rule of communication and Bible interpretation: we must always take into account the mindset, culture, knowledge, and assumptions of the audience being spoken to, and not just automatically assume that they are the same as ours.) The fictional setting of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, lifted directly from the pages of the pagan Talmud, was just a vehicle to make a couple of scathing points to the Pharisees (and to warn the other Israelites who were listening about the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian teachings), and His Israelite audience back then would have understood this perfectly. Because of their culture, knowledge, and mindset (which is very different than that of a modern Christian), they never would have dreamed that Jesus was giving them a literal teaching about conscious death or the afterlife. I believe you will understand this perfectly once you read the rest of this book, and particularly Chapters 9 and 10.

I mention the parable of Lazarus and the rich man briefly here because it is a perfect example of a puzzle piece that we must figure out how to fit into the larger jigsaw puzzle of what the Bible teaches about what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for mankind. Modern Christians have been brainwashed by pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited traditional ideas to think of the fictional setting of the parable as a literal teaching about the setting and details of the story, while discarding the points Jesus made with the parable, and making up new points – something we would never dream of doing with any other parable! Modern Christians have been brainwashed to color this puzzle piece a different color than God painted it. Why? Because modern Christians have inherited certain ideas about it from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages and they have *never been forced to think about the rules they*

use to interpret the parable as compared to the rules they use to interpret every other parable and all of Jesus' other parables. Common sense reminds us that we should interpret the parable the same way we interpret every other parable of Jesus and every other parable or illustrative story told by anyone, treating the setting as fictional, looking at the points Jesus Himself made with the parable and resisting the urge to invent our own, and taking into account the fact that the details of the fictional story are lifted straight out of the pages of the Pharisees' pagan Talmud (which is why they directly contradict everything else in accurately translated Scripture).

Right now you may not be convinced of what I just said about the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, because you have not read Chapters 9 and 10 of this book yet, and because I have not yet explained many of the other puzzle pieces and how they fit together when you stick to common sense. That's ok. Don't let it stress you out. It doesn't stress me out that you may not completely agree with me yet! You're only on Chapter 2 of this book for Pete's sake! You just have to keep prayerfully pressing and pushing, asking God to help you and to "lead you and guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13), examining every puzzle piece with common sense in the light of every other puzzle piece you're examining with common sense, and eventually it will all fit together perfectly and make perfect sense. If I'm wrong, God will help you know that! If I'm 99% right and 1% wrong, God can help you see that too! Don't be afraid or discouraged or frustrated – have fun with it! Have confidence that God can show you the truth! Truth seeking is fun!

I once had a reader email me, saying, "Some of the Bible verses you say mean such-and-such...I'm not so sure they mean what you say they mean. They could maybe be taken a couple different ways. How can you be so sure you are right about this verse?" I explained to this reader that the reason I was so sure about the meaning of the particular puzzle piece (Bible verse) in question was because I have spent years putting together *all* the Biblical puzzle pieces on the subject of what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for humanity, trying my best to always apply the common sense rules all humanity uses all the time when communicating, resisting the urge to paint over or slice/dice (artificially superimpose my preconceived ideas upon) puzzle pieces, making sure I'm not missing any puzzle pieces, and trying every puzzle piece in different places until they all fit together perfectly and logically without contradicting each other at all but perfectly complementing and explaining each other instead. Therefore, because I've spent years doing this, I can look at a particular puzzle piece (say, a particular Bible verse), point at it, and very confidently say, "It absolutely fits right there. Exactly and perfectly. It means this. No doubt." But someone like this sincere and good-hearted reader, who had only spent a couple of days trying to put the puzzle pieces together, who was a relatively new Christian and to whom my material was very new, cannot possibly have the same level of certainty about what any one puzzle piece means or where it fits, because he has only spent a tiny fraction of the time trying to put the puzzle together that I have.

Everybody knows that the longer you spend putting a jigsaw puzzle together, the more certainty you have that you have placed the major pieces in the right places. By the

time you can see what the picture looks like, and that all the pieces fit together perfectly with no funny business (slicing/dicing/coloring/duct-taping/breaking-common-sense-rules-of-communication) required to do so, you have perfect confidence (no doubt) that each individual piece is in the right place. At that point you can lift any individual puzzle piece out of the puzzle and say with perfect confidence, “I absolutely know for sure exactly where this puzzle piece goes, with no doubt whatsoever.” Why? Because when you look down at the rest of the jigsaw puzzle, every other puzzle piece matches up perfectly with all the other puzzle pieces, and a space exactly the size and shape of the piece you have in your hand is just waiting for you to put that particular piece right back where it belongs. But when your jigsaw puzzle is only half completed there is still a lot of doubt as to where many of the individual pieces go! I explained to this reader that the only way he was ever going to be as sure as I was about what these different Bible verses and passages mean, is to keep trying to put the jigsaw puzzle together until everything fits perfectly and logically (without *ever* breaking any common sense rules of communication), and I suggested that he read this book at least two or three times (there is a lot to absorb if it is brand new to you, especially if you are starting out without much Bible knowledge in the first place as this reader was).

That’s why I wrote this book. My goal for this book is to give you a shortcut in putting together the jigsaw puzzle of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for mankind “the common sense way” (refusing to break the common sense rules of communication). The great news is that you do not have to be a PhD in theology to do this. It is all common sense! There is enough good information out there about the core meaning of Greek and Hebrew words, and every place where they are used in Scripture, to simply use common sense to piece it all together. You just have to watch out for Biblical scholars who artificially superimpose their Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited ideas into their claims about what a certain Biblical word or statement means.

For example, I recently saw a Bible lexicon’s explanation about the Greek word “hades” – it started off by stating that “hades” means “hell”. After two paragraphs of trying to explain stuff about hell without the slightest shred of Scriptural proof, the lexicon finally stated, “Really what this word ‘hades’ means is ‘the unseen.’” Oh. Thanks for telling me what it *really* means after brainwashing me with your unscriptural Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited beliefs for two paragraphs!

This is why any time I am examining a verse or passage, in order to make sure I’ve got a fairly accurate translation I first check the Concordant Version (you can read the New Testament for free on www.concordant.org) and sometimes supplement that with Young’s Literal Translation (look up any verse on www.bible.cc and scroll down, the last version listed is Young’s Literal). Both those translations do a pretty good job of translating the Bible strictly according to common sense (the Concordant is the best at this in my opinion) and resisting the urge to artificially insert pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited preconceived assumptions into the translation. Taking a peek at those two translations is a cheap, fast, easy way to cut through 99% of the Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited

mistranslations in most of the popular English Bibles, so you can make sure you are not accidentally coloring over a puzzle piece with a magic pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholic marker.

In this book I explain every major Biblical puzzle piece on the subject of what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for humanity and how they all fit together when you translate and interpret every puzzle piece with common sense. I do not cover every single last verse and passage on the subject (this book would be massive if I did), but I cover all the major ones, and you will find that if you stick to common sense, any other puzzle piece you come across in the Bible will fit together perfectly with the big major pieces I've put together for you in this book.

When you then go away from this book and read what other people have to say, you might find people who claim, "Such-and-such a puzzle piece means something different than what John Lilley says." At that point you are going to have to go back to the big picture created by my jigsaw puzzle, and compare how my interpretation of that puzzle piece fits into my puzzle with how their interpretation of the puzzle piece fits into their puzzle. *What you will often find is that upon further examination, they don't have a full jigsaw puzzle that fits together without using scissors, magic markers, and duct tape.* In order to make everything "fit" they way they want it to, to fit the preconceived "hell" picture in their mind, they have to break the common sense rules of communication when translating and interpreting certain Scriptures. The trick is, it may not be immediately obvious that they are doing this by just looking at their interpretation of one Bible verse or statement – sometimes the truth only comes to light and becomes obvious when you begin to notice that they are forced to twist (color/cut/duct-tape/ignore) *other* Bible verses and statements in order to make that one puzzle piece they're arguing about fit they way they want it to. This is because some Biblical statements and passages are unclear on their own and must be explained fully by looking at every other Biblical statement and passage on the subject.

What you will often find is that people will cut or paint a certain puzzle piece the way they want it, and ignore certain puzzle pieces that don't fit with the way they've cut or painted their "pet" puzzle piece(s). They never persist long enough to find out that they are making an error; they are happy to sit and admire their artificially sliced and artificially colored puzzle piece because it matches their preconceived beliefs. But you, if you want to know the truth and be 100% sure that you know it, must persist until you see how *every single puzzle piece* fits perfectly with the others. *If someone cannot paint a perfectly cohesive picture with their jigsaw puzzle without resorting to throwing out the common sense rules of communication, they don't know what they are talking about.* This is why I suggest you read a whole book, like Francis Chan's book, to see several of his arguments put together into a jigsaw puzzle, rather than merely listening to arguments about one puzzle piece at a time. Then when you compare Chan's whole puzzle with my whole puzzle, it is much easier to see who is using scissors, magic markers, and duct-tape, and who is not.

Once you are done reading this book you are going to have to decide for yourself whether you think I am right, or whether you think you should tear up the jigsaw puzzle I

just put together for you, and put the jigsaw puzzle back together the “hell way”. I contend that the “hell way” *routinely discards common sense* (the common sense rules of communication) when translating and interpreting Scripture in order to arrive at the Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited conclusion that the Bible teaches conscious death and eternal punishment. The “hell way” relies over and over again on scissors, magic markers, and duct tape. (For example, you will find that Francis Chan routinely mentions a Bible verse with the word “hell” in it as “proof” of this or that; by the end of this chapter you will know beyond any shadow of doubt that such “proof” is based on translation work that completely discards all common sense.) I contend that if you *force yourself to never break* the common sense rules of communication when translating and interpreting the Bible, and do this with every single puzzle piece on the subject of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity, you will come to the conclusion I teach in this book.

When you put the jigsaw puzzle together by sticking to common sense instead of discarding common sense to fit a preconceived idea, something else happens – something truly amazing: *All the most difficult philosophical (“why?”) questions about God answer themselves effortlessly! His reasoning behind everything He does and allows becomes obvious with no mental gymnastics required!* Dozens of questions about “why God does this, allows that, or will do such-and-such” that normally stump Christians and send them spinning in philosophical circles trying to explain God and the reasoning behind His actions, are suddenly answered with no effort when you simply translate and interpret all the Bible’s statements on death and God’s plan for humanity with common sense. The philosophical circus stops. When you get a correct understanding of what God is going to do with humanity in the future, His reasoning behind His dealings with humanity becomes obvious. But...as soon as you pull out the scissors, magic markers, and duct tape again, discarding common sense in favor of artificially superimposing a Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited view of what happens at death and God’s plan for mankind, you artificially create philosophical problems with God again. Any time you start veering away from common sense rules in your translation and interpretation of the Bible, you are going to find that you’ve also started to paint a false picture of God that doesn’t fit with common sense philosophically either. But when you stick to translating and interpreting the Bible with common sense, the picture it paints of God fits with common sense too – God makes perfect sense to both the heart and mind.

Francis Chan and I cannot both be right on this subject. One of us is wrong. One of us is not making sense. I don’t believe it’s me. I believe Chan and other people who believe in hell are throwing common sense out the window in their Bible translation and interpretation work (without realizing what they’re doing), and therefore they end up with a picture of God that does not fit with the rest of what Christianity teaches about God and the common sense picture of what every human being would instinctively think God would be like. I’m not saying God must be like what we want Him to be like; I’m saying God built an instinct for justice and fairness into each person, and the picture of God that modern “hell minded” Christians paint violates that built-in instinct for justice and fairness. Translating and interpreting the Bible with common sense paints a picture of God that fits perfectly with the common sense instincts for justice, fairness, and love that God built in to

each human when He made humanity in His image (Gen. 1:27).

The bottom line is, you'll have to decide for yourself what you think after you examine each jigsaw puzzle (mine vs. most of modern Christianity's) and compare them against each other.

Now let's move on to the third word that is sometimes mistranslated as "hell" in your English Bible: "tartarusing".

"Tartarusing" Doesn't Mean Hell

The Greek word "tartarusing" only appears once in the Bible, in 2 Peter 2:4. An accurate translation of this verse would read:

"For if God does not spare sinning angels, but thrusting them into gloomy caverns tartarusing, gives them up to be kept for chastening judging..."

There are three key points to notice in this verse.

First, in this, the only instance in which "tartarusing" appears in the Bible, *there is no indication of humans doing whatever "tartarusing" is*. Only angels are "tartarusing".

Secondly, these angels are only "tartarusing" *for a certain period of time – until their "chastening judging" (corrective judgment) as the strictly literal Concordant Version translates it*. They are not tartarusing "forever".

Third, *there is no fire*.

So right off the bat, translating "tartarusing" as "hell" (where supposedly billions of humans go to burn forever) is ridiculous.

So what are these angels doing "in gloomy caverns tartarusing"? Well, Jude 6 explains it clearly: *"Angels who kept not their own sovereignty, but left their own habitation, He has kept in imperceptible bonds under gloom for the judging of the great day."*

God is keeping some disobedient fallen angels someplace dark until the judgment of the great day. That's it. God made sure that there is another verse in the Bible (Jude 6) that explains exactly what Peter means by "tartarusing", so a Greek word that only appears once in Scripture doesn't confuse us.

So why does Peter use the word "tartarusing", an unusual word that is only used once in the Bible? Scholars say Peter was inventing a word – coining a term – based on the word

“Tartarus”, to describe what the angels are doing until judgment day (waiting in the dark). “Tartarus”, to the Greeks in Peter’s day, was a dark place, part of a fairly elaborate pagan conception of the afterlife. Peter and his hearers would have been familiar with it, similar to how Christians today would be familiar with Muslims’ seventy virgins. It’s worth noting that even in the Greek pagan conception of the afterlife, “Tartarus” had no fire. It was just dark.

Was Peter teaching his readers that Tartarus is a real place? Of course not. That would contradict everything else he ever taught them. Peter and the believers to whom he wrote the letter (now known as the Bible’s book of 2nd Peter) would have known that Tartarus was a place that only existed in the minds of pagans. Peter was just using a concept familiar to his audience (a dark place called Tartarus) to communicate effectively to his audience. Thus he coined the term “tartarusing” – “waiting in a dark place”.

Peter was simply using a Greek term familiar to his audience, “Tartarus”, a dark place in the Greek pagan conception of the afterlife, to say, “these angels are waiting in a dark place”. Jude 6 confirms Peter’s exact meaning. Again, Peter and the readers of his letter knew Tartarus is not a real place and that it only exists in the pagan imagination, the same way Christians today know there will not be seventy virgins waiting for anybody when they die. And for the sake of argument, even if Tartarus was a real place, the Bible only uses this word once, as a verb, and only about angels, with no fire anywhere – so “hell” is a ridiculous translation of it. It can only be translated as “hell” through extreme creativity.

So that explains the Greek words that are sometimes mistranslated as “hell” in many English Bibles. And as I mentioned earlier, the only Old Testament Hebrew word that is sometimes mistranslated as “hell” in some English Bibles is “sheol”, which does not mean “hell” as we understand it today either. There is no word in either the Greek New Testament or the Hebrew Old Testament that means “hell”.

The word “hell” started out as an old English word, “hel”, long after Bible days. There was no word for “hell” in the Godly cultures of Bible days. The reason for this is that they had no need to describe that concept. (Just as a remote Amazonian tribe 100 years ago would have no need in their culture and language to describe “automobile”.) As you continue reading this book (particularly Chapter 4) you’ll learn more about why Godly people in Bible days had no need for a word to describe the idea or concept of a place of conscious afterlife torment.

In the next chapter I will correct another extremely important English word that appears in many of the “popular/readable” English Bible versions; actually it is a group of related English words that all carry the same basic meaning in English. These words should never appear in any English Bible, because they are blatant mistranslations; these English words carry a meaning that is not found in the original Hebrew and Greek words from which they are translated, and they carry the *exact opposite* meaning of the Greek word from which they are translated! (If you don’t believe me, just keep reading!) Let’s keep unraveling the confusion.

Chapter 3

The “Eternal” Mistranslation

Before I begin this chapter, I want to remind you that anyone who disagrees with my conclusions about the translation issues I discuss in this chapter and the previous one, is also disagreeing with the translators of the most literal, accuracy-focused English Bible versions (e.g. The Concordant Version and Young’s Literal Translation). In this chapter I will explain why you will not find terms like “eternal punishment” or “forever and ever” in literal, accuracy-focused Bible translations like the two I just mentioned.

Hastings’ *Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol. I, p. 542, art. *Christ and the Gospels*) states that there is no word either in the Old Testament Hebrew or in the New Testament Greek that expresses the abstract idea of eternity.

Huh? Most English Bibles that you’d buy in the bookstore are full of words that refer to eternity, like “eternal”, “everlasting”, and “forever”! How can Hastings’ *Dictionary of the New Testament* claim that there is no word either in the Old Testament Hebrew or in the New Testament Greek that expresses the idea of eternity?

Because it’s true.

It’s bad enough that many English Bibles contain the word “hell” even though the Greek and Hebrew language manuscripts do not contain any word that even comes remotely close to the modern definition of “hell”. But the confusion caused by mistranslations in the typical English Bible found in the bookstore doesn’t stop there. There are four more extremely important words/phrases that are *always* mistranslations when you see them in your English New Testament:

“eternal”, “everlasting”, “forever”, and the phrase “forever and ever”.

(Note: Also watch out for the word “never”.)

Now, let me assure you that the word “immortality” (referring to the body believers will receive at the rapture, for example) found in 1 Corinthians 15:53 is correctly translated; so in all practicality there is such a thing as “forever” or “eternity”, because an immortal body does not die.

However...

There simply is no word in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts of the Bible that refers directly to eternity or means “definitely endless”. When you see words like “forever”, “eternal”, “everlasting”, or the phrase “forever and ever” in an English Old Testament, it is a mistranslation of some form of the Hebrew compound word “to/from olam” (“a long, unspecified period of time”, not “definitely endless time”) or one of two other less-common Hebrew compound words. And when you see words that refer to eternity in an English New Testament, it is always a mistranslation of the Greek word “eon” (used in the New Testament to translate “olam”; the most accurate translation of this Greek word without adding a sense to it that is not found in the word itself would be “age”).

As you will see, when more loosely-translated, readability-focused Bible versions translate these words with English words referring to eternity or endlessness, they are adding a meaning to the words that is simply not found in the original languages. One of the reasons readability-focused translators do this is because there is no direct equivalent in English of the Hebrew word and concept of “to/from olam” and there is no adjective form of “eon” (“eonian”) in English, so the translators just use an English word such as “eternal” or “forever” that sounds “normal” in English. These words conveniently fit with the translators’ preconceived pagan/Catholic-inherited “hell mindset”. In fact, pagan Catholic ideas about “the afterlife” are the *very reason* that words referring to eternity sound “normal” to modern Christians who have inherited those ideas.

This inaccurate translation work causes confusion. The words “eternal” and “forever” in English carry the meaning of “definitely endless” and/or “time without beginning or end”, while “olam” and “eon” and its forms simply do not carry that meaning, and this can be easily proven by examining how the words are used in Scripture.

In this chapter we will look at how these words are used in the Bible and we’ll talk about some common sense rules of communication that the most literal and accuracy-focused English Bible translations use to translate them more accurately. You will see that Hastings’ *Dictionary of the New Testament* is absolutely correct when it states that there is no word in the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible that expresses the abstract idea of eternity.

Let’s look at the Hebrew word “olam” and the Greek word “eon” to see what they really mean.

We’ll examine the Hebrew word “olam” first, because it will also form the foundation of our study of the Greek “eon”, since “eon” and its forms are used to translate “olam” in the New Testament and in the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament).

The Hebrew Word “Olam”

There are three Hebrew compound words that sometimes get translated in your English Old Testament as “forever”. By far the most common is “to/from olam”. C. Ryder Smith in his book *The Doctrine of the Hereafter* says,

“The prevalence of the translation 'for ever' in the English versions for this term, as for the other two, gives a wrong impression.”

The reason Smith says the English translation “for ever” gives the wrong impression to the English reader, is that English words like “forever”, “everlasting”, and “eternal” refer to time without end, so when we see those words in our English Bible it would never cross our mind that the underlying Hebrew compound word is often used of periods of time that *have an end*. Let me explain.

One of the primary common sense rules of language is that words are defined by their *usage*. For example, the word “milk” means “the white stuff that comes out of a cow (or another mammal), because that’s how the English-speaking world uses this word consistently. No, this is not rocket science.

So how is “olam” used in the Old Testament? Let’s look at a couple revealing instances of its usage:

“Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, From ancient times (olam) your fathers lived beyond the river...” – Joshua 24:2

Did the forefathers of Israel live there forever in the past, with no beginning? Of course not. If “olam” meant “forever” or referred to “eternity”, the forefathers of Israel must have been living there for all time past, with no beginning. The reason the word “olam” is used in this verse is that *it does not mean “forever” or refer to “eternity”*, it merely means “a long period of time of unknown/unspecified length”.

Here we see the key difference between what “olam” meant in Hebrew and the concept of “forever”: the modern English speaker takes the word “forever” to mean “definitely eternal”, “definitely endless”, or “definitely referring to eternity”, whereas the word “olam” has no sense of definiteness to it, it merely refers to a long time – how long of a time, no one knows or it is unspecified. “Olam” is related to a Hebrew verb that means “to hide from sight”. In other words, “olam” is *purposefully vague and unclear* as to the length of time it’s referring to.

As you can tell, it’s tricky to translate this word into English because English has no one-word equivalent. “For a long time” would probably be the closest English equivalent. If

I were translating the Old Testament I'd probably translate it "a long time", because the English phrase "a long time", like the Hebrew phrase "to/from olam", makes no attempt to specify an exact length of time and is purposefully unclear about what length of time is being referred to. But "a long time" probably sounds lame to Bible translators; it doesn't sound "Bible-ey" to them. I don't care. I'd rather convey what God said *accurately* than have it sound cool.

So when "olam" is used to refer to the past (as in the example above), the translators don't use the word "forever" because it cannot possibly mean that; they use the phrase "in ancient times", a rough equivalent that still does not perfectly convey the meaning of the word, but it works and is at least somewhat accurate in that it does not specify an exact length of time. The problem comes in when "olam" is used to refer to something in the present or future. When used to refer to the present it means something like "available without interruption" or "going on now and continuing into the future for an unspecified length of time", and when used to refer to the future, it means "for a long but unspecified period of time".

But modern translators, because they want to pick one nice easy word to use, and because they already believe in the pagan leftover concepts of "eternal punishment, eternal this, eternal that, eternal everything and the kitchen sink" anyway, simply translate "to olam" as "forever" or "eternal". *This is not accurate. It reinforces the pagan/Catholic-inherited idea in the minds of modern English-speaking Christians that everything in the Bible is about eternity, when in reality the Bible says nothing directly about eternity (it speaks of it indirectly by the use of terms such as "immortality", as I mentioned earlier).*

Let's look at another example:

"But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master...I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall...pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever (olam)." – Exodus 21:6

Did such a slave living many centuries ago, really serve his master forever? Of course not. They're both dead today. This is because "olam" does not mean "forever" or refer to "eternity", it means "for a long but unspecified period of time".

There are many other instances in the Old Testament where the word "olam" obviously does not mean – and cannot possibly mean – "forever". (See Gen. 6:4, Deut. 32:7, 1 Sam. 27:8, and Job 22:15 for example.) Folks, the whole point of the word "olam" is that it refers to an *undefined, unspecified* amount of time, so logically it does not mean "*definitely referring to eternity*".

Some people argue that "olam" is sometimes used to speak about God or His mercy, and therefore it must mean "eternal" or "everlasting" in those cases. But that is faulty logic. Just because a word refers to God or His glory or His mercy doesn't mean it must mean anything in particular, merely because we want it to or think it should. Careful study of such

verses in the Old Testament reveals that, just as with the other instances of “olam” in the Old Testament Hebrew, the amount of time being referred to is *undefined* or *unspecified*, not “definitely eternal”. Sometimes the context reveals that God is *consistently available* (when needed) *and available into the future for an undefined amount of time*. As I mentioned a moment ago, the word “olam” was related to the verb “alam” which meant, “to hide from sight”, “to conceal”, or “to veil”.

So “olam” does not mean *definitely eternal*, it means *a period of time of unspecified or unknown length*. The length of time it refers to is concealed, veiled, unknown, unclear. To translate “olam” in an English Bible as “forever” or as referring to “eternity” is to ascribe a meaning to the word “olam” that it simply did not have in Hebrew, because in English we assume that “forever” means “definitely eternal” or “definitely endless”. “To/from olam” never meant *definitely eternal* or *definitely permanent* or *definitely endless*. It never meant *definitely* anything. It meant the exact opposite: an *undefined* length of time. It meant *long – but we’re not sure how long (exactly how long is unknown, hidden from sight, undefined)*, and there are some instances when it seems to have the connotation of *consistently available* (available now and into the foreseeable future, but the exact length of time it will be available, and whether it will end or not, is not stated).

Just because we know that God “has neither beginning of days nor consummation of life” (Heb. 7:3) does not mean “olam” meant eternal, or that it was used to describe the eternal aspect of God. The fact is, there is *nothing definite* about the period of time “olam” refers to. And of course there are many instances in the Hebrew Old Testament where it is obvious that “olam” *did not* refer to eternity or an endless amount of time, such as in the examples I gave you above. The Old Testament uses the word “olam” to refer to a long but undefined amount of time, and many Old Testament verses simply use the word “olam” to refer to the fact that God’s goodness or mercy lasts for a long time (exactly how long, they weren’t sure, that was unspecified), or is available now and would be available for an unspecified length of time in the future.

My friends, the words “forever”, “eternal”, “everlasting”, and “forever and ever” as we understand them today (to us they mean *definitely eternal* or *definitely lasting for eternity* or *definitely endless*) really should not appear in the Old Testament, at least not as a translation of “to/from olam”. Careful study of this Hebrew compound word simply does not support it being translated this way.

We can see why Hastings’ *Dictionary of the New Testament* states that there is no word in the Hebrew Old Testament that expresses the abstract idea of eternity.

Of course, Hastings’ *Dictionary* also says there is no word that expresses the abstract idea of eternity in the Greek New Testament either. As we shift our focus to the New Testament, I want to take a moment to talk to you about the ramifications of what we are about to discuss and why it is so important.

The Ramifications of the Issue of the Translation of “Eon” In the New Testament

(Note: In this chapter, for brevity’s sake, I will refer to people who believe in eternal punishment as “ETers”; this is not a term of condescension, but merely of convenience. It’s much easier than writing out “people who believe in eternal punishment”.)

The reason the translation of the Greek word “eon” is so important is that the ramifications are massive particularly in a couple of spots in the New Testament. It really all comes down to this: “ETers” must *prove* that the Greek phrases “eonian chastisement/punishment” and “into the eons of the eons” *must* be translated as “eternal chastisement/punishment” and “forever and ever”. If they cannot prove this, the doctrine of “eternal” punishment falls apart (has no solid Biblical basis). None of us would dare preach the idea that God will punish or torture billions of precious humans without end, unless we were *absolutely certain* that the terms “eonian chastisement/punishment” and “into the eons of the eons” *absolutely must* be translated as referring to eternity. If there is no solid proof that these terms must be translated as referring to eternity, then it would be a terrible crime to foist such a terrifying doctrine as “eternal” punishment upon those to whom we preach. (Especially considering that it’s frankly incomprehensible why God would bring billions of people into existence knowing beforehand that their fate would be eternal torture.)

I’ve heard it said, “If hell is real then it’s dangerous to preach that it’s not, but if it’s not real and someone preaches that it is, there is no harm done.” This silly statement assumes that God and His Word would leave us in the land of “if” regarding the most important subject in the world, His ultimate plan for mankind. It also conveniently ignores the terrible emotional pain and turmoil experienced by people who don’t know any better than to take the doctrine of hell seriously, and live daily with the soul-crushing thought that their dead loved ones who died without knowing the Lord are burning and screaming and will be burning and screaming for eternity. I should also mention the fact that those who preach incorrectly about God cannot receive reward from Him for preaching that which is incorrect. (We can only receive reward from the Lord for those areas where we preach correctly about Him – see 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.)

If you want to live in the land of “if” on this subject, go ahead. I refuse to do so. I encourage you to take into account everything you read in this chapter, put it in the larger context of everything you read in this book, test it against everything else you may hear from other members of the body of Christ on this subject (in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21), and then come to your conclusion.

Now let’s look at the Greek word “eon” (a noun) and it’s plural and adjective forms.

The Greek Word “Eon”

The Greek word “eon” is used in the New Testament when quoting Old Testament verses that contain the Hebrew word “olam”. Although (like many translations of a word in one language into a word in another language) the meaning of “olam” is not necessarily the exact same as the meaning of “eon”, they are close enough that the God-inspired authors of the New Testament saw fit to translate “olam” as “eon”. “Eon” is also used throughout the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) to translate “olam”.

So right away we must point that since “olam” does not carry the meaning of eternity or endlessness within itself, and “eon” is used in the New Testament and the Septuagint to translate “olam”, what are the chances that “eon” carries the meaning of eternity or endlessness? We would have to see some very solid proof in order to come to the conclusion that it does. But as you’ll see, we find that “eon” and its forms, like “olam”, are used over and over again in the New Testament to refer to periods of time that do not and cannot refer to endlessness or eternity.

Let’s start by looking at a couple of quotes from Bible scholars:

M. R. Vincent, Presbyterian Bible scholar, states as part of his note on the Greek word “eon/eonian”: *“Neither the noun nor the adjective, in themselves, carry the sense of endless or everlasting.”*

G. Campbell Morgan, the British Congregational minister, said about “olam” and “eon”: *“Let me say to Bible students that we must be very careful how we use the word ‘eternity.’ We have fallen into great error in our constant use of that word. There is no word in the whole Book of God corresponding with our ‘eternal,’ which, as commonly used among us, means absolutely without end.”*

Now let’s examine a couple examples of how the Greek word “eon” is used in the New Testament. We will see why Bible scholars and translators that refuse to artificially insert a meaning into “eon” that is simply not found in the word, refuse to translate “eon” and its forms with words referring to eternity:

2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as “the god of this age (eon)”. “Eon” is also used in Galatians 1:4, which refers to “this present evil age (eon)”.

Satan is not the god of this “forever”, is he? Of course not! He is the god of this *age* – his *temporary* reign over the activities of this earth *will come to an end at the end of this age* (Rev. 20:1-3).

Yet some modern Bible translators translate this *same Greek word “eon”* as “forever” in

other places. What is their reasoning for doing this? I submit to you that it's not reasoning, but traditional pagan/Catholic leftover.

You see, in order to translate “eon” as “forever” when they can get away with it in order to fit their traditional beliefs and preconceived ideas, many modern Bible translators are extremely loose, inconsistent, and creative in their translation of “eon” and its forms throughout the New Testament. They can't insert the concept of eternal punishment into the Bible every time they see “eon”, “eons”, or “eonian” in the New Testament, because *there are simply too many instances when “eon” obviously does not and cannot mean “forever”*. There are many times the word “eon” and its forms are used where it is impossible to make the sentence or thought make any sense with the word “forever” or “eternal” or the concept of endless time in it. 2nd Corinthians 4:4, Matthew 13:49, Mark 10:30, and Galatians 1:4 are just a few examples of such instances (there are many, many more). These verses would directly contradict other clear teachings of Scripture and/or make no sense whatsoever if the word “eon” were to be translated “forever” or with any word referring to eternity or endlessness.

Various Scriptures tell us that Satan's rule over this world will have a specific end (Rev. 20:1-3). He is not “the god of this forever”, or “the god of this world” (which implies incorrectly that he rules the world with no limitations – there is a separate Greek word for “world” and it is not used here); rather, Satan is “the god of this age”, which tells us, in perfect harmony with Revelation 20:1-3 and Luke 4:5-6, that God is allowing him to reign during this particular period in human history and that his temporary reign will end at the end of this age. An “eon” in Greek, here is shown to have *a specific end*. Therefore the word “eon” cannot possibly mean “forever”, because “forever” is the *exact opposite* of a period of time with a specific end. No word means the opposite of itself. (If you're wondering, “Could it *sometimes* refer to endlessness?” you'll have that question answered later in this chapter.)

Some Bible versions add to their readers' confusion by mistranslating “eon” as “world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and in Galatians 1:4. Yet “eon” doesn't mean “world” by any stretch of the imagination. There is a separate Greek word for “world” (“cosmos”), and that is not the word used here. The use of the word “world” to translate “eon” in certain instances is a leftover from Middle Ages Latin translations of the Bible – the Latin word used to translate “eon” also somewhat or sometimes carried the meaning of “world”. But the Greek word “eon” itself does not carry the meaning of world. Here we see the importance of cutting the Latin Catholic Middle Ages confusion out of the picture, and going straight back to the Greek. Careful study of all the uses of the Greek word “eon” and its forms in the New Testament shows that the vast majority of the time it is exceedingly obvious that it refers to a period of time, and it makes perfect sense in every single instance when understood to refer to a period of time.

“Eon” doesn't mean “world” *or* “forever”! As you'll see, the most accurate simple translation would be “age”, since the New Testament makes it clear that there are several periods of time that God has planned for human history up to the “consummation” of His

plan, referred to over and over again in the New Testament as “eons” or “ages”. Every single instance of the word “eon” or one of its forms (“eons”, “eonian”) in the New Testament makes perfect sense when it is translated as “age/ages/pertaining-to-an-age-or-ages”.

You can see the massive problem English-speaking Bible readers face when trying to understand what God said when they see the words “eternal/forever”, “world” and “age” and have no way of knowing – other than careful study of the underlying Greek – that these three vastly different English words have all been translated from the same underlying Greek word! *A single word in any document should never be assumed to have such a wide variety of vastly different meanings when every instance of it in the document makes perfect sense when translated with its single most basic meaning. This is just common sense folks!*

The only reason the translators of some of these loosely-translated Bible versions in the bookstore are all over the map with their translation of this Greek word “eon” is because they are strongly influenced by *factors other than common sense rules of language and translation*, namely, their preconceived pagan/Catholic-inherited way of thinking that “everything in the Bible is about eternity”, the confusing precedent set in the translation of “eon” and its forms by the Latin translations of the Bible that were done in the Middle Ages, and, in the case of the adjective form of “eon” (“eonian”) there is no adjective form of “age” in English, which makes it a challenge to translate. These “outside forces” have combined to make the average English New Testament you’d buy in the bookstore a confusing mess when it comes to the translation of this massively important Greek word “eon”.

What it all comes down to is that we have three choices as to how to translate “eon”, its plural form “eons”, and its adjective form “eonian” in the New Testament:

Choice #1: “Eon” and its forms must always be translated as referring to eternity or endlessness.

Choice #2: It is obvious that “eon” and its forms often do not and cannot refer to eternity or endlessness but rather *must* refer to an “age” or “ages” (a period or more than one period of time that clearly have an end); *but in certain instances* (specifically the terms “eonian chastisement/punishment” and “into the eons of the eons”) it *must* refer to eternity, and *we have no choice* but to translate it as indicating endlessness or endless time in those specific instances. In other words, this word sometimes means the opposite of itself.

Choice #3: It is obvious that “eon” and its forms as used in the New Testament often do not and cannot refer to eternity or endlessness but rather *must* refer to an “age” or “ages” (a period or more than one period of time that clearly have an end); *and it cannot be proven* that any instance of the word and its forms in the New Testament refers to eternity or endlessness, rather every instance of the word in Scripture makes perfect sense when

translated as “age”/“ages”/“having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages” (which does *not* carry the meaning of “definitely endless time”).

Let’s start by eliminating Choice #1. No one, not even the most ardent “ETer”, argues that Choice #1 is true, because there are a great many instances in the New Testament when “eon” and its forms are used where they obviously do not and cannot refer to eternity or endless time. I listed a couple of classic examples a moment ago, although we could list many more. Here is another example:

Titus 1:2 speaks of the “hope of eonian life which the God who does not lie promised before the times of the eons.” Here we see that it would be ridiculous to translate these two instances of “eon” as referring to eternity. It is used twice in the same sentence, and in one of those instances the sentence tells us that God made a promise “*before the times of the eons*”. Are we to believe that God made a promise *before eternal times*? Is there even such a thing as *before eternity*? Obviously not.

Titus 1:2, all by itself, puts a serious dent in the claim made by some that the term “eonian life” should be translated as “eternal life”. In fact this verse would seem to lend credence to the opposite claim – that “eonian life” should *not* be translated “eternal life”. It is obvious that “the times of the eons” as used at the end of the sentence *absolutely does not* mean “eternal” – there is no such thing as “before eternal times”. We would be on very shaky ground to claim that the author of Titus meant “eon” to carry one meaning in the first part of the sentence and the opposite meaning in the second part of the sentence. The concept of ages (periods of time each with a beginning and an end, as used in the phrase “before the times of the eons” or “before the times of the ages” or as it would be naturally understood, “before God’s plan for the ages began”) is the *opposite* of the concept of eternity (time without beginning or end). A period or periods of time with a beginning and an end is the *opposite* concept of time with no beginning and no end. **To suggest that the author of Titus 1:2 would use the same word “eon” to refer to two opposite concepts in the same sentence, is very shaky ground indeed.**

So I have amply demonstrated (using just a few verses of the New Testament, although I could quote many, many more), that “eon” and its forms are often used in Scripture in such a way that it is exceedingly obvious that they *cannot* and *do not* refer to eternity or endlessness. And I have shown you using Titus 1:2 that the term “eonian life” cannot be assumed to mean “eternal life”, because the very same sentence speaks of “before the times of the eons”, and there can be no such thing as “before eternal times”.

So we have completely demolished Option #1 above. This surprises no one. Even the most ardent “ETers” know that “eon” and its forms are frequently used in the New Testament to refer to periods of time that are not and cannot possibly be endless or eternal.

And we've put a serious dent in the possibility that Option #2 is correct. (Here's where "ETers" start shifting uncomfortably in their seats.) Remember, Option #2 says that "eon" and its forms *must* be translated as referring to eternity in certain instances, particularly the phrase "eonian chastisement" and "the eons of the eons". Because we have demonstrated without even a whimper of disagreement from even the most ardent "ETers" that "eon" and its forms are frequently used in the New Testament to refer to a period or periods of time that *absolutely must have a beginning and an end* and *cannot possibly* be endless, the "ETers" are now in the unenviable position of attempting to prove that the word "eonian" sometimes *changes its meaning to the exact opposite*. They are now in the difficult position of having to somehow come up with *absolute proof* that the word "eonian" sometimes means something very different than (actually expresses the *opposite concept* of) what it usually means. "ETers" must now try to prove that this Greek word changes its meaning to refer to eternity when it is used in the term "eonian punishment", and that the phrase "the eons of the eons", which uses two instances of a plural word that elsewhere in the New Testament clearly has nothing to do with eternity, *must* refer to eternity. This is a tall order.

First of all, if the term "eonian life" does not refer to eternity (as it would seem from Titus 1:2 which in the very same sentence speaks of "before the times of the eons"), then it would certainly be a stretch to imagine that the term "eonian chastisement" *must* refer to eternity! Let's examine Titus 1:2 further before moving on, because this is very important.

"ETers" often claim that the meaning of the word "eon" changes "depending on context". In fact they *must* claim this, they *have no choice* but to claim this, if they are to hold to their idea that the Bible teaches "eternal" punishment. They cannot argue for one nanosecond that "eon" and its forms *always* refers to eternity, so they are stuck arguing that it *sometimes* refers to eternity *depending on context*.

But let's think about that claim for a minute. What "ETers" are saying is that the word "eon" and its forms sometimes refers to a period of time that has a beginning and an end, and yet at other times it refers to a period of time with *no* beginning and *no* end! Huh? As I've pointed out, "a period of time with a beginning and an end" is *the exact opposite* concept as "time with no beginning and no end".

I challenge you to find me another word in the Greek language, or in any language for that matter, that changes its meaning to the exact opposite concept depending on context! Even if you *could* find a word like that in a certain language (good luck!), it still wouldn't prove that we *must* translate the Greek word "eon" and its forms as its own opposite in the specific instances in question ("eonian chastisement/punishment" and "the eons of the eons"). The fact would remain that it is extremely unusual (if not impossible) for a word to "sometimes mean the opposite of itself depending on context" due to the great potential for confusion. This is just common sense. There is a good reason that words are not their own antonyms – because the potential for confusion would be massive. There is really no good reason for a language to have a word that sometimes means the opposite of itself. Why not just have a *different* word that means the opposite? That way there's not

confusion! Even if we could find an isolated instance of a word sometimes being its own antonym in one or two languages, we would still need ample additional proof in order to dare claim that the specific Greek word “eon” and its forms *must* refer to eternity (the exact opposite concept of what it usually means) when used in the term “eonian chastisement/punishment” and the phrase “the eons of the eons”.

What I’m telling you is that *if* the Greek word “eon” does what the “ETers” say it does (become its own antonym depending on context) it would be extremely rare, or perhaps unique, among all the words in all the languages in the world. Words that are their own antonym are either extremely rare or nonexistent, for obvious reasons. Needless to say, we must have absolute proof that this is the case with the word “eon” before daring to build an entire doctrine upon it, especially a doctrine concerning the most important subject in the world, God’s future plans for humanity.

We should also note that the other Greek word in the term “eonian chastisement/punishment” is “kolasin”. The root of this word is “kolos” and it literally means “to prune”. The idea is that of correction, not vindictive punishment. That’s why, as you’ve noticed, I refer to it as “chastisement” or “chastisement/punishment”, to make it clear that the Greek word does not speak of vindictive punishment or punishment without an aim, but rather punishment with the aim of correction or “pruning”. Greek has a separate word that simply means “punishment” or “penalty”: “timoria”. And by the way folks, this word “timoria” is only used once in Scripture to talk about unbelievers, in Hebrews 10:29, which talks about a specific sin (trampling underfoot the Son of God and counting His blood unholy despite having been previously sanctified by it) that most unbelievers throughout the history of the world could not possibly have committed (since most people throughout the history of the world have never even heard the gospel). And we must also note that Hebrews 10:29 does not speak of “eternal” punishment (it does not mention a time period in regards to the punishment). “Timoria” is used in other places in the New Testament, but in those places it speaks of punishing followers of Christ, Christians.

So there is only one verse in the whole New Testament that uses the word “timoria” (“punishment”) in regards to unbelievers, and the vast majority of unbelievers could not possibly have committed the sin that deserves the “timoria”. The more we study this term “eonian chastisement/punishment”, the less it looks like “eternal vindictive punishment as in trillions of years of torture without end”.

So let’s review before we move on. There are many instances in the New Testament where “eon” and its forms *absolutely must* refer to a period of time (an age or multiple ages) that *definitely has a beginning and an end* and is *not endless or eternity*. Most words have a consistent meaning. (There are some words that can have somewhat different meanings depending on context, but such words are not very common; the vast majority of words in any language have a consistent meaning regardless of context. And again, you will be hard pressed to find any word in any language that sometimes means the opposite of itself, that

at times expresses the opposite concept as it normally expresses, that is its own antonym.) So “ETers” are stuck making a very difficult argument, that this Greek word is different than most words. They are stuck arguing that “eon” and its forms does not have a consistent meaning, but rather is its own antonym sometimes. They’re stuck arguing that it *sometimes* is its own antonym and *sometimes* refers to eternity *depending on context* in the hopes that they might be able to prove that it *must* refer to eternity in the term “eonian punishment” and the phrase “the eons of the eons”.

But of course, Titus 1:2 shows us that it would seem highly unlikely, even absurd, for the term “eonian life” to refer to eternity because the phrase “before the times of the eons” is used in the very same sentence – what are the chances that the apostle Paul uses the same word twice in the same sentence to refer to *opposite concepts*? (Remember, eternity – time with no beginning or end – is the opposite concept of “eon” or “eons” – which according to 2 Cor. 4:4, Titus 1:2, etc. clearly refers to a period of time with a beginning and an end.) And there is another verse in Scripture that like Titus 1:2 uses the word “eon” twice in the same sentence where one of the instances is absolutely clear it *cannot and does not* refer to eternity: Romans 16:25-26. We will talk about that one later.

We must also take into account the fact that the other Greek word in the term “eonian chastisement/punishment”, “kolasin”, distinctly carries the meaning of correction or pruning (chastisement, like a father chastises his son, not like a person gets revenge on his enemy).

So, with the information we’ve examined thus far, the claim that “eonian chastisement/punishment” refers to “an eternity of vindictive punishment” would seem dubious at best.

I hope you can see – without even having read the further points I will make in this chapter – that “ETers” are on very shaky ground here. They had better be able to come up with some powerful proof before they’re going to get me to believe that “eonian chastisement/punishment” must mean “eternal chastisement/punishment” and that “the ages of the ages” must mean “forever and ever”.

Dear reader, as an introduction to the further points I will make in this chapter, I submit to you that the thought process of “ETers” when it comes to translating “eon” and its forms as its own antonym when it suits them, is nothing more than, “When it makes sense to my modern pagan/Catholic-inherited hell mindset to think of it as ‘eternal’, and the context does not make it sound obviously ludicrous to translate it as ‘eternal’, I give myself permission to translate it as ‘eternal’”. *But there is in fact not one single shred of proof that any of these instances of “eon” and its forms in the New Testament must refer to eternity or endlessness. In reality every single instance of “eon” and its forms in the New Testament makes perfect sense when simply translated as “age/ages/having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages”.*

I now submit to you several more pieces of information on this topic for your consideration.

Does “Eonian” Have To Refer to Eternity Just Because the Bible Uses the Term “Eonian God”?

Remember, the burden of proof is on “ETers” to *prove beyond any shadow of doubt* that the term “eonian” chastisement/punishment *must* mean “eternal” chastisement/punishment. To this end they sometimes claim that “eonian” must mean “eternal” because it is used in Scripture to describe God in the term, “eonian God”.

First of all, *must* a word mean any particular thing just because it is used to describe God? Obviously not. Must the word “powerful” mean “merciful” just because God is merciful? Can’t God be *both* “powerful” *and* “merciful”? Of course He can! This “logic” that a word *must* mean a particular thing just because it is used to describe God is utter balderdash. It makes perfect sense to call God the “God of the ages” (“eonian God” with “eonian” translated/defined as “having to do with an age or ages”).

And look at the context of the verse where the term “eonian God” is used! Romans 15:25-26 says, “*Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian, yet manifested now and through prophetic scriptures, according to the injunction of the eonian God...*” (Concordant Version). Most versions translate that first phrase “in eonian times” as “from ages past” or “from the beginning of the world” or something like that, because it is obvious that the verse is not talking about a secret kept hidden from humanity “from eternity past”, since humanity has not existed for eternity in the past. So if the word “eonian” cannot possibly refer to eternity in the first part of the sentence, where do people get the idea that it refers to eternity in the second part of the sentence? They don’t get it from common sense, that’s for sure. (They get it from this false mindset that “everything in the Bible must be about eternity”).

Why not just translate and understand these two instances of “eonian” consistently in a way that makes perfect sense? “...*A secret kept hidden from ages past, yet manifested now...according to the command of the God of the ages*”. Translating it any other way forces us to use the exact same word to mean to very different and in fact opposite things in the same sentence! That’s nonsense land. There is absolutely no reason to do that when translating the same word with the same meaning in both instances in the sentence makes perfect sense.

As I’ve said, every instance of “eon” and its forms in the New Testament makes perfect sense when translated as “age/ages/having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages”. Many places in the New Testament speak of God’s sovereignty over the eons/ages and His plan for the eons/ages. To say that God is the “God of the ages” matches up perfectly with the rest of

the New Testament. Thus there is absolutely no reason to go off the reservation and start claiming that a word *must* be its own antonym (*within the same sentence no less!*), merely because we're desperate to back up a belief that history shows was not even a part of Christianity until Catholicism threw paganism into the mix in the Middle Ages.

Does “Eonian” Have To Refer to Eternity Just Because the Bible Uses the Term “Eonian Life”?

We touched on this earlier but I'll mention it again because this argument is perceived by “ETers” to be the other “big gun” in their arsenal on this topic. (The “eonian must refer to eternity because it's used to describe God” is their first big gun. We just demonstrated that one to be nothing more than an imaginary BB gun that shoots flowers out its nozzle. We'll do the same with this one.)

Titus 1:2 uses the phrase “before the times of the eons” in the very same sentence as the term “eonian life”. And Romans 16:25-26 uses the word “eonain” in the same sentence twice, and the first time it is absolutely clear it does not and cannot refer to eternity. Dear reader, I challenge you to find a single instance in the history of human language where a writer or speaker uses the same word twice in the same sentence to mean two opposite things. 'Nuf said.

So Titus 1:2 and Romans 16:25-26 disprove the claim made by some “ETers” that the word “eonian” always refers to eternity. And Titus 1:2 shows us that “eonian life” does not and cannot mean “eternal life” since it is used in the same sentence with the phrase “before the times of the eons” which obviously cannot and does not refer to eternity. The simplest translation of “eonian life” without adding a meaning to the word “eonian” that is not contained in the word itself, would simply be “life that has to do with an age or ages”. Again, this translation/definition of “eonian life” makes perfect sense in every instance. This becomes very clear when you translate “eon” and its forms consistently throughout the New Testament. (You'll learn even more about this later in this Chapter and in Chapter 9).

OK boys and girls, who would like to raise their hand in front of all the world and claim that “eonian punishment” *must* mean “eternal punishment” when not even “eonian life” can be proven to mean “eternal life”?

I can hear the protests from “ETers”....“But...but...but... ‘Eonian life’ *must* refer to ‘eternal life’ because if it doesn't, if it only means ‘life that has to do with an age or ages’, then that means we won't get eternal life, but we'll only get life for an age or ages and then we'll die! That can't be!”

C'mon folks. Really? This is what the "logic" of the "ETers" has come down to? Simple question: If I say, "I will be alive for the next ten days" does that mean I must die when the ten days are over? No. I said nothing about what will happen *after* the 10 days. All I said was I will be alive for the next ten days. I'm making no comment one way or the other about what will happen *after* the 10 days. OK now, same question: If the Bible says "Christians (those who believe in Christ now in this age) will get life that 'has to do with' an age or ages", does that mean we must die when that age or those ages are over with? No. The Bible said nothing (when using that particular term, "eonian life") about what will happen *after* that eon or those eons being referred to. All it said (in that particular term, "eonian life") is that we will have life that has to do with an eon or eons. It's making no comment one way or the other about what will happen *after* that eon or those eons referred to in the term "eonian life".

This would be a good place to point out that the adjective "eonian" does not technically mean "lasting for an age or ages", but rather simply "having to do with an age or ages". The Young's Literal Translation often translates it "age-during", which is far more accurate than "eternal" or "everlasting", but it's still not super-accurate because "age-during" incorrectly implies that whatever is being spoken of lasts throughout the entire age. This is why the super-accuracy-focused Concordant Version refuses to translate it "age-during" but rather simply invents a new English word, "eonian", and forces us to study what that word means. The word "eonian" simply means "having something to do with an age or ages".

Again, it makes perfect sense to translate and define the term "eonian life" as "life that has something to do with an age or ages". This translation/definition also matches up perfectly with the use of "eonian" in Titus 1:2, which uses the term "eonian life" right alongside the phrase "before the times of the eons". It makes perfect sense for Titus 1:2 to talk about our hope of "eonian life - life having to do with an age or ages" (specifically the millennium and New Jerusalem age, keep reading the rest of this book) that God promised and planned "before the times of the ages (before God's plan for the ages began)".

Again, (I know I sound like a broken record), every single instance of "eon" and its forms in the NT makes perfect sense when translated as "age/ages/having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages". And again, (I know I sound like a broken record), there is absolutely no proof that any instance of "eon" and its forms in the New Testament *must* be translated as referring to eternity. We've just demonstrated that the arguments "ETers" perceive to be the two "big guns" in their arsenal on the topic of the translation of "eon", offer no proof at all that this word and its forms should be translated as referring to eternity in the key instances in question.

Of course, the Bible makes it clear we Christians will receive immortal, incorruptible bodies at the rapture (see 1 Cor. 15). So for all practical intents and purposes, yes, we will have life that will not end. An immortal body does not die. But the Bible does not use the term "eternal life" to describe our immortality, because the word "eonian" as demonstrated

by Titus 1:2 and Romans 16:25-26 does not refer to eternity. The Bible uses very specific terms to describe very specific things, especially on issues as important as this. The Greek language is a very precise language, and this is one of the reasons God chose it specifically to be the language used to transmit His Word to us in the New Testament. The Bible uses the term “immortality” to describe the fact that at the rapture we will get bodies that will not die ever again. But it uses the term “eonian life” to point out the fact that we will be alive during the next two ages (the millennium and New Jerusalem age – see Chapter 9 of this book and the rest of this chapter) while most of humanity who ever lived will be dead during those two ages. That’s their “eonian punishment”, their “punishment that has to do with or occurs during an age or ages” – they’ll be dead during those two ages.

Remember, the Bible says, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). (Notice it does *not* say, “The wages of sin is hell.” See the next chapter where you’ll learn the clear Biblical definition of death.) And let’s read the rest of the sentence: “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eonian life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This verse clearly contrasts the “eonian life” we Christians get as a reward, with the “wages of sin (death)” and “eonian punishment” that those who don’t come to the knowledge of Christ in this age will get: we Christians will be alive during the next two ages while the rest of humanity will be dead during all or most of those same two ages. Keep reading the rest of this book to learn more details about this.

Folks, I know this way of thinking (regarding detailed, specific statements in Scripture about very specific ages/eons) does not feel “normal” to a modern Christian. Modern Christians tend to think in the pagan, Catholic-inherited “everything is about eternity, eternity this, eternity that, eternity everything but the kitchen sink” mindset. This way of thinking has been reinforced in modern Christians’ minds because the translation of “eon” and its forms in the New Testament in most of the English Bibles in the bookstore is laughably and absurdly inconsistent, and frequently contains references to eternity despite the lack of any warrant or logical proof that it ought to be translated that way. The modern translators of these loosely-translated, readability-focused versions start out believing in hell and are stuck in the “everything in the Bible is about eternity” mindset before they even start translating, so the “common” translating work and the “common” pagan/Catholic-inherited mindset are a reinforcing feedback loop of error. But when you translate “eon/eons/eonian” consistently as “age/ages/having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages” as I’m teaching you to do here (because it is without doubt the most accurate and correct way to translate it into English in an understandable way without adding a meaning to the word that it does not contain within itself) you get an amazing understanding of the specifics of God’s plan for the ages outlined in the New Testament.

But this is lost on people who read an English Bible they bought at the bookstore where “eon/eons/eonian” is translated in a variety of different ways and thus have no idea that it is just this one Greek word “eon/eons/eonian” being used over and over and over again. The repeated use of this Greek word in the New Testament gives us tremendous detailed insight into God’s specific plans and the timing of specific events He has planned

in the future, but you can only get the understanding of these specific details when you translate the word accurately and consistently. And again, there is no logical reason at all not to do this. The only reason many English Bible “versions” don’t do it is because the translators artificially superimpose their preconceived Catholic-inherited “hell and eternal punishment” belief system on top of the word and give themselves permission to translate it a variety of ways, as its own antonym (even in the same sentence!), etc. when there is no logical reason or warrant to do so. Which is precisely why this chapter is so important.

Dear reader, you will never understand God’s plan for humanity and the reasoning behind it if you do not understand this chapter. If you remain stuck in the pagan/Catholic-inherited, “translate ‘eon’ a variety of different ways”, “everything in the Bible is about eternity and I have no concept of God’s specific plans and purposes for specific ages/eons in human history” mindset, you have no hope of ever truly understanding God and the reasons behind His most important decisions regarding the ultimate destiny of billions of precious people.

Here are some more pieces of information to consider on this subject:

The Testimony of Common Sense Rules of Language Regarding Adjectives, and the Fact That There Is a Plural Form of “Eon”

Dear reader, I invite you to ask any language expert in the world (ideally one that doesn’t have a doctrinal stake in the answer to this question or doesn’t realize that you’re asking the question about the Greek word “eon”) the following question:

Is it correct to say that an adjective does not carry greater force than the noun from which it is derived?

I’d be willing to bet that every unbiased language expert will answer “yes”. In other words, it is simple common sense that the word “elderly” speaks of being old because it is an adjective derived from the noun “old”. It is simple common sense that the word “weekly” speaks of something that happens every week because it is an adjective derived from the noun “week” (same with “daily”, “monthly”, “yearly”, etc.). It would be ludicrous to arbitrarily assume that we can take an adjective and attach a meaning to it that is very different than, or the opposite of, the noun from which it is derived. It would be ludicrous to arbitrarily decide that “elderly” means “young” just because we want it to. It would be ludicrous to arbitrarily decide that “weekly” no longer means “every week” but suddenly means “every year” just because we want it to. Again, this ain’t rocket science folks.

G.T. Stevenson expresses this thought on page 63 of his book *Time And Eternity*, (which I highly recommend you read):

*“Since, as we have seen, the noun *aion* refers to a period of time, it appears very improbable that the derived adjective *aionios* would indicate infinite duration, nor have we found any evidence in Greek writing to show that such a concept was expressed by this term.”*

I would not hesitate to expand upon what Stevenson said here by revising his “very improbable” to “impossible”, because “ETers” are claiming that the adjective form carries the *opposite* meaning of the noun! Let me show you what I mean.

It is very easy to prove that the Greek word “eon” means “age – a period of time that has an end”. How? Not just by showing you many instances in the New Testament when it is used where it absolutely cannot refer to endless time and absolutely must refer to a period of time with an end (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:4 which speaks of Satan as “the god of this eon”). I could also prove to you that an “eon” must have an end *simply by pointing out that there is a plural form, “eons”, that is used over and over in the New Testament.*

Think about it. If “eon” referred to time without end, there could be no plural form. “Eon” cannot mean “forever” or “eternity” because it is utterly nonsensical to speak of “forevers” or “eternities”. But there *is* a plural form of “eon” in Greek, “eons”, and it is used over and over throughout the New Testament! Obviously it makes perfect sense to speak of plural “ages”. We even use the plural form of this Greek word in English – “Hey man, I haven’t seen you in ages!” Sometimes we even use the Greek word itself! “Hey man, I haven’t seen you in eons!” Like I said, this is not rocket science. The word “eon” means “age” and the word “eons” means “ages” (at least that is the simplest way to translate it into English without adding a significantly different meaning than is contained in the word itself). It only starts to get confusing if you try to artificially superimpose pagan/Catholic-inherited nonsense on top of simple things in the Bible. There is absolutely no reason to do that when every single instance of “eon” and “eons” in the New Testament makes perfect sense when translated as “age” and “ages”. This is kindergarten stuff, really.

So because there is a plural form of “eon”, “eon” *must* refer to a period of time *with an end* – otherwise it would make no sense whatsoever for a plural form of this word to exist.

Now, if an eon/age has an end (as proven by the fact that it has a plural form), then what does its adjective form mean? An adjective *gets its meaning from the noun from which it is derived*. If you start arbitrarily adding meaning to an adjective that is not contained in the noun, you’re in nonsense land. You’re in “I’m creatively inventing stuff” land. I’m not willing to do that with the Bible. I wouldn’t dare do it to a word in any other language outside of the Bible when the stakes are so much lower, so you can bet your bottom dollar I’m not going to do it with a massively important Greek word in the Bible that is so vital to a correct understanding of the details of God’s future plans for mankind.

When we translate the adjective form of “eon”, “eonian”, as “having to do with an age or ages”, it makes perfect sense every single time it is used in Scripture. There is

absolutely no reason to take a trip to “I’m inventing stuff and breaking common sense rules of language just because I want to” land and start arbitrarily claiming that the adjective form of “eon”, “eonian”, has to refer to eternity in any instance. There is no proof whatsoever that the adjective form of “eon” ever carries a different meaning than the noun from which it is derived.

So, no one disputes that the noun “eon” is used over and over again in Scripture to refer to periods of time that cannot possibly be endless and absolutely must have an end, and there is a plural form of the noun too, further proving that the noun “eon” refers to a period of time *with an end* (it is nonsensical to speak of “eternities” or “forevers”). And no sane person would argue that an adjective contains a significantly different or opposite meaning as the noun from which it is derived. Therefore, to claim that the adjective form “eonian” carries a significantly different or opposite meaning as the noun from which it is derived would seem utterly ludicrous. The noun “eon” cannot possibly refer to endless time because it has a plural form. So how can the adjective refer to endless time? It can’t.

The Testimony of the Phrase “the Eons of the Eons”

There is a phrase, “the eons of the eons”, that is used fairly often in the New Testament. This phrase is not found in extra-Biblical Greek literature anywhere. So we have two choices as to how to figure out what that phrase means. We can either assume (in the total absence of any proof) that the Biblical writers invented this phrase as a very fancy and nonsensical way to refer to eternity, or we can deduce that because most of the New Testament authors were Jews, and the use of the construction “the greatest of a group” such as “King of kings”, “Lord of lords”, “Song of songs”, etc. is very common in Hebrew, that this same construction used in Greek, “the ages of the ages”, is a “transplant” (my term) from the Hebrew language and carries the same basic meaning – it is used to refer to the greatest of a group.

You will learn more about later in Chapter 9, but for now suffice it to say that “the ages of the ages” is a very specific term used by the New Testament authors and speakers to refer to the greatest two ages of human history that God has planned. It is used interchangeably by the New Testament authors and speakers with terms such as “the kingdom”, “the kingdom of God”, “the kingdom of heaven” (referring to the *source* of the kingdom, not its location – remember, “Your kingdom come...*on earth as it is* in heaven”), etc. to refer to Jesus future reign on earth during what we now call the millennium and the New Jerusalem. The millennium age (Rev. 19:11-20:6) and New Jerusalem age will be the greatest two ages of human history that God has planned.

And no, those two ages are *not* the end of the story of mankind. Nowhere does the Bible say that the end of the book of Revelation is the end of the story of mankind just because it happens to be the last book in the Bible. We must look at the entirety of

Scripture and put the various statements and passages together like a jigsaw puzzle in order to get the whole story of God's plan for mankind. If you slide Revelation 19:11 through the end of the book of Revelation in between verses 23 and 24 of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, you will get a decent overview of the future of mankind after the end of this age. The apostle Paul tells us very clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (and repeats it in various ways in other places in Scripture) what will happen at "the consummation" of God's plan for the ages, *after* the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, when Jesus will hand the kingdom over to God the Father. In that passage Paul says that Jesus will reign "until" the last enemy is defeated at which point Jesus will hand over the kingdom to God the Father.

So when the Bible talks about "the kingdom" it is referring to the earthly reign of Christ which will last only "until" the last enemy is defeated (1 Cor. 15:24-28), at which point Jesus will hand it over to the Father. Christ's earthly kingdom will last for two ages, "the ages of the ages", the greatest two ages of human history, the millennium and New Jerusalem age, and after that comes the "consummation" of God's plan. And as we see in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, there is a sense in which the kingdom's function as an authoritative punisher of evil will end (Jesus will hand it over to the Father when He has defeated the last enemy), but of course there is also a sense in which it will never end (because at that point God will be "all in all" and there will be no more enemies to defeat, so obviously there will be no rebellion against God and all will be in harmony with God).

My point is that if you translate and understand "the eons of the eons" as "the ages of the ages", the greatest two ages of the ages of human history God has planned, you will see that *all the statements in the Bible regarding the timeline of the future match up perfectly with each other* when you treat "the kingdom", "the kingdom of God", "the kingdom of (whose source is) heaven", and "the ages of the ages", along with references to "eonian punishment" (punishment that has to do with an age or ages, namely, being dead – "the wages of sin is death" – during all or most of the millennium age and New Jerusalem age) and "eonian life" (life that has to do with an age or ages, getting immortality early by taking part in the rapture and thus being alive during the millennium age and New Jerusalem age while most of humanity who ever lived is dead) *as interchangeable terms that refer to the millennium and New Jerusalem age*. The level of clarity you will get regarding the Bible's statements about the future plans of God for mankind when you do this is astounding. The fog of Scriptural, logical, and philosophical confusion caused by mistranslation of "eon" and its forms will disappear completely from your mind.

I should also point out that the Greek word that sometimes precedes "the ages of the ages" is not "*for* the ages of the ages", but rather would be more accurately translated "*into* the ages of the ages". Sometimes English speakers see the word "for" and they read the idea of "*only for*" into it, which leads them into the argument that "If (such-and-such) is *for* the ages of the ages, and the ages of the ages is only a finite period of time, then that would mean it would be *only for* the ages of the ages, and that doesn't make any sense, so this phrase can't refer to a finite period of time, it *must* refer to eternity!" That argument is moot, because the Greek doesn't say "*for* the ages of the ages" or "*only for* the ages of the

ages”, it says, “*into* the ages of the ages”, which obviously says nothing about what happens *after* the greatest two ages of the ages of human history.

So the phrase “*into* the ages of the ages” does not limit whatever is being talked about to *only* the ages of the ages. Similar to the term “eonian life”, the phrase “*into* the ages of the ages” says *nothing, zero, nada about what will happen after the eons being referred to* in the same way that me saying, “I’ll be alive for the next 10 days” says nothing, zero, nada about what will occur after 10 days. The argument that “the Bible sometimes ascribes glory to God for the ages of the ages, so that phrase *must* refer to eternity” simply holds no water. It is absolutely appropriate to ascribe glory to God *into* the greatest two ages of human history that God has planned (which will be the two ages when God finally begins to glorify Himself on a mass level in the eyes of humanity), without necessarily saying anything about after those two ages, just as it is absolutely appropriate for me to say, “I’m really going to enjoy the next two weeks” without commenting at all on the weeks after that.

I’ll also point out, if the Biblical authors meant “ages tumbling upon ages” or “ages upon ages”, as some people claim (in a desperate attempt to explain why the Biblical authors would use such an unusual phrase and construction to refer to endlessness or eternity), why didn’t the Biblical authors just *say* that? The word “upon” did exist in Greek and is used elsewhere in the New Testament – why not use it if that’s what they meant? Why didn’t they just say, “ages upon ages” if that’s what they meant? Why specifically say “of” instead? Again, it only makes sense if you realize that the New Testament writers had Hebrew/Jewish backgrounds, were extremely familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament), and were simply taking a very common way of referring to the greatest of a group in Hebrew that was used often in the Old Testament, “(whatever) of (whatever)”, and using that same language construction with which they were very familiar, in Greek to refer to the greatest two ages of the ages of human history that God has planned.

And if this phrase really did mean “forever and ever”, why is the word “and” not found in the Greek, but instead the word “of” is used? Is it “forever of ever”? Hmmm, that makes no sense. And why is it two plural words connected by “of”? Is it “the forevers of the forevers”? Hmmm, that’s, uh, totally nonsensical... And by the way, why would you need an extra “ever” when you’ve already got “forever”? How can you add any length of time onto “forever”? “Forever and...” what? What comes after “forever”? Oh, I guess “ever” comes after “forever”! I guess “forever” is not enough time, so you’ve got to add another “ever” onto it! Wait a minute, oh, boy, now I’m more confused than ever! Come to think of it, *none of this makes any sense. “Forever and ever” is an utterly ludicrous, laughably ridiculous translation of “into the ages of the ages”.*

C’mon folks, let’s get off the merry-go-round in crazy land. There can be no possible reason not to translate “the eons of the eons” simply as “the ages of the ages”. That translation makes perfect sense both in Greek and in English, it matches up perfectly with the way the word “eon” and its forms are used in the rest of the New Testament, and it

matches up perfectly with the other terms used throughout the New Testament to refer to the greatest two ages of human history that God has planned (the millennium age and the New Jerusalem age). I see no logical reason to translate this phrase any other way.

Anyone who wants to claim that “into the ages of the ages” *must* be translated “forever and ever” or *must* refer to eternity rather than acknowledging that it just uses the same “greatest of a group” construction common in Hebrew (which the New Testament writers were very familiar with), can have my ticket to crazy land. I’m not interested in building doctrines about the most important subject in the world off of ludicrous creatively inventive translations of phrases that make perfect sense when translated consistently with the way the word is used in the rest of the New Testament and consistent with a common language construction used often in the Old Testament (with which the New Testament writers were very familiar).

Stop me when I stop making sense.

There are a few more points I should make on this topic before we move on.

The Testimony of How Ancient Greek Writers (Outside of the Bible) Used the Word “Eon” and Its Forms

Here is another important fact outlined by G.T. Stevenson in his quote I mentioned above: *“Since, as we have seen, the noun aion refers to a period of time, it appears very improbable that the derived adjective aionios would indicate infinite duration, nor have we found any evidence in Greek writing to show that such a concept was expressed by this term.”*

Some Christians get all in a huff whenever someone tries to prove something about the Bible using evidence from outside the Bible. So let me point out that I don’t *need* to make the point I’m about to make; the Bible speaks for itself in how it consistently uses the word “eon” and its plural and adjective forms. But I’m going to make a point using evidence from outside the Bible anyway, because it further reinforces what I’m teaching you about the way the Scriptural writers used “eon” and its forms.

It would make sense for the men God inspired to write the New Testament to generally use Greek words in pretty much the same way that those Greek words were used by everybody in the Greek-speaking world at that time. If they didn’t do this, their writing could not be understood by anybody back then! Just like I’m using English words in this book that every English speaker understands. If I suddenly started using certain English words in a different way than everybody in English culture at this time in history is accustomed to, I’d confuse everybody, and I couldn’t be understood properly by my audience. That’s why I use English words the way I know everybody else uses them, at this time in history in the English speaking world.

Now, as we've seen, the New Testament writers could, in rare instances, take a Hebrew construction such as "the (whatever) of the (whatever)" ("King of kings", "song of songs", etc.) and transplant such a common Hebrew construction into Greek, and because of the Hebrew/Jewish heritage of the new Christian church, everybody in Christianity would pretty much understand it at that time in history without any trouble. But there is no evidence that the New Testament writers artificially transplanted the idea of eternity or endlessness into their use of the word "eon" and its forms, from the Old Testament or from anywhere else. (Obviously, they could not artificially transplant such an idea from the Hebrew Old Testament, because as we've seen, no Hebrew words that convey endlessness and eternity are found in the Old Testament.)

So how did Greek writers outside of the Bible, around the time the New Testament was written, use the Greek word "eon" and its forms?

Let's start by fast-forwarding from Bible times to the sixteenth century, when a guy named Phavorinus pointed out the fact that it was *theologians* who imparted the idea of eternity or endlessness to the word "eon", rather than that idea being contained in the word itself as it was commonly understood in Greek. He said, "*Aiōn*, time, also [by association] life, also habit, or way of life. *Aiōn* is also the eternal and the endless as it seems to the theologian.' Scholar Ezra S. Goodwin stated in regards to this,

"Here I strongly suspect is the true secret brought to light of the origin of the sense of eternity in *aiōn*. The theologian first thought he perceived it, or else he placed it there. The theologian keeps it there, now... Hence it is that those lexicographers who assign eternity as one of the meanings of *aiōn* uniformly appeal for proofs to either theological Hebrew or Rabbinical Greek, or some species of Greek subsequent to the age of the Seventy, if not subsequent to the age of the apostles, so far as I can ascertain."

In other words, the evidence shows that it was theologians who were *not very familiar with Greek* who first started claiming that "eon" and its forms sometimes refer to eternity, and the meaning of eternity or endlessness was not found in the word as it was commonly used in Greek *until* the theologians whose primarily language was Latin started artificially adding that meaning to it.

J.W. Hanson, in talking about scholar Ezra S. Goodwin, said that Goodwin "patiently and candidly traced this word through the Classics, finding the noun frequently in nearly all the writers, but not meeting the adjective until Plato, its [apparent] inventor, used it. [Goodwin] states, as the result of his protracted and exhaustive examination from the beginning down to Plato, 'We have the whole evidence of seven Greek writers, extending through about six centuries, down to the age of Plato, who make use of *aiōn*, in common with other words; and no one of them ever employs it in the sense of eternity.' It is preposterous to say that the Seventy would render the Hebrew *olam* by the Greek *aiōn* and give to the latter (1) a different meaning from that of the former, or (2) a different meaning

from *aiōn* in the current Greek literature. It is self-evident, then, that *aiōn* in the Old Testament means exactly what *olam* means, and also what *aiōn* means in the Greek Classics. Indefinite duration is the sense of *olam*, and it is equally clear that *aiōn* has a similar signification... I do not know of an instance in which any lexicographer has produced the usage of ancient classical Greek in evidence that *aiōn* means eternity. Ancient classical Greek rejects it altogether. Thus it appears that when the Seventy began their work of giving the world a version of the Old Testament that should convey the sense of the Hebrew Bible, they must have used *aiōn* in the sense in which it was then used. Endless duration is not the meaning the word had in Greek literature at that time. Therefore the word cannot have that meaning in Old Testament Greek. Nothing can be plainer than that Greek literature at the time the Old Testament was rendered into the Greek Septuagint did not give to *aiōn* the meaning of endless duration.”

Don't be confused by the term “Old Testament Greek” in the quote above. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but the quote above is referring to the Septuagint, which was a translation of the Old Testament into Greek around the 2nd century B.C. “The Seventy” in the quote above refers to the legendary seventy Jewish scholars that completed the translation. The quote above is correctly pointing out that the Greek word “eon” and its forms were used to translate the Hebrew “olam” in the Septuagint. So let's revisit the conclusion of the quote above: **“Nothing can be plainer than that Greek literature at the time the Old Testament was rendered into the Greek Septuagint did not give to *aiōn* the meaning of endless duration.”**

Dr. Marvin Vincent tells us in *Word Studies of the New Testament* (note that he refers to the Septuagint as “the LXX”): “The adjective *aionios* in like manner carries the idea of time. Neither the noun nor the adjective in themselves carries the sense of ‘endless’ or ‘everlasting.’ *Aionios* means enduring through or pertaining to a period of time. Out of the 150 instances in the LXX, four-fifths imply limited duration.”

So if the Greek language did not ascribe the meaning of endless duration to “eon” and its forms around the 2nd century B.C., then in order to claim that “eon” and its forms as used in the New Testament refer to endless duration, you'd either have to claim that it suddenly began to be used that way in Greek culture at large during the two hundred years or so after the Septuagint was translated, or that the Biblical writers suddenly began using the word in their writings in a very different way than the language and culture around them used it. And there is simply no evidence of any such thing. In fact, the evidence shows the opposite. Let's look at some of it.

Herodian was a Greek living in Rome who wrote a book in Greek called *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus*. He lived from about 170 to about 240 A.D. In his writing he talked about the periodic games held in Rome as “eonian” games. In Latin they were referred to as “secular” games. They were obviously not “eternal” games. The meaning both the Latin word “secular” and the Greek word “eonian” used by Herodian obviously sought to convey was that they were “periodic” games, in the same sense as our modern

Olympic Games. (The Latin word for “secular” could also sometimes carry a meaning that has to do somewhat with “world”, and this is why you sometimes see the Greek word “eon” translated as “world” in your English Bible that you bought in the bookstore. The Greek word “eon” always has to do with a period of time and does not carry the meaning of “world” at all, but when the Bible was translated into Latin in the Middle Ages, these Latin translations and the ideas they helped birth still strongly affect Christianity to this day, so modern translators are affected by that Latin word for “secular” when they give themselves permission to translate “eon” incorrectly as “world”, for example in 2 Corinthians 4:4. A major key to understanding God’s Word correctly is to ignore the Latin translations and the dubious theology they helped give birth/credence to in the Middle Ages, and instead go directly back to common sense based translation of the Greek.)

A writing called *Apostolical Constitutions* from the 4th century A.D. says, “And let this be to you an eonian ordinance until the consummation of the eon.” To claim that the word “eonian” here is referring to eternity or endlessness would obviously be absurd because the “eonian ordinance” only lasts “*until* the consummation of the eon”. The eon being referred to clearly has an end, and the “eonian” ordinance *ends* along with the eon.

Saint Chrysostom (late 4th century) stated as part of his homily on Ephesians 2:1-3 that "Satan's kingdom is eonian; that is, it will cease with the present world."

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (late 4th century) used the term “an eonian interval”. Obviously it would make no sense to call an interval “eternal” or “endless”.

Josephus, who lived in the first century A.D., used the word “eonian” to talk about periods of time such as the imprisonment of a man by the Romans (the imprisonment obviously did not last forever), the period of time between when God gave Moses the law to his own writing (obviously not an “endless” or “eternal” period of time), and the time which Herod’s temple stood (the temple had been destroyed by the time Josephus was writing). This shows us that the word “eonian” was normally used to refer to finite periods of time in the first century A.D.

Over and over again we see that both in Scripture and in Greek literature surrounding the time when the Bible was written, we would enter into the realm of the absurd and unproven if we claimed that “eon” and its forms referred to eternity or endless time, while if we just stick to the basic definition of the word (“a span of time”, “a period of time”, or more simply for New Testament translation purposes, “an age”), every use of “eon” and its forms both in the New Testament and extra-Biblical Greek writing makes sense without any language gymnastics or logic gymnastics required.

In *Christian Words* Dr. Nigel Turner says, “All the way through it is never feasible to understand *aiionios* (eonian) as everlasting.”

Alexander Thomson, who spent many decades studying the original languages of the Bible, said in *Whence Eternity?* (highly recommended reading),

“The inspired Scriptures never speak of eternity. They describe nothing as eternal. *They contain no term which in itself bears our time sense of everlasting.* As eternity is not a subject of revelation, our present object is to discover how and when this unscriptural term gained entrance into theology, with most disastrous results...It may be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the more one explores into the early centuries of Christendom, the clearer does it become that *a corrupt theology was alone responsible for displacing the teaching regarding the eons by a dogma respecting ‘eternity’...*”

“Eternal is one of the many hundreds of words which gained entrance into English during the Renaissance. Previous to that time, it was completely unknown (in English). No such word appears in any old English scriptures. Instead of it, there is found a simple little word with the meaning of eonian, or something like that, spelt ece, of which more will be said later. In fact, it may be laid down as a rule that no language had, for some time after the first century A.D., any term to denote eternity.”

“Some of the following facts may at first sight seem somewhat startling, yet that is because they are not widely known. *Had the old English Bibles been translated direct out of the Greek, instead of from the Latin Vulgate Version of Jerome (380 A.D.), it is very probable that the word eternal would never have been found in our modern Bibles and theological terminology at all.* But for the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 A.D., which brought many French words into the English language (and French is largely decayed and corrupt Latin), and drove out many native English words, *we should most probably now be using not eternal, but ece, the old equivalent of eonian.* On the other hand, had the sack of Constantinople by hordes of Turks from Asia taken place prior to the Norman Conquest, instead of in 1453, the likelihood is that *we should have had the Greek term eonian incorporated into English, instead of the Latin eternal.*”

Thomson then goes on to explain how a man named Jerome set out to create a Latin version of the Bible which was actually a revision of previous Latin versions:

“Upon Jerome fell the arduous task of attempting to bring about harmony out of this confusion, and the outcome was his version of the Latin scriptures which in after times, from the thirteenth century onwards, was known as the ‘Vulgate.’...This was the Bible which was to dominate most of Christendom for a thousand years, right up to the Reformation. Jerome, however, in his revision, while correcting obvious errors and setting right what seemed to be bad Latin, was very conservative otherwise. Many expressions he left as he found them. Whatever may have been his own views regarding the future, he does not appear to have revised two Latin words, fraught with profound significance, which he found in the old version. These are both words used to render the Greek word eon...Sometimes, as we shall see, the Greek *αιων* (eon) was rendered by one of these two Latin words, and sometimes by the other. Not only so, but when the Greek shows the word eon twice or thrice in one clause (as in ‘for the eon, and for the eon of the eon’), the Latin

frequently shows both *aeternus* and *seculum*. This alone ought to be sufficient to prove that the two Latin words could have the same meaning, more or less, and it will be our present purpose to demonstrate that originally the two words differed little in meaning, but that theology, chiefly through the dominating influence of one man, imparted to *aeternus* a nuance alien to its derivation and original usage...

“The old Latin writers used *aeternum* in the same sense as Greek writers used *aionion*, as meaning eonian...As the word eon is really a transliteration of the Greek *aion*, its nearest English equivalent may be found in the word ‘age.’ The origin of this word is very interesting. It traces its descent back to the Latin *aevum*, which is the equivalent of the Greek *aion*. *Aevum* produced *aevitas*, which became shortened to *aetas*. From this was formed another form, *aetaticum*, a Low Latin term. In France this was slurred into *edage*, then into *aage*, which arrived in England as *age*. How then, did the Latin *aeternum* and the Greek *aionion*, which both originally referred to that which is eonian, come to signify ‘eternal’ in our modern sense? There is no doubt that these words have been ‘made to express’ what is eternal, the instrument in every case being theology.”

Thomson later tells us, “The Latin Vulgate version dominated Europe for the thousand years which lay between Jerome and Wiclif (Wycliff), and longer. No one seems to have thought in those times of a Greek original, and in any case, the Greek language was all but forgotten in Europe. The Catholic Church used Latin in its services, and Latin had displaced Greek completely as the universal language of courts and clergy and scholars.”

But while the ancient Greek in which the New Testament was written remained in use, the meaning of the word “eon/eons/eonian” was clear. Thomson describes an instructive event in the year 544 when Emperor Justinian gathered together a local council to suppress certain doctrines: “In particular, he wished it made very plain that the life of the saints was to be everlasting, and that the doom of the lost was to be likewise. Yet he did not argue that the word eonian meant everlasting. Nor did he claim that the word eonian had hitherto been misunderstood. In setting forth the orthodox position of the Church of that time, he did not say, ‘We believe in *eonian* punishment,’ as this was exactly what Origen, three hundred years before, had maintained and believed. In fact, Origen, who exulted in the truth of the reconciliation of the universe, definitely used the word eonian with reference to fire and doom as meaning a limited time. But writing in the very expressive Greek language, Justinian says, ‘The holy church of Christ teaches an *endless eonian* (*ateleuteetos αιωνιος*) life for the just, and *endless* (*ateleuteetos*) punishment for the wicked.’ Justinian knew quite well that by itself eonian did not signify endless, and he therefore added a word the meaning of which is quite unequivocal, a word not found in the Scriptures. This letter of Justinian, which is still in existence, ought to convince anyone who is in doubt, regarding the true scriptural meaning of the word eonian. It may be added, that the Council, though expressly convened in order to stigmatize the teachings of Origen, one of which was that punishment was only temporary, condemned his views generally, but did not anathematize his teaching regarding the reconciliation of all.”

Thomson concludes that the concept of eternity, eternal punishment, and the idea that the Bible constantly talks about eternity (when in reality it doesn't talk about it directly at all) came to dominate Christian thinking through a combination of confusion caused by the Latin translation of "eon" and its forms, and theological creativity (my term for the theology of Tertullian and Augustine – keep reading for more info on these two – based on creatively bad translation/understanding of "eon"). He says, "It is to the Latin versions that we must look for the origin of the pernicious system, or rather lack of system, of giving to the Greek eon two diverse meanings," and, "A corrupt theology was alone responsible for displacing the teaching regarding the eons by a dogma respecting 'eternity.'"

Dr. F.W. Farrar says in his book *Mercy and Judgment*, "Since *aion* meant 'age,' *aionios* (eonian) means, properly, 'belonging to an age'... and anyone who asserts that it must mean 'endless' defends a position which even Augustine practically abandoned twelve centuries ago."

Dr Farrar's mention of Augustine leads me nicely into the next point. When did "Christianity" actually start believing in this "eternal" punishment thing?

Tertullian and Augustine: Two Men Weak In Greek Jumpstart the Inaccuracy and Insanity Train In Regards To God's Plan For Mankind

Tertullian was the first major "Author of Confusion" in regards to the Bible's teaching regarding God's ultimate plan for mankind. He lived from about 160 to 220 A.D., and as Thomson puts it, "He was the first one to set about systematically to explain the Scriptures in the Latin tongue of North Africa, and the first theologian to establish a technical Latin terminology for Christianity. It is no exaggeration to say that the choice of terms of this Latin scholar has profoundly affected all succeeding theological thought. It is to Tertullian that we owe such terms as trinity, substance, person, redemption, justification, sanctification, sacrament, and many more, including probably such as perdition, perish, destroy, punish, torment, damnation, dispensation, predestination, revelation, priest, mediator, minister, congregation, propitiation - all terms from the Latin, although it is possible some of these may be due to Jerome."

In a moment we'll talk about Augustine, "Author of Confusion #2", who took Tertullian's ideas and put them on steroids. But first let's talk about Tertullian and the man that we may think of as the Ali to Tertullian's Frazier in a theological sense, Origen. Across the ring from Tertullian, living at about the same time, we have Origen. Thomson says it this way: "What Origen was, about the same period, to Greek or Eastern Christianity, Tertullian was to Latin or Western Christianity."

So let's set the stage. Origen was a native Greek speaker who was reading the New Testament in its original language. Tertullian was a Latin speaker who did not know Greek

very well, as we see from the following quote about him taken from the Catholic Resource Network's *Dawson Newsletter*, Spring 1994 (my emphasis added):

“An advocate; conversant with the Roman law, possessing also a rich fund of knowledge, *he lacked the thorough grammatical training* of his successor (Cyprian). Notwithstanding this lack - perhaps in part *because of it, since a thorough Greek training might have cost him something of his native vigor of expression* - he had for his task *to create much of the language for those spiritual truths which were then new to the Latin tongue*. He had also to formulate the requirements of Christianity upon the conduct of men *in terms suited to that legal bias which characterized the Roman social and political fabric.*”

The above quote ought to be required reading for every modern Christian. Here we see that Tertullian, possibly the most influential “thought leader” in Christian history since the times in which the Bible was written (at least in the centuries that followed him – in his own day he apparently did not have more influence than Origen as you’ll see later), did not have thorough grammatical training in Greek! This is the man who created (invented and/or expressed in Latin) terminology, theological terms (ways of talking about God) that would dominate the thinking of “Christianity” for hundreds of years (even to today)! This is the man who had for his task to create much of the language for those spiritual “truths” (excuse me while I cough) which were then new to the Latin tongue! I’m not saying everything Tertullian taught was absolutely wrong, but that his creativity with the Latin language to talk about God and the theological ideas that language creativity gave birth to, should not have been so blindly followed by centuries of theologians since the dark ages.

It’s also extremely important to note in the quote above that Tertullian was very familiar with legal terms and thought with the “legal bias” of Roman society (some say he may have been a lawyer because of the prominence it has in his writings, others say it merely demonstrates his focus on the “legal bias” of Roman society at that time), and he set out “to formulate the requirements of Christianity upon the conduct of men in terms suited to that legal bias which characterized the Roman social and political fabric.” This is an extremely important point. Tertullian thought like a lawyer, and the entire Roman “social and political fabric” was characterized by a “legal bias” or a mindset that focused very much on thinking about everything in legal terms. And it is through this lens that Tertullian sought to understand and explain God.

It’s so important to note these vital facts about Tertullian, because the implications are massive. It is well known amongst those who have studied Tertullian that he often used Latin terminology and words in a way that they were not used commonly at the time, and even invented Latin words, in his attempts to express his ideas about Christianity and the Bible. The problem is, *he did not have thorough grammatical training in Greek, and his mindset was heavily influenced by the “legal bias” that was the “social and political fabric” of Roman society at that time*. So we’ve got a guy who doesn’t have a great grasp of the original language of the New Testament (or the Old Testament either for that matter), who is thinking through a “filter”

or a “lens” through which he sees the world that is heavily focused on law, and superimposing that “legal bias” upon Scripture, *inventing words and terms to talk about God and His plan for mankind etc. etc. that would eventually become the standard way Christians think about God for centuries afterwards*. Talk about a recipe for “missing the boat” regarding God’s character. And that’s exactly what Christianity ended up doing (because it later ended up largely following Tertullian’s way of thinking and the terminology he used to describe Christian concepts).

The following quote from *The Fathers of the Third Century* by Rev. George A. Jackson expresses the extent to which Tertullian was creative in the terminology he used about God (emphasis added):

“But what Latin it was that Tertullian *suddenly dared* to write! It was *without precedent in the literary field*... a language which accordingly is *filled with loanwords and new coinage* to describe the new facts and ideas of the Christian daily life. It observes and adopts at the same time even in grammatical details the language actually spoken by the society of Carthage (Latin), and by the people whom Tertullian knew, observed and sought out. But *above all it was Tertullian's own language*, an expression of *his violent creative power*...”

Here’s another quote about Tertullian from *The Fathers of the Latin Church* by Hans Von Campenhausen (emphasis added):

“Nothing could be more unlike the style and thought and temperament of his great contemporaries at Alexandria - Clement and Origen. They wrote as Greek intellectuals... He wrote as a Roman to Romans, as a citizen to citizens, *as a lawyer to lawyers*. Although his *strange, difficult, baroque style has always been a scandal to the purists and has caused him to be treated as a kind of outlaw by the conventional literary historians*, his Latin was a living tongue and *he did more than any other writer to create the language of the Church*.”

What’s interesting is that a lot of these people that talk like this about Tertullian seem to be enthralled with the fact that he “did more than any other writer to create the language of the church.” I’m horrified by it! Folks, if you can’t see the danger of a guy who doesn’t have a great grasp of Greek (or Hebrew) using his “creative power” to “suddenly dare” to write in a way that was “without precedent in the literary field” using language “filled with loanwords and new coinage” (invented words and terms) to talk about God, I don’t know what to tell you. It gives me the creepy crawlies just to think about how the world’s perception of God’s plans and character and nature eventually ended up being defined for hundreds and hundreds of years by a guy like this *who didn't have a solid grasp of Greek* and was *purposefully creative* in his Latin terminology and by extension in his theology. Let’s look at the result, as expressed by Mr. Thomson in *Whence Eternity?* (emphasis added):

“Up till his time Roman Christianity had been essentially Greek in form, but when he embraced it, *Latin terms and thoughts were introduced, which gradually but steadily altered the whole*

character of its teaching, and paved the way for the Roman Catholic system of dogma. Dr. Swete says, 'The Church in North Africa was the first Christian community so far as we know which offered the Eucharist for the benefit of the departed.' One of the terms introduced by Tertullian was 'satisfaction.' Harnack says, 'He was the first to regard definitely such ascetic performances as "satisfaction" as propitiatory offerings by which the sinner could make amends to God.' According to Tertullian, a comparatively brief ascetic punishment inflicted by the believer on himself took the place of what the damned were awarded - eternal punishment."

So we see that with Tertullian originated the idea that the Christian could inflict some type of punishment on himself now so as to make his experience in the next life better. Fast forward to the Reformation and this was the kind of thing (crawling up and down stairs on your knees to do penance for your sin, etc.) that Martin Luther had to take a stand against. Obviously this idea of doing penance or "satisfaction" as Tertullian called it, is not in Scripture anywhere. Christ's work on the cross alone paid the price for sin. As we can see, Tertullian was not just being creative with the language he was using, he was being creative theologically (making up ideas not found in Scripture due to his strong "legal bias.") Modern Protestant Christianity has filtered out some of these creative theological inventions (and/or borrowings from paganism) largely due to Luther and the Reformation, but as a whole modern Christians still have "default mindsets" that in many ways can be traced back to Tertullian's creativity with Latin to express his creativity with doctrine. The primary example of this, of course, is "eternal" punishment.

Now lets compare Tertullian's knowledge of the original language of the New Testament, his mindset, and his teachings, to that of Origen. Origen was a native Greek speaker who believed that eventually God would reconcile all humanity to Himself. He was reading the New Testament in its original language, and as a native Greek speaker he obviously understood the Greek words and what they meant much better, much more naturally, and much more accurately than someone like Tertullian who "did not have thorough grammatical training" in Greek. Right off the bat, *based on that fact alone*, you'd almost have to lean towards Origen's understanding of God as opposed to Tertullian's. Thomson expresses the differences between the mindsets of Origen and Tertullian (emphasis contained in original):

"Being well trained in Roman law he (Tertullian) looked on God much more as the Judge who gives the law and must be obeyed, than as the Father of all. All relations between God and man partake of the nature of legal transactions, and thus a good act by man brings satisfaction to God and merit to man. But the fundamental relationship is that of fear on man's part. The great difference between the Greek Church and the Latin Church consisted in this, that the Greek Church looked upon revelation as expressing *God in His relation to man*, while the Latin Church began with man, and saw primarily *man as in relation to God*. God's measureless love and grace were viewed as at the disposal of man, or man was viewed as the fallen and guilty rebel measured up before the Judge."

We see here that it was due to Tertullian's "legal bias" that Christianity ended up thinking that God's hatred for sin is more powerful than His love and ability to save humanity. This idea could be expressed as, "God created humanity despite the fact that He knew they'd be rebels that He could not save, and despite the fact that He knew His hatred of sin would be unlimited while His love for them and power to save them would be limited." It could also be expressed as thinking of God more as a Judge who hates sin to the point that His punishment is vindictive and cruel than as a Father who loves people and is capable of correcting and teaching them through righteous judgment. Or we could be blunt and just say it like it is: *Tertullian originated the idea of God as a monster*. Only a monster would bring billions of people into existence knowing beforehand that for most of them the sum total of their experience would be a few decades of difficult life followed by eternal torture. Only a monster would bring these billions of precious people into existence knowing that His hatred for their sin would be greater than His love for them and His ability to save and convince them, to the point where He would be forced to torture them eternally.

In my opinion (as you'll see in the rest of this book), Scripture is absolutely clear that God is both a Judge and loving Father, but, if you'll permit me to say it this way, the "loving Father" part of Him is more powerful than the "Judge" part of Him. (Which is why the apostle Paul said things like "Mercy triumphs over judgment" and "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more" – statements I could never understand or fully embrace when I previously believed in hell.) Or I could say perhaps more accurately that the "Judge" aspect of God has been twisted in Christianity's view due to this "eternal" punishment and "hell" mistranslation nonsense and Tertullian's "legal bias", to the point where Christianity is asking people to believe that God's idea of "justice" is eternal torture. Whereas Origen's idea of God's justice was that His judgments have an instructive and corrective purpose. Again, it all hinges on whether you give yourself permission to translate and think of "eon" and its forms as having to do with eternity, like Tertullian and Augustine, who did not know Greek very well, did. Thomson says it this way:

"The one (Origen) commenced with God and His love, operating all things in accord with the counsel of His will from past ages for the ultimate good of the race, ever seeking to draw man to Himself and instruct him with a view to his well-being and growth in grace." (Note: This is because, as a native Greek speaker, Origen naturally understood the correct meaning of "eon" and its forms.) "The other (Tertullian) saw man as on probation, and God as the magistrate. Instead of men being gradually instructed in the ways and mind of God..." (the understanding one gets about God's plan for the ages when consistently translating "eon/eons/eonian" as "age/ages/having-to-do-with-an-age-or-ages") "...they must subscribe without question or discussion to the Creed, the rigid and crystallized expression of the Latin Church's views." (Get with the program now in this first life on earth, or face "eternal" punishment, the impression one gets when taking the creative liberty to think of "eon" and its forms as having to do with eternity.) "As Farrar says, the centre of Origen's system was God and hope, while that of Augustine's was punishment and sin; whereas Origen yearns for a final unity, Augustine almost exultingly acquiesces in a frightful and abiding dualism."

So we see that it is from Tertullian and Augustine that Middle Ages Catholicism (and much of modern Christianity) got this idea that mankind's sin is soooooo bad that God just can't handle it, it drives Him crazy and He cannot tolerate it to the point where He is so angry about it that He is forced to sentence people to eternal burning and screaming in order to satiate His need and passionate desire to punish it.

Augustine brought this "dualism" idea, the mindset that life is a battle between good and evil where evil is just as strong or stronger than good and just as strong or stronger than God, from the Manichaeism that he was a part of before converting to Christianity. In my opinion the Bible does *not* teach this idea of dualism, but rather teaches that God is and has always been and always will be stronger than evil. (For example see the apostle Paul's astounding statements in places like Romans 8:20-21 and 11:32! Again, this is why the apostle Paul could say things like "Mercy triumphs over judgment" and "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more" which make no sense – you catch yourself saying "That's not true" – if you hold to a dualistic "God is losing the battle against evil" viewpoint. There are many statements in the Bible that only make sense when *we get rid of Augustinian's dualism and Tertullian's mindset (due to their poor understanding of Greek and the strong influence of cultural and religious pagan mindsets outside of the Bible on their thinking)* that "God is more of a sin-hating Judge than an all-powerful Father with a wise plan to eventually convince all humanity of His goodness" and *return to the apostle Paul's original teaching (grasped at a basic level by Origen and Clement due to their accurate understanding of Greek)* that God is an all-powerful God who is using instructional judgments at various perfectly placed times during His plan for the ages to eventually reconcile all humanity to Himself by convincing them with the testimony of history that the Designer's design for life is best."

So as you can see, the demarcation between belief in a loving, all-powerful Father with a plan and the ability to eventually reconcile all men to Himself, and the belief in a ridiculously harsh Judge that says "get with the program now before you die (even though most of you never even heard the gospel preached, and your lifetimes vary greatly in length and circumstances), or you will suffer eternally", occurred fairly early in church history, and the line was drawn between those who were native Greek speakers (Origen and Clement) and those who were ignorant of Greek and took linguistic freedom with the Latin and parlayed this into theological creative freedom (Tertullian and Augustine). Thomson continues,

"It was reserved for three great Carthaginians, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, so to influence the Latin Church that it deflected and declined into a system of dogmatic hierarchy and spiritual despotism. But Tertullian was the individual who set this current in motion. Through his powerful instrumentality Christendom, at the critical juncture, took the wrong turn, and his influence still prevails. Neander says of him, that his mind was often at a loss for suitable forms of phraseology, as he had more within him than he could express, and for this purpose he was obliged to create a language for the new spiritual matter, out of the rude Punic Latin. It has been said that Tertullian often makes use of

words not found in general use outside of the very early writers, and that he often imparts to words a new or unusual force.

“This, then, is the man in the hollow of whose hands lay the clay which was to be moulded into concrete Latin dogma. This is the man in whose hands reclined the fate of the word *eternal*.”

Please note above that when Thomson says, “Through (Tertullian’s) powerful instrumentality, Christendom, at the critical juncture, took the wrong turn”, he is knowledgeable enough of church history to know that it is not as if all of Christianity immediately followed Tertullian’s ideas rather than Origen’s. As we’ll see, Origen’s ideas about God’s plan for mankind were still very common and even the majority view for quite a while after his and Tertullian’s time. Thomson is merely pointing out that Tertullian was “the man in whose hands (eventually) reclined the fate of the word *eternal*” (due to choices future generations made to go with Tertullian’s outlook on this issue rather than Origen’s).

So now that we’ve watched the highlights of the “Ali vs. Frazier” fight of Christian ideas about God’s plan for mankind in relatively early church history, “Origen vs. Tertullian”, enter stage right, “Author of Confusion” #2, Augustine. I believe Ali should have won this fight for the minds of Christians down through the years, but largely because of Augustine, in the long run Frazier ended up winning it, causing massive confusion about God for centuries afterwards. (This book is my most valiant attempt to clear up that confusion.)

Augustine lived from the year 354 to 430, and was the first major figure in church history to take Tertullian’s creative Latin translations/terminology/ideas and put them on steroids to powerfully advance the idea of “eternal” punishment in a very influential way. He took Tertullian’s theological ideas, many of which were based on Latin terms that often did not accurately or adequately communicate the meaning of the Greek, and ramped them up. Augustine was not reading the Bible in its original languages, but in Latin, and he freely admitted, “I know but little Greek.” Of course it is no surprise that the second major figure in church history to give a major push to the doctrine of “eternal” punishment, like his ideological forefather Tertullian, did not have a very solid grasp of Greek. (Also keep in mind he and Tertullian did not have access to nearly the multitude of Bible study tools, concordances, scholarly works, etc. that we have access to today at the click of a few computer keys, through which people that are not Greek experts can learn what many different scholars say about key Greek words, and more importantly, easily study each instance of how any Greek word is used in Scripture.)

It’s also very important to point out that Tertullian’s and Augustine’s views were not the only view, or even the majority view, amongst Christians during Christianity’s first several hundred years. Of course Origen, who was very influential, did not believe in eternal punishment, and he lived at about the same time as Tertullian lived. And even Augustine

himself made it clear that during his time “very many” Christians did not believe in “endless torments”. Charles Pridgeon, president and founder of the Pittsburgh Bible Institute, quotes Augustine in *Encheirid. ad Laurent*, c. 29 (emphasis added): “There are *very many* in our day, who though not denying the Holy Scriptures, *do not believe in endless torments.*”

I will quote Pridgeon in a moment regarding his conclusions about the common beliefs of the early church on the topic of God’s ultimate plan for mankind. But first of all, let’s note that Augustine said there were very many Christians in his day who did not believe in “endless torments” but still embraced the Holy Scriptures. This is a far cry from many Christians today who will give birth to a cow and start using words like “cult” or “heresy” if they hear anyone dare to assert that hell is not in the Bible. Augustine’s view was obviously not commonly accepted by much of Christianity back then, because he himself stated there were “very many” Christians who took Bible very seriously but did not believe in “endless torments”.

So according to Augustine himself, even as late as the 4th and early 5th century there were “very many” Christians who believed the Bible to be the inspired Word of God but did not believe in eternal punishment. Let’s look at some other historical evidence from around that time and earlier, to see if eternal punishment was the typical, normal, or standard belief among Christians.

Christianity’s Beliefs About God’s Ultimate Plan For Mankind During Its First Several Centuries

The four great General Councils of the first four centuries, held in Nice (325 A.D.), Constantinople (381 A.D.), Ephesus (431 A.D.), and Chalcedon (451 A.D.), did not condemn universalism (the belief that God has a good plan for all mankind eventually), or mention it at all, even though according to Augustine (and much other historical evidence) it was a common view (or the most common view – see further evidence below) amongst Christians in those days. Nor did these councils give official statements of any kind regarding hell or eternal punishment. *It is unthinkable that these councils, convened to decide on what normal/standard Christian beliefs should be, would say not one word about hell or eternal punishment – by far the most important subject in the world and in the Bible – if they believed it.* For example, the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. made a big hullabaloo about the doctrine of the trinity but ignored the issue of God’s ultimate plan for mankind. Considering that there were “very many” Christians in those days that did not believe in “endless torments”, wouldn’t you think that if these people who did not believe in eternal punishment were considered dangerous heretics, it would be far more vital for a council of Christian leaders to condemn them rather than making a big fuss over far less practical issues like the trinity?

Not to mention that the earliest Christian creeds, such as the Apostle’s Creed, do not say a single word about hell, eternal punishment, “endless torments” or any such thing, nor

do they say a single word against universalism (the belief that God has a good plan for everybody in the end). It is unthinkable that all these councils and early Christian creeds would have left out such a massively important point of doctrine as hell and eternal punishment if they believed it. Think about it folks. If hell and eternal punishment were realities, it would be *the single most important thing for all Christians and all Christian preachers to talk about and preach about at all times and make clear in all doctrinal statements*. If most Christians during the first few centuries A.D. believed these doctrines and considered those who didn't believe them to be heretics, then these early creeds and major church councils would surely have mentioned the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment and would have surely gone out of their way to condemn universalists rather than prattling on about far less important issues.

Dear reader, I hesitate to use the beliefs of the early church during the first few hundred years of its existence as “proof” of any particular teaching on Bible topics, because it is clear from the apostle Paul’s writings in Scripture itself that even as he was writing two-thirds of the New Testament, he was already having to fight off all sorts of false ideas creeping in to the church and being combined with Christianity! So if Paul was having to fight off errors even as he was writing Scripture, it is obvious that quoting anything other than Scripture itself as “proof” of any particular doctrine is shaky ground. So I do not mention historical evidence as “proof” of anything, but rather to show that some modern Christians’ attitude of treating anyone who does not believe in hell as a heretic, was not the attitude of Christianity during its first few hundred years. I do think it is instructive to point out that the historical evidence shows – as stated by Augustine himself – it was very normal even as late as the 4th and 5th century for Bible-believing Christians to not believe in “endless torments”.

Historical evidence shows that universalism (the belief that God will eventually reconcile all humanity to Himself) found little or no resistance in the first four hundred years of Christianity, and it may very well have been the majority view. We talked about Origen (late 2nd century to early 3rd century A.D.) who, along with another influential believer named Clement, was one of the most eminent and influential Christians in early church history, and was an outspoken universalist. Scholar J.W. Hanson (in his book that I recommend at the end of this book) concludes regarding his extensive research of Origen and the beliefs of the early church regarding God’s ultimate plan for mankind:

“Now let the reader recapitulate: (1) Origen during his life-time was never opposed for his Universalism; (2) after his death Methodius, about A.D. 300, attacked his views of the resurrection, creation and pre-existence, but said not a word against his Universalism; (3) ten years later Pamphilus and Eusebius (A.D. 310) defended him against nine charges that had been brought against his views, but his Universalism was not among them; (4) in 330 Marcellus of Ancyra, a Universalist, opposed him for his views of the Trinity, and (5) Eustathius for his teachings concerning the Witch of Endor, but limited their arraignment to those items; (6) in 376 Epiphanius assailed his heresies, but he did not name Universalism as among them... (7) in 399 and 401, (certain of) his views... were attacked by

Epiphanius, Jerome and Theophilus, and his advocacy of the subordination of Christ to God was condemned, but not his teachings of man's universal salvation; and (8) it was not till 544 and again in 553 that his enemies formulated attacks on that doctrine, and made a cat's-paw of a half-heathen Emperor, and even then, though the latter framed a canon for the synod, it was never adopted, and the council adjourned - owing, it must have been, to the Universalistic sentiment in it - without a word of condemnation of Origen's Universalism. With the exception of Augustine, the doctrine which had been constantly advocated, often by the most eminent, did not evoke a frown of opposition from any eminent scholar or saint.”

Hanson also wrote concerning Augustine's influence on Christianity (I have underlined certain portions): “Augustine brought his theology with him from Manichæism when he became a Christian, only he added perpetuity to the dualism that Mani made temporal. The doctrine of endless punishment assumed in the writings of Augustine a prominence and rigidity which had no parallel in the earlier history of theology...

“Augustine assumed and insisted that the words defining the duration of punishment, in the New Testament, teach its endlessness, and the claim set up by Augustine is the one still held by the advocates of ‘the dying belief,’ that *aeternus* in the Latin, and *aionios* in the original Greek, mean interminable duration. It seems that a Spanish presbyter, Orosius, visited Augustine in the year 413, and besought him for arguments to meet the position that punishment is not to be without end, because *aionios* does not denote eternal, but limited duration. Augustine replied that though *aion* signifies limited as well as endless duration, the Greeks only used *aionios* for endless, and he originated the argument so much resorted to even yet, based in the fact that in Matt. 25:46, the same word is applied to ‘life,’ and to ‘punishment.’ The student of Greek need not be told that Augustine's argument is incorrect, and he scarcely needs to be assured that Augustine did not know Greek. This he confesses. He says he ‘hates Greek,’ and the ‘grammar learning of the Greeks.’ It is a deviation in the history of criticism that generations of scholars should take their cue in a matter of Greek definition from one who admits that he had ‘learned almost nothing of Greek,’ and was ‘not competent to read and understand’ the language, and reject the position held by those who were born Greeks! That such a man should contradict and subvert the teachings of such men as Clement, Origen, the Gregories and others whose mother-tongue was Greek, is passing strange. But his powerful influence, aided by civil arm, established his doctrine till it came to rule the centuries. Augustine always quotes the New Testament from the old Latin version, the Itala, from which the Vulgate was formed, instead of the original Greek. See Preface to ‘Confessions.’ It seems that the doctrine of Origen prevailed in Northeastern Spain at this time, and that Jerome's translation of Origen's ‘Principiis’ had circulated with good effect, and that Augustine, to counteract the influence of Origen's book, wrote in 415, a small work, ‘Against the Priscillianists and Origenists.’ From about this time began the efforts of Augustine and his followers that subsequently entirely changed the character of Christian theology.”

Note that Augustine was “aided by civil arm” in spreading the influence of the idea of

eternal punishment based on blatant mistranslation/misunderstanding of the Greek word “eon” and its forms. The corrupt political/religious monster institution that was born in the Middle Ages, just like all corrupt pagan political/religious institutions before it, had little use for a God that loves you no matter what or a religion that inspires people to do the right thing primarily because it is simply the right thing to do, but they had great use for a God (or gods) that inspire obedience to authority primarily out of fear. “Do what we political/religious leaders say, or you will suffer forever in the afterlife!” As the church entered the dark ages, it became more and more a political institution that ruled by fear, corruption and selfish ambition, while the Bible was removed from the hands of the common people and translated out of its original languages into Latin, and heinous errors were introduced by blatant combination of paganism with Christianity. It is little surprise that the horrific and monstrous pagan originated ideas of hell and eternal punishment began to take strong root during the same period in the dark ages as ideas such as Mary worship (a form of ancient pagan goddess worship morphed with Christianity), paying money to the church so your loved one has a better time in purgatory, praying to dead people for help, crawling up and down stairs on your knees to make penance for your sins, etc. etc. ad nauseum.

Charles Pridgeon, president and founder of the Pittsburgh Bible Institute, concluded regarding the early Church:

“On account of the doctrine of Reserve which was held by so many of the Church Fathers, some who are quoted as holding to the doctrine of never-ending torment have other passages which teach quite the contrary. Many held the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all for themselves...but felt that it was not safe for the multitude, and therefore taught them an endless perdition. When we remember the cruelty and militarism of the Roman Empire, and also the pagan teaching that was permitted to enter on this great subject, many of these we fear, judging from their actions, had not received a truly Christian spirit, and we are not surprised that endless torment was so largely incorporated in the western Church. Besides this, it took the dark ages and medieval ignorance to render this doctrine almost universal. It is time to return to the Bible and to the teaching of the early Church, which is not only Biblical but is sane and is also consistent with a God of love and the sacrifice of His Son who was a propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2).”

Pridgeon points out a very interesting fact – some Christian leaders during the onset of the Middle Ages made it clear in their writings that they privately believed in universalism but preached eternal punishment to the masses because they were afraid that the doctrine of universalism would not be enough incentive to scare the masses into good behavior! These men took it upon themselves to preach something to the masses that was different than what they actually believed, due to the false and unbiblical ideas that fear should be the primary motivation for a Christian and that fear is a better long-term motivator for good behavior than wisdom and desire for reward. (See Hebrews 11:6 and 1 John 4:18 for

example.) Pridgeon also points out the simple fact that pagan beliefs about God's ultimate plan for mankind were combined with Christianity during the dark ages.

In closing this section I will quote the scholar J.W. Hanson once more, where he lists many conclusions from his extensive research about the prevailing belief in the church during its first few hundred years concerning God's plan for mankind. Here are his conclusions numbers 8 through 31:

“(8) The first comparatively complete systematic statement of Christian doctrine ever given to the world was by Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 180, and universal salvation was one of the tenets.

(9) The first complete presentation of Christianity as a system was by Origen (A.D. 220) and universal salvation was explicitly contained in it.

(10) Universal salvation was the prevailing doctrine in Christendom as long as Greek, the language of the New Testament, was the language of Christendom.

(11) Universalism was generally believed in the best centuries, the first three, when Christians were most remarkable for simplicity, goodness and missionary zeal.

(12) Universalism was least known when Greek, the language of the New Testament was least known, and when Latin was the language of the Church in its darkest, most ignorant, and corrupt ages.

(13) Not a writer among those who describe the heresies of the first three hundred years intimates that Universalism was then a heresy, though it was believed by many, if not be a majority, and certainly by the greatest of the fathers.

(14) Not a single creed for five hundred years expresses any idea contrary to universal restoration, or in favor of endless punishment.

(15) With the exception of the arguments of Augustine (A.D. 420), there is not an argument known to have been framed against Universalism for at least four hundred years after Christ, by any of the ancient fathers.”

Let me interrupt J.W. Hanson's list for a moment to note that I am not sure if #15 above is 100% true, depending on what Hanson means by it. From what I can tell from my research, there were some Christians and Christian leaders during the first few hundred years that spoke of belief in eternal punishment. As we saw earlier, it seems that Tertullian, for one, talked about eternal punishment at around the same time as Origen. Hanson's point here may simply be that Augustine was the first Christian leader to make a powerfully influential sustained assault to push the idea of eternal punishment as a major tenet of Christian faith. Here again I should caution against forming our beliefs based on what any particular person or group in church history believed, because even as the apostle Paul was writing his New Testament letters he was having to fight off false ideas being combined with his teachings. It may be that some of the detailed understanding of God's plan that the apostle Paul had, was somewhat lost within a relatively short period of time after he lived. For example, from what I can tell Clement and Origen had the right general idea but may not have understood some of the details that the apostle Paul understood and wrote about

in the New Testament concerning God's plan. So I need to be clear, we should rely purely on accurate translation and interpretation work (using common sense based communication and language rules) from the original language manuscripts of the Bible itself, not on what any person or group in church history believed, when deciding on doctrinal issues. My goal for this section about the history of the word "eternal" and the idea of eternal punishment is not that it would have any say over careful Biblical translation and interpretation work, but rather to point out that the modern attitude of some Christians that anyone who does not believe in hell or eternal punishment is a "heretic", was not anywhere close to the attitude of Christianity in general for its first few hundred years, as is made clear by Augustine himself and Hanson's points #9-14 and #16-31, which to the best of my knowledge are true regardless of how true #15 is or exactly what Hanson meant by #15. Let's continue with Hanson's list...

"(16) While the councils that assembled in various parts of Christendom, anathematized every kind of doctrine supposed to be heretical, no ecumenical council, for more than five hundred years, condemned Universalism, though it had been advocated in every century by the principal scholars and most revered saints.

(17) As late as A.D. 400, Jerome says 'most people' (*plerique*) and Augustine 'very many' (*quam plurimi*), believed in Universalism, notwithstanding that the tremendous influence of Augustine, and the mighty power of the semi-pagan secular arm were arrayed against it.

(18) The principal ancient Universalists were Christian born and reared, and were among the most scholarly and saintly of all the ancient saints.

(19) The most celebrated of the earlier advocates of endless punishment were heathen born, and led corrupt lives in their youth. Tertullian one of the first, and Augustine, the greatest of them, confess to having been among the vilest."

Another pause for another important note. Number 19 above is extremely important because in studying guys like Tertullian and Augustine, it seems quite clear that in certain key ways they were bringing ideas from the culture around them and their past into the mix when they started thinking and talking about God and the Bible. Specifically, Tertullian's thinking was heavily influenced by the typical Roman "legal mindset" and Augustine's was heavily influenced by the Manichaeism from which he converted to Christianity. I'll leave it up to you to study more about this if you're interested. We all struggle with seeing the Bible through the "lens" of our past, our culture, and/or certain mindsets we've learned from outside of the Bible itself, and Tertullian and Augustine were no different. The problem in their case was that their ignorance of the original languages of the Bible allowed their minds to take full flight with ideas that were not contained in Scripture itself, and the translation issues from Greek into Latin allowed them to use the Latin to formulate and expound their ideas without an accurate understanding of the original languages being present in their minds in certain cases to stand up as a referee and shout, "Wait a minute!" Which is exactly what Hanson points out in the next items on his list...

“(20) The first advocates of endless punishment, Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Augustine, were Latins, ignorant of Greek, and less competent to interpret the meaning of Greek Scriptures than were the Greek scholars.

(21) The first advocates of Universalism, after the Apostles, were Greeks, in whose mother-tongue the New Testament was written. They found their Universalism in the Greek Bible. Who should be correct, they or the Latins?

(22) The Greek Fathers announced the great truth of universal restoration in an age of darkness, sin and corruption. There was nothing to suggest it to them in the world's literature or religion. It was wholly contrary to everything around them. Where else could they have found it, but where they say they did, in the Gospel?

(23) All ecclesiastical historians and the best Biblical critics and scholars agree to the prevalence of Universalism in the earlier centuries.

(24) From the days of Clement of Alexandria to those of Gregory of Nyssa and Theodore of Mopsuestia (A.D. 180-428), the great theologians and teachers, almost without exception, were Universalists. No equal number in the same centuries were comparable to them for learning and goodness.”

Note: Hanson obviously does not consider Tertullian and Augustine to be “great theologians and teachers”, although they did end up eventually having a great influence on “Christian thinking” even to today. I assume the reason Hanson does not consider them “great theologians and teachers” is because of their ignorance of the original languages of the Bible and the creative license this ignorance allowed them to take with their ideas about God. I’d have to agree.

“(25) The first theological school in Christendom, that in Alexandria, taught Universalism for more than two hundred years.

(26) In all Christendom, from A.D. 170 to 430, there were six Christian schools. Of these four, the only strictly theological schools, taught Universalism, and but one endless punishment.”

Another important note: You will sometimes hear modern Christians dismiss these ancient theological schools that taught universalism as if they don’t matter, as if they were a blip, an aberration, an insignificant minority. This is not accurate; it’s just modern Christians artificially superimposing their modern mindset that universalism is a “minority view”, on top of history. But, folks, we’re not allowed to do that with history. The simple fact is that four out of the six theology schools in early Christian history taught universalism. It’s the equivalent in modern times of four out of six Christian theology schools teaching universalism, and only one out of six teaching eternal punishment. If eternal punishment was the majority view back then, and universalism was considered a heresy or a cult, it is unthinkable that four out of the six theology schools would teach universalism. It seems that universalism was the *majority view* back then. (This is also confirmed by Augustine and Jerome who said that “very many” and “most” Christians did not believe in “endless torments” during their time.) Again, none of this proves that universalism is true, but it

does prove that it was not considered a heresy or a cult by most of Christianity during its first several hundred years, but was in fact the majority view. How times have changed. A few more items from Hanson's list:

“(27) The three earliest Gnostic sects, the Basilidians, the Carpocratians and the Valentinians (A.D. 117-132) are condemned by Christian writers, and their heresies pointed out, but though they taught Universalism, that doctrine is never condemned by those who oppose them. Irenaeus condemned the errors of the Carpocratians, but does not reprehend their Universalism, though he ascribes the doctrine to them.

(28) The first defense of Christianity against Infidelity (Origen against Celsus) puts the defense on Universalistic grounds. Celsus charged the Christians' God with cruelty, because he punished with fire. Origen replied that God's fire is curative; that he is a "Consuming Fire," because he consumes sin and not the sinner.

(29) Origen, the chief representative of Universalism in the ancient centuries, was bitterly opposed and condemned for various heresies by ignorant and cruel fanatics. He was accused of opposing Episcopacy (the system where bishops are the chief clerics), believing in pre-existence, etc., but never was condemned for his Universalism. The very council that anathematized 'Origenism' eulogized Gregory of Nyssa, who was explicitly a Universalist as was Origen. Lists of his errors are given by Methodius, Pamphilus and Eusebius, Marcellus, Eustathius and Jerome, but Universalism is not named by one of his opponents. Fancy a list of Ballou's errors and his Universalism omitted; Hippolytus (A.D. 320) names thirty-two known heresies, but Universalism is not mentioned as among them. Epiphanius, 'the hammer of heretics,' describes eighty heresies, but he does not mention universal salvation, though Gregory of Nyssa, an outspoken Universalist, was, at the time he wrote, the most conspicuous figure in Christendom.

(30) Justinian, a half-pagan emperor, who attempted to have Universalism officially condemned, lived in the most corrupt epoch of the Christian centuries. He closed the theological schools, and demanded the condemnation of Universalism by law; but the doctrine was so prevalent in the church that the council refused to obey his edict to suppress it. Lecky says the age of Justinian was 'the worst form civilization has assumed.'

(31) The first clear and definite statement of human destiny by any Christian writer after the days of the Apostles, includes universal restoration, and that doctrine was advocated by most of the greatest and best of the Christian Fathers for the first five hundred years of the Christian Era.

In one word, a careful study of the early history of the Christian religion, will show that the doctrine of universal restoration was least prevalent in the darkest, and prevailed most in the most enlightened, of the earliest centuries--that it was the prevailing doctrine in the Primitive Christian Church.”

So we have looked at church history and seen that belief in “endless torments” or “eternal punishment” was not a powerful force in Christianity until men who did not know Greek began to teach this idea in contrast to the teachings of the early eminent figures in Christian history who were native Greek speakers. The efforts of Latin speakers ignorant of

Greek like Tertullian and Augustine combined with the political forces that created the corruption and ignorance of the pagan/Catholic religious atmosphere in the Middle Ages to foist the idea of “eternal punishment” or “endless torments” upon the world. I will leave it up to you, dear reader, whether to believe men who did not know Greek, or the church fathers whose native language was Greek, regarding the translation of the Greek word “eon” in the New Testament and its ramifications for teaching on God’s ultimate plan for mankind as revealed in the Bible.

We have looked at the testimony of church history. Now, in closing this chapter, let’s look at the testimony of logical and philosophical thinking about God.

The Testimony of Logical and Philosophical Thinking About God

As you will discover in a greater way the further you read through this book, translating “eon” and its forms consistently as “eon” = “age”, “eons” = “ages”, and “eonian” = “having to do with an age or ages” allows many seemingly impossible philosophical, logical, and Scriptural problems, dilemmas, and questions to be solved instantly and effortlessly. On the other hand, if we insist upon translating “eon” and/or its forms in certain places in Scripture as referring to “eternal punishment” etc. (despite the evidence presented above), we are stuck without satisfactory answers to the myriad philosophical, logical, and Scriptural problems and dilemmas artificially caused by the false, pagan-originated ideas of hell and eternal punishment.

Why fight the evidence presented in this chapter, when fighting that evidence simply leads us to nowhere, to a monster God that makes no sense to any thinking person, to questions and dilemmas that have no answer? For example, *the predestination dilemma has no solution* (either Scripturally or logically/philosophically – both sides must cut plain statements out of the Bible and the Armenians are stuck with an incompetent monster God while the Calvinists are stuck with a powerful monster God) *until you translate “eon” and its forms consistently as referring to an age or ages (not endlessness or eternity), at which point the solution is exceedingly simple and obvious.* (You’ll learn more about this later in this book.)

Another example is the clear prophecy in Isaiah 45:23, which plainly states that eventually “every tongue will swear allegiance to” or “swear an oath to” or “swear by” God. The apostle Paul quotes this verse twice in the New Testament (Phil. 2:10-11, Rom. 14:11), and in one of the instances (Phil. 2:10-11) he makes it clear that this is a prophecy about everyone that has ever lived (not just a certain group of people alive on earth at a given moment). Isaiah 45:23 makes it absolutely clear that this future event will not be a grudging “I guess I have to admit You’re God but I still hate your guts” type of thing on the part of all humanity, but a genuine turning to God to bow their knees to Him in worship and “swear allegiance to” or “swear an oath to” or “swear by” Him. Are we to believe that immediately after every tongue swears allegiance to God, He is going to turn around and

throw them into eternal torture? Why would He do that? What would be the point? Why go to all the trouble of getting them to the place where they recognize that His way is the best way and swear allegiance to Him, only to turn around and sentence them to eternal burning and screaming? How can Isaiah 45:23 be in the same Bible as the teaching of eternal punishment, without God being an incomprehensible monster?

And of course there is the granddaddy of all philosophical problems with God (for those who believe in hell and eternal punishment). The Bible makes it clear in various places and in various ways that God knew before He created humanity that humanity would sin (e.g. Romans 11:32). And Bible prophecy makes it very clear that God knows most people will not give their lives to Him in this age. So why would God even bother bringing all these billions of precious people into existence knowing beforehand that their fate would be eternal burning and screaming?

Friends, it's very easy for us Christians to talk about *other people* burning and screaming because "we're safe", but what if you were a guy living in the backwaters of North Korea in 2013 who never heard the gospel, and you died of starvation due to your nation's horrible leaders' terrible policies...and suddenly you're in hell screaming in pain? How is eternal torture fair for a person like that? What has the average person done to deserve torture, much less eternal torture? Why is "eternal torture" God's idea of justice when humanity considers it unethical to torture people? How can God's sense of justice be so much different than that which He built into us, to the point where He can get away with a judgment that any thinking person would consider way overboard? How can endless torture be a just, fair punishment for a limited amount of (a few decades of) sin? Why does the average person deserve torture at all – much less eternal torture? (Keep reading to the next chapter to understand the Bible's clear definition of death. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23), not "The wages of sin is torture.")

Friends, this fictional North Korean guy I just described is a typical portrait of a majority of the people throughout history that never heard the gospel, lived (what we modern westerners would consider to be) difficult lives for a few decades under exploitative leaders (as bad or worse than ours today), and then, supposedly, according to the doctrine of hell, are burning and screaming for eternity immediately upon death. If you were one of these people, wouldn't you say, "God, why did you even bring me into existence when You knew this would be the sum total of my experience?" If, as the doctrines of hell and eternal punishment imply, God hates sin so much that He has no choice but to eternally torture sinners who don't repent within a certain amount of time (which varies greatly from person to person, and most people who ever lived never heard the gospel anyway), *why would He even create them in the first place*, knowing beforehand that His hatred for their sin would be so much greater than His love for them and so much greater than the power of the cross (and that Satan's power to convince these humans would supposedly be so much greater than His own power to convince) that He would be forced to torture them for trillions of years, endlessly, in order to satiate His hatred for their sin which He knew beforehand they'd commit? *Why even bring these people into existence in the first place if He knew the sum total of their*

experience would be a few decades of difficulty followed by eternal torture? Things that make you go “HMMMM...”

Folks, there are many philosophical and logical problems with God (more of which I outline in Chapter 11 of this book) and many logical problems with the Bible (instances in which the Bible at first seems to contradict itself) which can *only* be solved by getting the translation issues discussed in this chapter and the previous chapter right, and understanding the information I share in the rest of this book.

Why fight the evidence presented in this chapter about accurate translation of the Greek word “eon” and its forms, just for the right to end up tangled in a pretzel of philosophical and logical questions about God that have no satisfactory answer? Why fight the evidence presented in this chapter when following it leads us to a God that makes perfect sense to the heart and mind and to a Bible that is perfectly cohesive in all its statements about God’s plan for mankind, without any language/logical/philosophical gymnastics required?

Let’s close this section by comparing the rules that I (in agreement with the translators of The Concordant Version and Young’s Literal Translation, according to common sense rules of language and communication) use to translate “eon/eons/eonian” in the New Testament with the rules used by people who believe in eternal punishment. I am going to articulate two sets of communication rules for you. At first I am not going to tell you which set of rules I use, and which set of rules is used by people who believe in hell. Just read the two sets of rules and decide which set you think is true and ought to be used to interpret and translate Scripture (and all other communication), and which set of rules is false and should not be used.

Here are the two sets of rules:

SET OF RULES A:

Rule 1 – No word in any language can be its own antonym (at very best it would be extremely rare). You will be hard pressed to find a word in any language that sometimes means the opposite of itself. Reason being, such a word would be very confusing and thus useless or burdensome for clear communication. (Sometimes you will find a word that has a couple of different meanings or shades of meaning depending on context, but you will not find a word that has a second meaning that is the opposite of its other meaning.) Therefore, in Bible translation, we should not translate a word as having one meaning in one instance, but as having the opposite meaning in another instance. If we were to dare to do this, we would need absolute proof that such a strange phenomenon is indeed occurring before doing so.

Rule 2 – Just because two different words are used to describe the same person or thing, does not mean that those two distinct words must have the same meaning. For example, just because someone

describes me as both blonde and tall does not mean that the words “blonde” and “tall” have the same meaning and definition.

Rule 3 (a corollary of Rule 2) – Just because two different words are used in similar sentences with similar points, does not mean that those two different words must have the same meaning. For example, if I say to you one day, “I’m thirsty and I want some milk”, and the next day I say to you, “I’m thirsty and want some water”, that does not mean that “milk” and “water” are the same thing or have the same meaning/definition.

Rule 4 – If a word or phrase is normally used to refer to a certain limited period of time, and in a certain instance it is used to describe an action or quality that will obviously last longer than that, that word or phrase still means what it always means; it does not change its definition in that particular instance to match the longer period of time. For example, if the term “the next couple of weeks” is used in the sentence, “I’m really going to have fun for the next couple of weeks”, even though it is obvious that the speaker intends to have fun for longer than that, the definition of “a couple of weeks” does not change in that instance to “the rest of my life”. To give another example, if the term “to the ages of the ages” is used in a certain instance to describe God’s glory, even though it is obvious that God’s glory will continue beyond the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, the definition of “the ages of the ages” does not change, and we are not allowed to arbitrarily choose to change its definition to refer to eternity at that moment or at any other time; it retains its original definition that makes sense every other time it is used. To give another example, if the word “eonian” is used in a certain instance to describe the life of Christians, even though it is obvious that the life of a Christian will continue beyond the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, the definition of “eonian” does not change, and we are not allowed to arbitrarily choose to change its definition to refer to eternity in that instance or any other time; it retains its original definition that makes sense every other time it is used.

Rule 5 – When translating and seeking to understand the meaning of a word in a different language, we should seek to understand the mindset and assumptions of the people and culture that used that word and that language, while resisting the urge to automatically superimpose our own mindset, assumptions, etc. on top of the word. If that language contains a word or a form of a word that our own language does not contain, this rule is especially important to follow.

Rule 6 – It is more prudent to take our theological cue on the subject of “eonian chastisement/punishment” from church fathers whose native language was Greek, rather than from church fathers who did not know Greek very well.

OK, now compare SET OF RULES A with SET OF RULES B. Here is SET OF RULES B. You will see that they are the opposite of SET OF RULES A.

SET OF RULES B:

Rule 1 – It is normal for a word to be its own antonym. In other words, it would not be very unusual to find a word that means the opposite of itself. Therefore, in Bible translation, it is completely valid to translate one Greek word with two opposite meanings depending on context, if it seems to us to make sense to do so in order to fit our mindset and theological beliefs.

Rule 2 – If two different words are used to describe the same person or thing, those two different words must have the exact same meaning. For example, if someone describes me as both blonde and tall, this means that the word “blonde” and the word “tall” must have the same meaning and definition. To give another example, if the Bible says we Christians will receive “eonian life” and it also says we will receive “immortality”, then “eonian life” and “immortality” must have the same meaning and definition.

Rule 3 (a corollary of Rule 2) – If two different words are used in similar sentences with similar points, those two different words must have the same meaning/definition. For example, if I say to you one day, “I’m thirsty and I want some milk”, and the next day I say to you, “I’m thirsty and want some water”, that means that “milk” and “water” are the same thing and have the same meaning/definition. To give another example, if the Bible talks about “this present evil age (Greek ‘eon’)” and in another place talks about “this evil world (Greek ‘kosmos’), that means “eon” and “kosmos” must have the same meaning and definition.

Rule 4 – If a word or phrase is normally used to refer to a certain limited period of time, but then in a certain instance it is used to describe an action or quality that will obviously last longer than that, that word or phrase must change its definition in that particular instance to match the longer period of time. For example, if the term “the next couple of weeks” is used in the sentence, “I’m really going to have fun for the next couple of weeks”, it is obvious that the speaker intends to have fun for longer than that, so the definition of “a couple of weeks” must change in that instance to “the rest of my life”. To give another example, if the term “to the ages of the ages” is used to describe God’s glory, it is obvious that God’s glory will continue beyond the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, so the definition of “the ages of the ages” must change in that instance to refer to eternity...and on top of that we can arbitrarily choose to change the definition of the word “eon/eons/eonian” to refer to eternity any time we want to. To give another example, if the word “eonian” is used to describe the life Christians receive, it is obvious that the life of a Christian will continue beyond the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, so the definition of “eonian” must change in that instance to refer to eternity...and on top of that we can arbitrarily choose to change its definition to refer to eternity any time we want to.

Rule 5 – When translating and seeking to understand the meaning of a word in a different language, we should automatically impose our own mindset, assumptions, etc. on top of the word rather than seeking to understand the mindset and assumptions of the people and culture that used that word and that language. If that language contains a word or a form of a word that our own language does not contain, we should make assumptions about what the word means according to our own perspective, assumptions, mindset and culture, without carefully examining exactly

how it was and was not used in the other culture and what the word would have meant to a person in the other culture.

Rule 6 – It is more prudent to take our theological cue on the subject of “eonian chastisement/punishment” from church fathers who did not know Greek very well, rather than from church fathers who were native Greek speakers.

OK, now I invite you to ponder both sets of rules for a moment and decide which set of rules is common sense, and which set of rules completely violates common sense.

Folks, you do not have to be a genius or a language expert to see that SET OF RULES A is 100% true and SET OF RULES B is 100% false. This is just common sense. If you can't see that, there is no hope of you ever understanding the key issue of how “eon/eons/eonian” should be translated in the New Testament. Thankfully, anyone can see that SET OF RULES B, the set of rules used by people who believe in hell to translate “eon/eons/eonian” as referring to eternity or endlessness in some cases, is a set of rules that are utterly false. This is why these people never actually articulate the set of rules they're using when they make their arguments about “eon/eons/eonian” – because once you see the rules they're using, articulated plainly, *the rules debunk themselves because they are so obviously ridiculous.*

Go out and read anyone who opposes my viewpoint on the issue of the translation of “eon/eons/eonian” – *you will find that they always use SET OF RULES B without articulating those rules.* If they articulated the rules they're using, they would debunk themselves.

You will learn more about the subject of “eons” and why Jesus often referred to the next eon/age, in Chapter 9 of this book.

My friends, any time you see the words “forever”, “eternal”, “everlasting”, and “forever and ever” (and sometimes the word “never”), a huge red sign should begin flashing in your head that says, “LOOK AT THE UNDERLYING GREEK OR HEBREW WORD!” Because careful study of the Hebrew word “olam” and the Greek word “eon/eons/eonian” simply does not support them being translated that way.

Again, Hastings' *Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol. I, p. 542, art. *Christ and the Gospels*) puts it well when it states that there is no word either in the Old Testament Hebrew or in the New Testament Greek that expresses the abstract idea of eternity.

And as we saw earlier, the Greek word “eon” is used in the New Testament when quoting Old Testament verses that contain the Hebrew word “olam”. Although (like many translations of a word in one language into a word in another language) the meaning of “olam” is not necessarily the exact same as the meaning of “eon”, they are close enough that the God-inspired authors of the New Testament saw fit to translate “olam” as “eon”. This tells us that since *separately* neither word means “definitely eternal” or refers to the

abstract idea of eternity, we have additional confirmation that *neither* word means “eternal”, “everlasting”, or “forever”, and should never be translated as such. The simplest translation of both these words into English, without sacrificing too much meaning or being inaccurate, would simply be “a long time”.

One difference between the two words is that “eon” in the New Testament clearly refers to an age – a specifically designated period of time in human history with a clear end and a clear beginning. In some cases the age referred to has already ended, and in some cases (as in Galatians 1:4 or 2 Corinthians 4:4 which refer to “this present evil age”) we don’t know exactly when the end will be, but it is clear that there will be an end. Of course the plural word “eons” is used to refer to more than one age or multiple ages (Eph. 2:7, Rom. 16:25, 1 Cor. 2:7, etc.), and the word “eonian” is used as an adjective to describe something that has to do with one or more specific ages (2 Tim. 1:9, Jn. 3:16).

The bottom line is, shockingly, **the translators of our English Bibles have translated certain key words according to their belief system instead of according to the simple logical meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words.** Most modern Christians *never think to doubt their “expert” translators*, so the pagan idea of eternal punishment still clings on in much of the church. Meanwhile, Christians *just try not to think about all the logical and philosophical dilemmas caused by the doctrine of eternal punishment.* The answer to all these seemingly impossible questions about the nature of God, why He would burn so many of His precious creations for trillions of years, predestination, etc., is so amazingly simple:

The cause of all these seemingly unsolvable Scriptural, logical, and philosophical dilemmas is nothing more than mistranslation due to pagan traditional ideas inherited from Latin-based Middle Ages Catholicism.

So...when you are reading your English Bible,

Every single time you see the word “hell” or “forever/eternal/everlasting/forever-and-ever” (and even sometimes the word “never”), you must take into account what the underlying Greek or Hebrew word really means.

Otherwise the mind of God (what He is doing with humanity and why, as revealed in the accurately translated Bible) will be incomprehensible to you.

It is literally impossible to discover God’s plan for mankind by reading most common English Bible translations. That is why I recommend The Concordant Version, which makes every effort to translate the underlying words into English *consistently and accurately* according to *what they mean (their consistent usage) in the original language.* You can read the Concordant Version of the New Testament for free at http://www.concordant.org/version/CLNT_Intro.htm. You can also buy Young’s Literal Translation, which is a bit easier to read, at many Christian online bookstores.

The Joy of An Accurately Translated Bible

When you read an accurately translated Bible, what a revelation you get! As you will discover when you read the rest of this book, when the Bible is translated accurately, *suddenly everything God does makes perfect sense.*

Suddenly you see that God has a plan for the *ages* (Greek “eons”), where each age is a stage in the education of all mankind.

But you cannot fathom this by reading a modern English Bible where the word “age” barely appears, even though the word “age/ages” (Greek “eon/eons”) is *all over the place* in the original manuscripts!

Translating “eon” and “eonian” correctly also enables us to understand the Biblical concept of the kingdom of God much more accurately. As I will explain in Chapter 9, the term “the kingdom of God” in Scripture does not refer to hanging out in heaven forever, but rather to two specific ages of human life *on earth* that God has planned for the future – the millennium (Rev. 20:1-6) and the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 21-22). (Remember how Jesus told His disciples to pray? “Thy Kingdom come...*on earth...*”) In Chapter 9 I will show you how the term “eonian life” (life pertaining to an age or ages, the adjective form of “eon”) is used interchangeably with the terms “the kingdom”, “the kingdom of God”, “the kingdom of heaven”, and “the ages of the ages” by Jesus, His disciples, and the apostle Paul in Scripture to refer to life on earth during the millennium and the New Jerusalem age.

So with an accurate translation of the Greek word “eon” and a corresponding correct definition of “the kingdom of God” in Scripture, we can now see (as I’ll explain more thoroughly in Chapter 9) that the term “eonian life” refers not to eternity in heaven but to life in the kingdom of God during two specific ages of future life on earth. Thus a person who misses out on the kingdom of God or “eonian life” is not “damned for eternity” (a pagan concept and term not found anywhere in Scripture), but will simply miss out on life on earth during the millennium and the New Jerusalem age. They will miss out on life in those two ages because they will be dead during those two ages. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Being dead during those two ages/eons is their “eonian punishment”, their “punishment that pertains to an age or ages”. In a later chapter I will explain thoroughly from Scripture exactly what the apostle Paul says will happen to such people after that.

In this book I’m going to take you step by step through God’s plan of the ages and how He will reach His ultimate goal for humanity as revealed in (accurately translated) Scripture. If you are a good Bible student, you will have some legitimate questions at this point, like:

So what exactly happens to unbelievers (those who don't believe in Christ in this current age), and when?

What really happens when you die?

What about the parable of Lazarus & the rich man?

Etc.

You will find Biblical, logical answers to these questions and most other questions you could think of on this subject, simply by reading to the end of this book. I ask you not to make a final judgment about what I'm explaining to you concerning what the accurately translated Bible teaches on the subjects of what happens at death and God's plan for mankind, until you read this book in its entirety. It may take you a couple of hours, but isn't understanding God's plan for humanity worth it? And again I insist that you test everything I'm saying in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21. The subject of hell is not something you want to get wrong, if you know what I mean.

I'll answer the question "What really happens when you die?" in Chapter 4, I'll answer "What exactly happens to unbelievers, and when?" thoroughly in Chapters 4-7, and I'll explain the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Chapter 10 (but don't read that chapter until you've read Chapter 9, which gives you the background information necessary to understand the points Jesus made with the parable fully and correctly).

All right, now it's time for me to explain what happens to a human being at death according to the (accurately translated) Bible.

Chapter 4

Soul, Spirit,

&

What Really Happens When You Die (According To the Accurately Translated Bible)

Because of the strong leftover influence of paganism on the religion of Christianity and the resulting mistranslation of key words in the Bible, most Christians don't understand what the Bible actually says about what happens when a person dies. To make matters worse, Christians throw around the words "soul" and "spirit" without having a Biblical definition in mind of what those words actually mean. This chapter will clear up all the confusion.

Many Christians might say, "What confusion? It's easy – if you're saved, when you die you go to heaven, and if you're not saved, when you die you go to hell."

The problem with this idea, besides the fact that the word "hell" is not even in the Bible, is that it blatantly contradicts many plain statements of Scripture (Ecc. 9:5 & 10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17, etc.). In a moment we will look at some of these clear Scriptural statements about what happens at death, and instead of contradicting them with pagan/Catholic-inherited ideas, I will show you how all the Scriptural statements about what happens at death match up perfectly with each other.

The doctrines of conscious death and eternal punishment also leave us with all sorts of unanswered questions, such as: *If you go to heaven consciously right after you die, why would you need to be resurrected at the rapture?*

Here's another one: *How can God justify sending people to hell before they have a chance to be judged at the white throne (Rev. 20:11-12)? And...Why would He send people to hell immediately when they die, then resurrect them after a while only to tell them "You've been bad" (as if they wouldn't already know), and then throw them back in hell? What is the point of the white throne judgment if it is only a brief interruption from hell to hear "you're bad"?*

And come to think of it...*How can God justify sending millions of people to hell who never*

heard the word “Jesus” in their lifetimes, when the Bible itself says a person must hear the message of Christ in order to have a chance to get saved (Rom. 10:14)?

See, it’s not so simple. Many well-meaning Christians believe a few things that don’t make any logical sense, either Biblically, logically, or philosophically. The reason for this is the Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited leftover influence of paganism that still affects certain “Christian” beliefs, combined with and reinforced by what I spent the last few chapters explaining to you – the blatant mistranslation of certain key words in our English Bibles.

In this chapter, I’m going to extract the leftover paganism from a few common “Christian” beliefs about what happens when you die. In plain and simple language, I’m going to explain what happens when a person dies and what “soul” and “spirit” are according to the accurately translated Bible, not just according to our imaginations or religious ideas. You’ll realize that what the Bible *actually* teaches about what happens at death *makes perfect sense* logically, Scripturally, and philosophically. When we carefully study what the Bible says about death rather than relying on ideas we inherited from Middle Ages Catholicism, all the artificially-caused self-contradictions in Scripture on this subject disappear, and the Bible’s perfectly cohesive teaching on what happens at death becomes readily apparent.

I mention all this at the beginning of this chapter because it’s important for you to realize that the beliefs of many Christians about death are *completely contrary* to what their own Bible teaches. Much of what many Christians believe and preach about death and “the afterlife” is nothing more than leftovers from paganism.

So let’s look carefully and thoroughly at what the accurately translated Bible says about death.

What *Really* Happens At Death

I want to start by mentioning a couple of verses about death that are commonly misunderstood, so you know I’m not ignoring them. Many Christians are confused by Paul talking about “going to be with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:6-8) at death, and Jesus saying to the thief on the cross “today you’ll be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43), because they think Jesus and Paul are talking about being with the Lord *consciously*.

However, as you’ll see, if Jesus and Paul were talking about being with the Lord consciously immediately at death, they would not only be contradicting their own words (clear, straightforward statements they made at other times), but they would also be contradicting the testimony of the rest of Scripture.

So how do we explain these statements by Jesus and Paul? Well, *let’s start by examining*

the basics of what the Bible teaches about death.

The Bible repeatedly tells us that death = unconsciousness.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 declares plainly, “The dead know nothing”. The Bible, including Jesus, Paul, and others (including an angel of the Lord in Daniel 12:2) repeatedly refers to death as “sleep”. When you’re sleeping you’re unconscious. You “know nothing”. Simple.

Here are some more direct, plain, straightforward statements of Scripture that tell us what happens at death. You will see that they directly contradict the common modern “Christian” pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited idea that death is conscious.

“There is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol (the unseen) where you are going.” – Ecclesiastes 9:10

“The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence.” – Psalm 115:17

“In death there is no remembrance of You. In sheol (the unseen), who is proclaiming You?” – Psalm 6:5

“Mortal man...returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” – Psalm 146:2-4

These verses directly contradict the popular notion that dead people are conscious. If dead Christians are conscious and praising God in heaven, and dead non-Christians are conscious and screaming in agony in hell, then all the Scriptures I just quoted are lies!

According to the Scriptures I just quoted, dead people do not praise God – they do not even remember Him! That is because the day a man dies, his thoughts die too. He becomes unconscious. The reason dead people are silent, the reason they do not plan anything or know anything or do anything, is because they are unconscious. The Scriptures cannot be any clearer about this.

An important rule of Bible interpretation is that when studying any doctrinal issue in Scripture we must let the most straightforward statements interpret any statement or passage that may not be as clear in and of itself. But amazingly, the clearest, most straightforward statements in Scripture about what happens at death, including the plain statements I quoted as well as repeated references by Jesus, Paul, and an angel to death as sleep, are *completely ignored* by some Christians. Instead of looking at the overall testimony of Scripture and the clearest statements in Scripture on the subject of death, modern Christians often take a couple of comments by Paul and Jesus, and without studying other Bible passages carefully to ascertain what Paul and Jesus truly meant, read a *pagan-originated*

idea (conscious death) into those comments to make them mean something Jesus and Paul didn't mean at all. Jesus and Paul would never contradict their own statements, nor would they contradict the rest of the Word of God.

As you test what I'm teaching you in this chapter, you may have a few Scriptures come to mind that seem to contradict the statements by Solomon and David I just quoted. The key word here is "seem"; they only *seem* to contradict Solomon and David at first glance, to a modern Christian who has been trained to believe in conscious death. In actuality, not a single statement or passage in Scripture can be used as proof that people remain conscious when they die. Every single statement and passage in Scripture about death matches up perfectly with Solomon and David's straightforward statements about death. In this book I go through many of these passages that *seem* to speak of conscious death, and demonstrate that upon careful examination it is clear that they do not speak of conscious death at all, but rather match up perfectly with what Solomon and David said about death – that it is unconscious.

The New Testament Does Not Contradict Solomon and David Concerning What Happens At Death – It Quotes Them!

Some people try to casually dismiss Solomon and David's straightforward statements about unconscious death, saying that Solomon and David did not really know what they were talking about, and that due to "progressive revelation" (God revealing more truth to people later in history than people earlier in history), the New Testament "corrects" or "clarifies" what Solomon and David said about death. They claim that Solomon and David only talked about what appears to happen at death from the perspective of someone on earth, that they did not have full information about death, and that the New Testament makes it clear that death is conscious.

The biggest problem with this idea is that the New Testament *directly quotes* Solomon and David regarding what happens at death! A second problem with this idea is that there is no proof that Solomon and David were not making clear statements about death that are always true; people sometimes point to the context of Solomon's statements where he uses the term "under the sun", but David's statements match up perfectly with Solomon's, and there is nothing in the context of David's statements regarding "under the sun." A third problem with this idea is that no one contests what David and Solomon said about what happens to a human being's *spirit* at death, but then some people argue with what David and Solomon said about the *soul*; how could David and Solomon have been inspired and knowledgeable enough to know exactly what happens to the human spirit at death but not know what happens to the human soul? And a fourth problem with this idea is that not a single statement or passage in the Bible, including the New Testament, can be used to prove that death is conscious, but on careful examination every single one matches up perfectly with Solomon and David's statements about unconscious death.

Confusion on this subject is only created when people who already believe in conscious death (due to pagan/Catholic-inherited tradition) fail to examine the passages carefully and artificially superimpose the idea of conscious death upon some passages that are unclear in and of themselves, rather than letting the clearest statements on the subject (made by David and Solomon and quoted in the New Testament) interpret the unclear passages and statements for us. Let's examine this further.

As I mentioned, an extremely important rule of Bible interpretation (and for interpreting any communication) is that we are not allowed to take statements that are not perfectly clear in and of themselves, and make up our own interpretation or "fill in the blanks" ourselves; rather we must let the communicator himself "fill in the blanks" by looking to find other statements the communicator made at other times. As when trying to properly understand the message of any author or book on any subject, in the case of the Bible and what it teaches about what happens to a human being at death, we must start with the most clear and straightforward statements it makes about the subject, and interpret any unclear statements with those straightforward statements, rather than making up our own interpretation of the unclear statements.

Above I listed several direct, straightforward statements about death that Solomon and David made. Now, either Solomon and David knew what they were talking about, or they didn't. Let's examine the claim some people make that Solomon and David didn't know what they were talking about concerning what happens to a human being at death.

We really only have three options for how to interpret David and Solomon's statements about death:

1) *They did not know what happens to a human being at death*, but were speaking from ignorance, and/or merely from the perspective of someone on earth who is unable to perceive anything that might happen to a human being in death.

2) *They believed that human beings are conscious in death*, but for some reason chose to speak as if human beings are not conscious in death. (For some mysterious reason they spoke and wrote in Scripture the exact opposite of what they truly believed.)

3) *They believed that human beings are unconscious in death*, and they spoke specifically and exactly what they believed about what happens to the human soul and the human spirit at death.

Let's examine each of these options.

First of all, let's eliminate Option #2, the idea that David and Solomon believed in conscious death but simply chose to speak as if it was unconscious. Why on earth would they do such a thing? Why would they make statements about death that are the exact

opposite of what they truly believed? Why would David say that those who die go “into silence” if he actually believed that they went into a conscious experience? Why would Solomon say “the dead know nothing” and “there is no knowledge or wisdom or planning in sheol (where the dead go)” if he actually believed that the dead know a lot of things and there *is* knowledge and wisdom and planning in sheol? Why would these two authors of Scripture *lie about what they believed*? Folks, the idea that these two men that God anointed to write large portions of Scripture, would say the exact opposite of what they truly believed about what happens to a human being at death, is utterly absurd.

OK, now let’s look at Option #1. Some people claim that Solomon and David did not really know what happens at death, and that the New Testament gave us “progressive revelation” in this area, thus correcting Solomon and David’s statements about death.

The idea that the Bible contains “progressive revelation” is valid and true in some cases (as you will see in Chapter 9 of this book). But not in the case of David and Solomon’s understanding of death. The Bible itself tells us clearly that David and Solomon knew exactly what they were talking about concerning death. How? Well, not only is there not a single Bible verse that can be proven to be referring to a human being remaining conscious in death as a normal state, and not only does every single Scriptural statement about death match up perfectly with David and Solomon’s statements about it, but **the New Testament and Jesus Himself clearly confirm and corroborate Solomon and David’s statements about death by quoting David concerning Jesus’ own death!** (Since David corroborates Solomon concerning death, the New Testament corroborates Solomon’s statements about death too.)

The New Testament *quotes David twice* in regards to *the specifics of what happened to Jesus’ soul and spirit when He died* (Lk. 23:46, Acts 2:27). In Luke 23:46, it is actually Jesus Himself who, the moment before He died, *directly quoted David* about exactly what would happen to His spirit at death (Lk. 23:46, Ps. 31:5)! Keep in mind, Solomon’s statements about death match up perfectly with David’s statements quoted concerning Jesus’ death. Compare Luke 23:46 and Psalm 31:5 with Ecclesiastes 12:7. Then compare Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10 with Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 146:4, Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27. It all matches up perfectly! *The New Testament and Jesus Himself confirm David and Solomon’s specific statements about exactly what happens to the spirit and the soul at death, by quoting David’s specific statements!*

As you can see, the claim that David and Solomon were ignorant about what happens at death (Option #1 I listed above), is debunked by Scripture itself. Folks, Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived (other than Christ), a man who wrote three books of the Bible. And David was a prophet who accurately foretold many events without a single miss so far, of whom God said, “I have sworn by My holiness, I will not lie to David” (Ps. 89:35). The New Testament quotes him twice concerning exactly what happened to Jesus’ soul and spirit at death. To claim that these two giants of the Scriptures need to be “corrected” by modern Christianity concerning what happens at death is ridiculous. **The New Testament does not correct David regarding death, it quotes**

him! (And as we've seen, this validates Solomon's statements about death too, because they match up perfectly with David's.)

Some people try to cast aside Solomon's statements about death in Ecclesiastes, saying that the general perspective of the book of Ecclesiastes is that of what happens "under the sun", and therefore Solomon's statements about death in that book only refer to what can be seen by humans living on earth. I've heard people casually claim, "People who take Solomon's statements that death is unconscious at face value are ignoring the context of those statements." What they mean is, "The book of Ecclesiastes was about what happens 'under the sun' and therefore we are allowed to take any statement he makes in that book about death, and discard it."

To see if this claim holds water, let's examine the context of Solomon's statements about death in Ecclesiastes 9. I invite you to read the whole chapter, and indeed the whole book of Ecclesiastes, but here I will quote a few pertinent portions of the context of Solomon's specific statements about death.

"There is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men...The living know they will die, but the dead do not know anything, and they no longer have a reward...Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun...Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol where you are going." (Ecc. 9:3, 5-6, 10).

I have a simple question for you: If Solomon believed in conscious death, or if he did not know what happens to a human at death, then why would he go into such extensive detail about how dead people don't know anything and their love/hate/zeal perish in death? Why would he bother to state that there is no knowledge/wisdom/activity/planning in sheol and go into all sorts of detail about it, if he did not actually know what happens in sheol, or if he believed that there *is* knowledge and activity in Sheol? Why would he lie about what he believed, or make very specific and detailed statements from ignorance? Folks, the only possible reason Solomon could have made the statements he made about death is that he knew exactly what he was talking about.

It is correct to state that the perspective of the passage, and indeed the entire book of Ecclesiastes, is observation of life "under the sun" and commentary about it. But this does not mean that Solomon believed in conscious death, or that he did not know what happens at death. Think about it...If Solomon believed in conscious death, why wouldn't he say, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, because in the afterlife you will receive the reward for your deeds during your life on earth"? But he didn't say that! He said, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, because there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol" and "the dead no longer have a reward." In other words, do and enjoy what you can now while you're alive, because when you're dead you won't be able to do or enjoy anything. This matches up perfectly with the apostle Paul's description of dead heroes of faith who "did not receive what was promised"

and “will not be made perfect apart from us (who are still alive)” and submitted themselves to torture, etc. “in hopes of a better resurrection” – not a better conscious death! (See Heb. 11:35-40.)

If you read the entire book of Ecclesiastes you will see that its general perspective, its commentary about life “under the sun”, is that life on earth right now appears to have a lot of injustice (sometimes evil people get good rewards while righteous people don’t, etc. and thus life right now amounts to “futility/meaninglessness”), but dead people can’t do or enjoy anything, so enjoy your life while you can (before you die) and keep in mind that eventually God will judge everyone for their deeds (see Ecc. 11:9, 12:13-14).

Folks, how could Solomon have been inspired/anointed/knowledgeable enough to know that eventually God will judge everyone for their deeds, yet not know what happens to a person at death? How could he have been ignorant of what happens at death when he prophetically predicted the same event Revelation 20:11-13 predicts, and spoke specifically of what happens to the spirit at death in exactly the same terms that David did in Psalm 31:5 and Jesus did in Luke 23:46? No one dares to argue that Solomon didn’t know what he was talking about concerning what happens to a human being’s spirit at death, so how can we argue that he didn’t know what happens to a human being’s soul/consciousness at death? This whole idea that Solomon, the author of large portions of Scripture, didn’t know what he was talking about concerning what happens to a human being at death, is absurd. Especially when you consider that he made several very specific statements about what happens at death and about the future judgment of humanity that are confirmed by David and the New Testament.

Bottom line, the “under the sun” perspective of the book of Ecclesiastes by itself does not prove or disprove anything whatsoever about what Solomon believed concerning death. All of Solomon’s comments about life “under the sun” make perfect sense when one assumes he meant exactly what he said about death (that death is unconscious, dead people do not know anything and are unable to enjoy anything) and when one assumes that when he talks about God judging the deeds of men in the future, he is referring to the white throne judgment (of resurrected people), not conscious death. (Even people who believe in conscious death must admit that Scripture speaks only of the future judgment and reward as occurring *after the resurrection of people to life*, not during death – see Rev. 20:5, 11-13 and Hebrews 11:35-40. Which highlights a couple of the blatant logical problems with the idea of conscious death: Why would God need to resurrect Christians and Godly people to life at the rapture if we’re already hanging out consciously with Him in heaven immediately upon death? And, if hell was real, how could God justify decreeing that billions of people be tortured for many years before even giving them a chance to be judged at the white throne judgment?)

Friends, the fact that Ecclesiastes contains commentary about life right now “under the sun”, does not in any way prove that Solomon didn’t mean exactly what he said about death. And in fact there are many statements in Ecclesiastes that would make no sense

whatsoever or would be outright lies if Solomon believed in conscious death, and there are many statements that Solomon would have no reason to make if he did not know exactly what happens to a human soul and spirit at death. (For example, why would Solomon dare or bother to say what he says in Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, and 12:7, if he did not know these statements to be true, or if he believed the opposite? When reading Ecclesiastes 12:7, keep in mind that the Hebrew word for “breath” is the same as the word for “spirit”, and keep in mind that David’s statement in Psalm 31:5 perfectly corroborates Ecclesiastes 12:7 and was quoted by Jesus about what would happen to His spirit the moment He died. When reading Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, keep in mind that David’s statements in Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 146:4, and Psalm 16:10 perfectly corroborate it and the New Testament quotes David regarding this in Acts 2:27.)

People who claim that “the under the sun perspective of Ecclesiastes proves that Solomon did not mean exactly what he said about death” have no logical or Scriptural leg to stand on. As we’ve already seen, it would be ridiculous to claim that Solomon doesn’t mean exactly what he says about death, because David, in the Psalms, confirms Solomon’s specific statements about death in Ecclesiastes, and the New Testament *confirms David’s statements about death by quoting him twice in regards to Jesus’ own death*. David solidly confirmed what Solomon said about death, and the New Testament quotes David about this subject, so if Solomon was giving “limited” or “incorrect” or “ignorant” statements about death in Ecclesiastes that later needed to be corrected and/or expanded upon, why do David, Jesus Himself, and the apostle Peter confirm exactly what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes about what happens to the soul and spirit at death? (As you’ll see, everything Jesus and the apostle Paul said about death matches up perfectly with what David, Solomon, Jesus, and Peter said about death, when you “fill in the blanks” of unclear statements with Scripture itself rather than with pagan ideas inherited from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages.)

It is not enough to simply cry “progressive revelation!” and “the scope of Ecclesiastes is limited!” and then carelessly discard Solomon’s statements about death. Because David, Peter, and Christ Himself clearly confirm Solomon’s statements about death in Ecclesiastes (see Ecc. 9:5, 10 + Ps. 6:5, + Ps. 115:17 + Ps. 146:4 + Ps. 16:10 + Acts 2:27, and Ecc. 12:7 + Ps. 31:5 + Lk. 23:46), we would have to have solid proof elsewhere in Scripture that death is conscious in order to discard Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, and 12:7 as “incomplete” or “in need of correction/clarification”. Needless to say, there is no Scriptural proof that Solomon’s statements about death should be discarded. (If we were able to find any, we’d have the impossible problem of explaining why David and Peter and Jesus Himself *confirm* Solomon’s specific statements about what happens to the human soul and the human spirit at death!) The Bible does not contradict itself in this matter or show us any type of “progressive revelation” about what happens at death, but rather confirms David and Solomon’s statements about death over and over again.

By the way, let me make sure you don’t get confused by the wording of Acts 2:27 and Psalm 16:10. These verses say from the perspective of Jesus, “You (God the Father) will not abandon My soul to sheol/hades (the unseen), nor will you allow Your Holy One

to undergo decay.” Some people might initially think the phrase “You will not abandon my soul do sheol/hades” means that Jesus’ soul didn’t go to sheol/hades at all. But the next phrase, about God not allowing Jesus’ body to rot, makes it clear that this passage is using somewhat fancy language (it was originally part of a Psalm, a song) to talk about how God the Father, although He allowed Jesus to die, would not allow Jesus’ soul to *remain* in the unseen (unconscious) or His body to *remain* in the grave rotting. It would not be *abandoned* there. In other words, the phrase “You will not abandon my soul to sheol/hades” does not mean that Jesus’ soul never went to sheol/hades, but rather that it went there but God didn’t allow it to stay there or be abandoned there, just as God allowed His body to go into the grave but didn’t allow it to stay there or be abandoned there. You see what I mean. The passage is clear. Don’t be confused by the fancy psalmist/song phrasing of Psalm 16:10 (as quoted in Acts 2:27).

The fact that Jesus’ soul went to soul/hades/the-unseen (Ps. 16:10, Acts 2:27) matches up perfectly with Psalm 6:5 and 115:17 where David says that at death a person goes to soul/hades/the-unseen where there is silence and no one remembers or praises the Lord. Jesus was a human being, and Psalm 16:10/Acts 2:27 combined with Psalm 6:5 and 115:17 confirms without a shadow of a doubt that His body went into the grave and His soul went to sheol/hades/the-unseen where He did not remember or praise the Lord and where there is silence. Obviously the only way Jesus would “not remember” His Father is if He (Jesus) was unconscious. This is not rocket science. All the Scriptures match up perfectly with each other. What happened to Jesus at death was no different than what happens to every other human being at death. See also 1 Corinthians 15:20 for confirmation of this.

And as I’ll explain in more detail in a moment, this whole way of speaking of a person’s soul/consciousness “going to the unseen” we find in Scripture is probably/possibly just a fancy/poetic way of saying the person becomes unconscious. Even if sheol/hades/the-unseen is a real place, a human being is not conscious when their soul goes there – see Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17, Ps. 146:2, etc.

People who claim 1 Peter 3:19 says that Jesus preached to conscious people in hell while He was dead are a) *completely fabricating* an unscriptural meaning for sheol/hades – it is not “hell”, b) *ignoring* the fact that Jesus cannot possibly have preached to anyone in sheol/hades because David (as quoted by Peter in the New Testament) said Jesus’ soul went to sheol/hades but he also said it is silent there and no one remembers the Lord, and c) *ignoring* the context of that verse which tells us He did this preaching after He was “made alive” – resurrected – and that these “spirits” to whom He preached were fallen angels who disobeyed in Genesis 6, as confirmed by Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4. (The Bible never speaks of human beings as mere “spirits” but often calls angels “spirits”.) The total butchering of 1 Peter 3:19 is a classic example of modern Christians carelessly taking a verse totally out of context and butchering it, ignoring all the other related Scriptures which explain it perfectly, and instead artificially superimposing a Middle-Ages-Catholicism inherited pagan idea (hell

and conscious death) on top of it. If the apostle Peter knew how many modern Christians interpret his statement in 1 Peter 3:19 he would be aghast with horror.

The bottom line is, **the New Testament and Christ Himself confirm that Solomon and David understood death perfectly, by quoting David concerning exactly what happened to Christ's own spirit and Christ's own soul at death.** To discard or modify what these two giants of Biblical history (the wisest man other than Christ who ever lived, and a prophet/king, both of whom wrote large portions of Scripture) say about death would require solid proof elsewhere in Scripture. And there is no proof in Scripture that their statements about death were incorrect; the New Testament confirms their statements about death by directly and specifically quoting David in the case of what happened to Jesus' own soul and Jesus' own spirit at death, and every single statement about death in the Bible can be shown to match up perfectly with Solomon and David's statements about it. (That's what I'll spend the rest of this chapter doing.)

The mistake many Middle-Ages-Catholicism/pagan-influenced modern Christians make is that they completely ignore the most straightforward statements about death in the Bible (those made by Solomon and David and confirmed by the New Testament's quoting of David), and ignore the fact that the New Testament directly quotes David regarding Jesus' own death, and instead artificially superimpose their preconceived idea of conscious death (the idea that Christians are consciously chatting with Jesus the moment we die and everybody else is screaming in hell the moment they die) upon a few Bible verses that do not actually say that dead people or dead Christians are conscious. In a moment I will explain more thoroughly the Scriptural definitions of "soul" and "spirit", the Scriptural difference between them, and what happens to each at death according to clear statements in the Bible. The modern Christian is easily confused when reading certain Biblical passages about death because they treat soul and spirit as if they are the same thing; they do not understand the clear Scriptural definition of each, and they do not understand the clear Scriptural information about what happens to each at death.

The typical modern Christian has not been taught the clear Scriptural difference between soul and spirit and what happens to each at death, and instead has simply been swept along in the tide of vague Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited ideas about death that mash soul and spirit together without clearly defining them. Thus modern Christians have trouble wrapping their heads around the Scriptural idea of your spirit being in heaven *unconsciously* when you die. The fact that at death the spirit "returns to God who gave it" *unconsciously* (unconscious without a body to express consciousness/soul through) is plainly taught by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 and 12:7, and corroborated by David in Psalm 6:5, 115:17, and 146:4 along with the New Testament quoting David about Jesus' death in Luke 23:46 and Acts 2:27. After reading these passages that match up with each other perfectly, it becomes obvious that to claim that your spirit goes to God consciously when you die would require calling David and Solomon along with Jesus and Peter (who quoted David) liars or schizophrenics.

This confusion among modern Christians about going to God when we die – the difficulty in grasping the idea of our spirit going to God *unconsciously* – is a case of a disconnect in culture and assumed knowledge (preconceived ideas, knowledge assumed to be correct or obvious) between modern Christians and the Biblical writers and their audiences thousands of years ago. This disconnect has been caused by the Catholicism of the Middle Ages and its artificial melding of pagan ideas with Christian ones. The typical modern Christian thinks, “It’s weird and different and strange to think of my spirit going to be with God *unconsciously* at death – I’m so accustomed to thinking of chatting with Jesus immediately when I die.” But it was not weird or strange for Godly people in Bible times to think about becoming unconscious in death. It was assumed, because this is what Solomon, David, Jesus, Peter, and Paul clearly taught.

So when modern Christians read a certain passage in the New Testament that does not have full or complete information about what happens at death, and is not clear in and of itself regarding all the details of what happens to soul and spirit at death (say for example where Jesus or Paul talk about being with God at death), and *the passage itself does not specifically state* whether the person who goes to be with God at death goes there *unconsciously* (their spirit unconscious apart from a body according to Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, 146:4, Acts 2:27, & Lk. 23:46) *or consciously*, modern Christians instantly and automatically start superimposing their Catholic-inherited idea upon the passage: “I’m gonna be chatting with Jesus the instant I die!” But a Godly person in Bible times never would have thought that way, because they had not learned to think that way from Middle-Ages-Catholicism/paganism. The only teachings about death Israelite people and Christian believers in Bible times had was Solomon and David and the Old Testament’s clear teachings about it, and Jesus’, Peter’s, and Paul’s confirmations of what Solomon and David said. Back then, Middle-Ages-Catholicism/paganism had not muddied the waters yet, so there was no need for the Biblical writers to add all sorts of clarifications to passages that talk about being with God immediately at death. The Israelite/early-Christian audience back then just *assumed* that what they had always been taught about death (death is unconscious and at death the spirit returns to God unconsciously while the soul – the consciousness – goes to the “sheol/hades/the-unseen” according to Solomon and David) was true.

So when Jesus and Paul said something about being with God at death, they knew that their audience understood them and that what they were saying matched up perfectly with Solomon and David; they and their audience assumed a person’s spirit goes to be with God unconsciously...But the modern Christian has been taught to ignore Solomon and David and go with the pagan idea of conscious death. So the modern Christian assumes something completely different about any passage where it’s not clearly stated whether the person is with God consciously or unconsciously, than an ancient Godly person in Bible times would have. This is why I have to take a bit of time to unravel the confusion. It’s worth taking the time to explain it in detail, because the idea of our spirit going to be with God unconsciously at death, although clearly stated by Solomon and David and corroborated perfectly by (and never disproved by) every single passage in the Bible about death, sounds weird and different to a modern Christian. Really, it all comes down to one

basic question: Are we going to discard what Solomon and David said about death and *superimpose our Middle-Ages-Catholic-inherited idea* of what happens at death upon certain Bible passages that aren't clear in and of themselves, or are we going to *superimpose the clear statements of Solomon and David (corroborated by Jesus and Peter who quoted David)* upon those unclear passages?

On my website BreakthroughBibleInsights.com (in the hell articles section) I have an article called *Soul Sleep – Is It Scriptural?* in which I go through virtually every Scripture that is used in an attempt to prove that the Bible teaches conscious death, and show that when examined carefully, not a single one of these Bible passages actually says that the normal state of a human being in death is consciousness, and in fact every single one of those passages perfectly corroborates Solomon and David's statements about unconscious death. If you have a question about a Bible passage concerning death that is not answered by this chapter, check out that article – you'll probably find the passage explained there. That chapter abundantly illustrates that the only way you can ascribe the idea of conscious death to any of these Bible passages is to start with that assumption and *artificially superimpose* it upon the passage – not a single one of those passages actually states that the normal state of human beings in death is consciousness. What you will see by reading to the end of this book is that refreshingly clear, airtight, logical, provable conclusions about Scripture come only when we *use plain statements of Scripture to interpret unclear ones*, rather than superimposing preconceived unscriptural (pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited) ideas on top of unclear passages.

In a moment we'll look at some of the things Jesus and Paul said about death, and we'll see that a couple of their commonly misunderstood statements about death, when examined carefully, actually match up perfectly with Solomon and David's statements about it. But first I want to explain another extremely important basic truth that is essential for understanding what the Bible teaches about death: the Scriptural definition of a human being's "soul", and the Scriptural definition of a human being's "spirit". This basic truth is a major key to seeing how many New Testament statements about death perfectly corroborate Solomon's and David's statements about death.

What Spirit and Soul Really Are According To the Bible

Careful Biblical study demonstrates that

a) Soul and spirit are two different things. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete." *Much of Christianity's confusion comes from thinking of soul and spirit as interchangeable and carelessly using these terms interchangeably, when they are two entirely different things!*

b) "Soul" refers to *consciousness*. *Soul, Biblically, is the ability to interact with your environment,*

to feel, etc. – to be conscious. For example, the Bible says that animals have souls, but not spirits. Genesis 1:30, referring to animals, says, “every living thing in which is a living soul”. This is because even animals have consciousness and the ability to interact with their environment. So we see that in Scripture, “soul” refers to *conscious experience*.

c) A human being’s “spirit” (or the underlying Greek/Hebrew word which is the same as the word for “breath”) does not refer to consciousness but rather to what I might call the “God part” of a person and/or simply the fact that they are breathing in and out. The word “breath” is obviously a handy analogy for the invisible spirit of a person or a spirit being like an angel or demon. In the Bible the Greek and Hebrew word “breath” is used to refer to spirit – something that is invisible but real. Thus you have to look at the context anytime the Greek or Hebrew word “breath” is used to see if it is referring to physical breath, to the invisible “God part” (my term) of a human being, or to a spirit being like a demon or angel. And we must also remember that according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, quoted above, the spirit of a human being is *separate* and *distinct* from the soul/consciousness of a human being.

Note: Middle Ages Catholicism blurred the distinction between a human’s soul and spirit when it comes to death, to the point where many modern Christians use the terms interchangeably when speaking of death. Godly people in Bible days, on the other hand, were extremely familiar with and took for granted the specifics I’m explaining to you here about what exactly a human’s soul and spirit are, and exactly where each goes at death.

d) A human being is conscious (becomes a “living soul”) only when a spirit from God is united with a working physical body – see Genesis 2:7.

e) Death is a return of each part (spirit, soul, body) to where it came from – it is Genesis 2:7 in reverse. The body returns to the ground. The soul (consciousness or conscious experience), which might be spoken of more accurately as a state rather than as an actual entity or thing, returns to the “unseen/unperceived” (possibly/probably a poetic way of saying a person becomes unconscious). (Even if a human’s soul is an entity of some sort and the unseen/sheol/hades is an actual place of some sort that is invisible to the human eye, the Bible is absolutely clear that there is no conscious activity there.) And as we’ve seen, Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us that death the spirit “returns to God who gave it”. The key part about this to understand is that the spirit returns to God *unconsciously*, it is *not conscious* when separated from a working physical body. (See Ecc. 12:7 and 9:5, 9:10).

The best analogy I’ve heard about soul and spirit, which is not perfect but comes closest to visually explaining the true teaching of the entire Bible on this subject, is the analogy of a light bulb. The physical parts of the light bulb are the body. The electricity is the spirit. The light is the soul. The light comes on when electricity joins with the physical parts of the bulb. In the same way, you are conscious when your spirit is united with your body. Smash the light bulb – hurt the body badly enough – and the light goes out; you die. Or, turn off the electricity – remove the spirit from the body – and the light goes out; you

die. And the reverse is true: as we see in Genesis 2:7, a human is only alive/conscious (the light is only on) when a spirit (the electricity) is united with a working physical body (the physical light bulb through which the light/consciousness shines).

Let me make it clear that the above analogy is not the *basis* of what I'm saying about this subject, it's just an analogy that somewhat accurately depicts what the Bible itself teaches about the makeup of human beings (Gen. 2:7, 1 Thess. 5:23), what happens to them at death, and what is required for a human being to be alive/conscious (a spirit must be joined with a working body to produce soul/consciousness). The Bible tells us that at death each part of a human being – body, soul, and spirit – returns to its element, where it originally came from; the body returns to the ground, the spirit/breath/invisible-God-element returns to God (unconscious without the body, see Gen. 2:7, Ecc. 12:7, Lk. 23:46, Ecc. 9:5, Ecc. 9:10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17, Ps. 146:4), and the soul/consciousness goes to the “unseen” (a way of saying the person becomes unconscious).

The Bible says that at death the soul goes to the “unseen” (Acts 2:27-31). Again, the Greek word “the unseen” is “hades”, “un-perceived”, the equivalent of the Hebrew word “sheol”, which also means “the unseen” or “unperceived”. The soul (which as I said, in the Bible equates to consciousness or conscious experience) going to the “unseen” or “unperceived” is possibly a fancy/poetic way of saying you become unconscious. Some people may say that “the unseen/sheol/hades” is an actual place, some type of location that is not visible from earth or not visible to the human eye. Even if the soul/consciousness is some type of tangible entity (not perceivable by the five human senses, but an actual entity) that goes to some type of actual place (not perceivable by the five human senses, but an actual place of some sort) at death, the fact remains that the person and/or their soul is not conscious in death and the normal death state is unconsciousness. Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Psalm 146:4, Psalm 115:17, and Psalm 6:5 (along with the constant corroborating use throughout Scripture of the analogies of sleep for death and being “awake” for being alive, and the New Testament’s quotation/confirmation of David’s and Solomon’s statements about death) make this abundantly clear.

The main reason I lean toward the “it’s just a fancy/poetic way of saying a person becomes unconscious” idea rather than the “sheol/hades/the-unseen is an actual place” idea is that the Bible never speaks of a person’s “soul” dying, or their “spirit” dying, it always speaks of the *person* dying; and Genesis 2:7 tells us that Adam “*became* a living soul” when a spirit from God was united with Adam’s physical body. This tells us that there is no such thing as a human soul (consciousness, “a living soul”) *unless* a spirit is united with a body. The Bible also clearly tells us that the personality elements that make up a person are contained or “wrapped up” (my term) in the *spirit*, not the soul (1 Cor. 2:11). The soul/consciousness is just the conscious expression of those personality elements that takes place when the spirit has something to express itself through (a physical body). Thus when the spirit returns to God at death (Ecc. 12:7, Ps. 31:5, Lk. 23:46), the personality elements contained in the spirit go with it and God “remembers” (my term) who the person is and the personality elements contained in the spirit, while the person becomes unconscious

because the spirit is no longer attached to a physical body and thus has nothing to express itself through.

If you carefully examine everything else I say in this chapter and every Scriptural statement about death, you will see that this “Genesis 2:7 and its reverse in death” principle holds true in every single reference to death in Scripture. The confusion only enters in when modern Middle-Ages-Catholicism/pagan-trained Christians artificially superimpose the idea of conscious death onto passages that aren’t 100% clear on their own as to whether the person “goes to be with God” at death consciously or unconsciously. If we assume David and Solomon knew exactly what they were talking about concerning death and that the “Genesis 2:7 and its reverse in death” principle holds true throughout Scripture, every single Biblical passage and statement about death matches up with the others perfectly.

And don’t be confused by Jesus warning the Israelites 2,000 years ago about “losing your soul”. When we understand that even animals have souls (consciousness), and that soul refers to conscious experience, it is clear that He was telling the Israelites that if they tried to save or tightly hold on to their lives (their conscious experience in this age, if they lived primarily for comfort and pleasure in this age) they would lose their souls – their conscious experience – in the next age of life on earth, what today we would call the millennium; they would lose “eonian life” (the privilege of being alive on earth, conscious in physical bodies during the millennium and New Jerusalem age). This statement Jesus made makes perfect sense when you realize that His preaching to Israel 2,000 years ago was all about giving them a chance to see the kingdom come to earth within their lifetimes (to see what we would now call the millennium occur *back then*) if they met certain conditions (which they obviously did not meet, because the kingdom did not come back then). In Chapter 9 I will explain more details about this, and you will understand it perfectly. My point for the purposes of this chapter is that nothing Jesus said about the soul or “losing your soul” contradicts the simple definition of soul used in the rest of Scripture – consciousness or conscious experience. Part of modern Christianity’s confusing mental mish-mash concerning what the “soul” is, is due to misunderstanding Jesus’ preaching to Israel. His preaching to Israel was primarily about giving them a chance to take part in the next age of life on earth, not conscious death or “the afterlife” – terms and concepts not found in Scripture. I’ll explain more about this in Chapter 9.

We also see Jesus referring to the “soul” as conscious life in the next age in Matthew 10:28, where He exhorted His disciples, “Do not fear those who are killing the body, yet are not able to kill the soul. Yet be fearing Him, rather, Who is able to destroy the soul as well as the body in Gehenna” (The Concordant Version). First of all, this statement by Jesus is further proof that the fire in Gehenna in the future will not be a nebulous spirit fire, because a nebulous spirit could not destroy a person’s body. The typical modern Christian’s knee-jerk interpretation of this statement is to assume that the “soul” is some type of entity or part of the person that remains conscious apart from the body, and that “Gehenna” refers to a nebulous spirit fire. But that interpretation is total nonsense – a nebulous spirit fire could not destroy a person’s body! Only a physical fire could destroy a person’s body.

So what, then, does Jesus mean when He talks about “killing/destroying the soul”? Well, the same thing Scripture always means when it uses the term “soul” – conscious experience. You’ll understand this better after you read Chapter 9, but with this statement Jesus was reminding His disciples that the earthly rulers of this age can kill a Godly person’s body but cannot stop the Godly person from experiencing life in the next age.

You see, a Godly person back in Bible days understood the Scriptural definition of “soul” and had not yet been confused by the pagan ideas mixed in with Christianity in the Middle Ages, and thus assumed that the “soul” referred to conscious life *only when a person has a functioning body*. Therefore, when they heard Jesus talking about earthly rulers in this age killing the body but not the soul, as contrasted with God who at the beginning of the next age will have the power to kill the body *and* the soul by killing evil people and throwing their bodies into the fire in the valley of Gehenna, they automatically thought of “soul” as “life in the next age after the Messiah begins to rule the earth”. As you will learn in Chapter 9, this matched up perfectly with their mindset, which was all about waiting for the Messiah. When they heard Jesus speak Matthew 10:28, they instinctively and automatically (without even thinking about it) realized that He was saying, “The rulers of this age can kill your body now but they cannot stop Me from resurrecting you and giving you the ability to experience life in the next age on earth – they cannot kill your “soul” or your ability to experience life in the next age. On the other hand God has the power to kill a person at the beginning of the next age and cause them to remain dead throughout that age, thus killing/destroying their conscious experience during that age.” This made perfect sense to Godly Israelites back then because their mindset was completely focused on the Messiah taking over rulership of the earth. They weren’t even thinking about the totally unscriptural ideas of “hanging out in heaven forever” or conscious death; those concepts didn’t even cross their mind.

Some might say, “Yeah, but Jesus didn’t actually say ‘in the next age’ when talking about the soul and killing the soul – He just talked about killing the soul.” I know He didn’t actually say ‘in the next age’, but Israelites back then would have assumed that’s what He was referring to. That’s what they were thinking about constantly – the next age of life on earth when the Messiah would rule the earth. It’s the equivalent of you and I watching a Chicago Bulls basketball game in 1991 and suddenly I turn to you and say, “Michael’s been on the bench for a few minutes but he just stood up – he’s going in!” You automatically in your mind add the words “Jordan” and “to the game” to the sentence, so that you hear my statement as “Michael *Jordan* has been on the bench for a few minutes but he just stood up – he’s going in *to the game*.” The words “Jordan” and “to the game” are totally unnecessary for me to actually say, because I know you know exactly what I mean, because both of our minds are obsessed with Michael Jordan being in the game, because when he’s in the game, the game is totally different because he’s the best player in the world and the Bulls are not a very good team without him in the game. But take someone living 2,000 years later who is not familiar with basketball or its rules or Michael Jordan or his importance the 1990’s era Chicago Bulls, who hears the statement “Michael’s been on the bench for a few minutes, but he just stood up – he’s going in!” is going to think, “Michael *who?* And *where exactly* is he

going in to?” It’s the same with Matthew 10:28 – Jesus did not have to say “the next age” when talking about the “soul” in Matthew 10:28 because in the context of Jesus’ constant preaching about the next age of life on earth and the raging controversy in Israel as to whether He was the Messiah (who all Israelites were expecting to take over physical rulership of earth, see Chapter 9), “experiencing the next age of life on earth under the Messiah’s rule” came to the minds of His audience when He talked about the “soul” as naturally as the word “Jordan” came to the minds of 1990’s basketball fans watching a Chicago Bulls game and hearing a friend or the announcer saying “Michael”.

On the other hand, due to the leftover influence of Middle Ages Catholicism, modern Christians tend to more naturally think in terms of the totally unscriptural ideas of “hanging out in heaven forever” and “conscious afterlife (conscious death)”, and therefore they interpret Matthew 10:28 as if Jesus is trying to scare people with the prospect of their “soul” remaining conscious in death and suffering in a nebulous spirit fire in Gehenna. But in order to interpret this statement of Jesus the Middle-Ages-Catholic-inherited way, they must *conveniently overlook the obvious fact that a nebulous spirit fire could not destroy a person’s body!* The fact that a nebulous spirit fire could not destroy a person’s body renders the Middle-Ages-Catholic-inherited interpretation of Matthew 10:28 utterly nonsensical.

The only way this statement of Christ’s makes any sense at all is to interpret it with the mindset of a Godly person 2,000 years ago and with the same definition of “soul” Scripture uses at all times – as referring to the consciousness, the conscious experience, which a person has when their spirit from God is joined to their physical body. When we interpret it in a way consistent with the rest of Scripture, consistent with the “next-age-of-life-on-earth-under-the-Messiah’s-rule-obsessed” mindset of Israelites living 2,000 years ago (you’ll learn more about this in Chapter 9 of this book), the “Matthew 10:28 jigsaw puzzle piece” fits together perfectly with all the other jigsaw puzzle pieces that make up the perfectly cohesive picture in the Bible of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for mankind that you are learning in this book. At the beginning of the next age of life on earth, Jesus (with His Father’s authority of course) will kill evil people and throw their bodies/corpses in a fire in the valley of Gehenna, thus destroying both their body and their “soul” (their conscious experience in the millennium under His reign). The earthly rulers of this age can only kill a Godly person’s body now, temporarily (thus causing the person to be unconscious for a little while for the rest of this age), but they are completely unable to stop Jesus from resurrecting the person at the rapture so the person can have an enjoyable conscious experience when it really counts, in the next age when Jesus begins to rule the earth. An earthly ruler in this age can (temporarily) “kill the body” of a Godly person but cannot (permanently) “kill the soul” (stop the person from experiencing life on earth in the next age under Jesus’ rule). This makes perfect sense when we enter into the mindset of Israelites 2,000 years ago who were obsessed with the Messiah returning to rule physically over the earth, and with having a nice life when He did so. It is exactly how they would have understood Jesus’ statement in Matthew 10:28, as naturally and unconsciously as a 1990s Chicago Bulls fan would understand the word “Jordan” when they heard the word “Michael” while watching a Bulls game. Again, in Chapter 9 of this book you’ll learn more

about the mindset of Israelites 2,000 years ago, and you'll become even more convinced that this interpretation of Matthew 10:28 is absolutely correct and perfectly consistent with the rest of Scripture.

The bottom line is, we see clearly and consistently in Scripture that at death a human being becomes unconscious, which is sometimes spoken of poetically as the person's soul/consciousness going to the "unseen" ("sheol" or "hades") or metaphorically as the person "sleeping". As I've mentioned, Modern Christianity's confusion on this subject stems from pagan ideas combined with Christianity in the Middle Ages by Catholicism. For example, the Old English (English in the Middle Ages) word "hel" (that's not a typo, it used to be spelled with one "L"), hundreds of years ago, simply meant "the unseen". So back then, "hel" would have been an accurate translation of the Greek word "hades" ("un-perceived") or "sheol" (its Hebrew equivalent). But as paganism was combined with Christianity during the Middle Ages and solidified into an "official pagan/Christian mish-mash" during that time in history, this English word "hel" began to have its meaning twisted until it eventually took on a *pagan* meaning (burning forever in the conscious afterlife) in the minds of most people. So today, the modern English word "hell" (which everyone takes to mean burning forever in the conscious afterlife, a pagan concept) is no longer an accurate translation of "hades" ("un-perceived") or its Old Testament equivalent "sheol".

Today, due to pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism leftover traditions in the minds of Bible translators, the Greek word "hades" ("un-perceived") and its equivalent Hebrew word "sheol" are still sometimes ridiculously mistranslated as "hell" in your English Bible, even though there is no indication anywhere in Scripture of any consciousness or suffering in the "unseen" or "sheol" in Scripture, and in fact the Scriptures state explicitly that there is no such thing going on there (Ecc. 9:5 & 10, Ps. 6:5, 146:4). (Some may say it's up for debate whether "sheol"/"hades" is an actual place of some sort or just a poetic way of speaking about death and saying a person becomes unconscious; to be honest I don't really care all that much either way, because the Bible makes it abundantly clear over and over again that there is no consciousness in death; even if people's souls/consciousnesses are somehow actual entities, those souls "*know nothing*" – *are unconscious* – in death/sheol/hades, and that is the main thing.)

It is extremely important to understand the Scriptural definition of death (a human's spirit being separated from their body resulting in unconsciousness), because it enables us to better understand God, particularly when it comes to His methods of judgment and punishment for sin. How can we understand God if we think the wages of sin is one thing, when really it is something else? How can you understand a father if you think he tortures his children when they do the wrong thing, when in reality he just grounds them for a while or makes them take a nap and miss out on some fun things? If you mistakenly think he tortures his kids when they do something wrong, your view of the man will be completely out of whack! But once you find out he is merely grounding his children (or making them take a nap, causing them to miss out on life for a while), not torturing them, your view of

this father changes, and you understand that he is completely reasonable. You see what I mean. The Bible says, “The wages of sin is *death*” (not hell!) (Rom. 3:23). The punishment for sin is not hell or torture, it is death – unconsciousness. Death is a very humane, yet just, punishment for sin.

Death (Unconsciousness): The Perfectly Fair Punishment For Sin

Unconsciousness, “sleep”, death, your soul (consciousness) going to “the unseen” – pick your word or phrase – is a very *just and fair* punishment for sin. The punishment of death fits the crime of sin perfectly.

Surely any thinking person can see that **the pagan concept of eternal (trillions upon trillions of years of endless) torture, burning and screaming, as a punishment would be way out of proportion with any crime it is possible to commit in a mere 100 years (or in many cases, much less) on this earth.** In order for trillions of years of torture to be a just punishment, the person being punished must have tortured others for trillions of years! (This is why most Christian preachers avoid preaching extensively on endless punishment – it makes no logical or philosophical sense, and preachers do not want to expose a nonsensical aspect of their belief system that they don’t have any clue how to explain.)

On the other hand, **death (unconsciousness, inability to operate and interact with your environment) is a *just – perfectly fair and reasonable – punishment for sin.***

What is sin? The word “sin” means “missing the mark”. Sin is simply to operate incorrectly, in a manner that is contrary to God's design. When a person sins they are operating in a way that God did not design people to operate (even though He knew beforehand they would try sin and made provision for it before He even created the world – see later chapters where I explain God’s grand plan for humanity). Let me explain this concept a bit more, because it is important.

If I buy a BMW but it ignores my driving input on the steering wheel and does its own thing, insisting on driving into a lake every time I try to drive it, I’m eventually going to have to put it out of commission at least temporarily. Sorry, Beemer, I can't drive you for a while. You’re not operating the way you were designed to operate and therefore *you’re dangerous to yourself and others.* Your builders in Germany designed you to operate in a certain way, for a reason. And since you're not operating that way, *you're a pain-causer.* You will hurt yourself and others. You’re a “sinner”. The just, fair, and logical “wages” (Rom. 3:23) or consequences of sin, is to be put out of commission for a while. Death. Unconsciousness.

No need for “eternal fire” (which is not taught by the Bible anyway, it only *seems* to be

in some English Bibles because of blatant mistranslations). Yeah, I might get mad at the Beemer – that’s natural. I might take my fist and pound the steering wheel a few times. Yes, God’s wrath *will* come upon sinful humanity on earth for a short time at the end of this age (see Revelation 16). (Also keep in mind that the people upon whom this wrath will come will have seen Jesus appear in the sky with their own eyes and gather Christians to Himself in the sky, and despite this will have remained rebellious – see Matt. 24:29-32.) But this wrath that God will pour out on blatantly rebellious people who have seen Jesus with their own eyes and still rebel, for a few days at the end of this age (see my book on the end times for more info) has nothing to do with “eternal fire” – that would be unnecessary, unjust, and unproductive. (Remember, both Scriptural “fire events” everybody is so scared of will be physical fires that burn physical bodies and cause physical death on this physical earth – see the next chapter for more details on the lake of fire. And see my explanation of Revelation 14:9-11 in my article *Debunking Francis Chan’s Book On Hell, Part 2* in the Hell Articles section of my website www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com.)

If I’m a smart Beemer owner, I won’t burn it to a crisp! What would be the point of that? What would it accomplish? That Beemer is way too big an investment! As a smart Beemer owner, I’ll *recognize what’s wrong with it, put it out of commission for awhile, take some time to fix it, and then when it’s fixed, I’ll drive it for a long time and derive great pleasure from it.*

What about God – is He a smart Beemer owner? Yes!

Fortunately, death is temporary – for everyone. In later chapters I will explain in detail from straightforward Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, how God will eventually defeat both sin and death so that death is no longer necessary and everyone will eventually have an immortal/incorruptible (undying) body. I’m glad God doesn’t leave humanity in the junkyard! As you’ll see in a later chapter where I’ll explain the white throne judgment and the true meaning of the word “judgment” in Scripture, death is actually a parking lot at God’s mechanic shop. Some cars (Christians) are chosen by God (usually because of our weakness and foolishness, see 1 Cor. 1:26-29) to “get fixed” before others (the rest of humanity), but in the end He’ll fix everybody. (*See Is. 45:23, Php. 2:10-11, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, 1 Tim. 4:10, Romans 5:18, 3:24, & 11:32, Col. 1:16-20, Eph. 1:10 etc. and the later chapters of this book – if you haven’t read those verses and the rest of this book yet, please don’t judge what I’m saying until you do! If these plain statements of Scripture aren’t true, then why not just burn the whole Bible instead of just cutting out these particular verses which most Christians ignore!*)

God has made way too big an investment in humanity to burn us to a crisp (over and over for trillions upon trillions of years, for eternity and ultimately) – that’s ridiculous. Why would He ever have brought us into existence in the first place if He knew that would be the end of most of us? **Fortunately the Bible doesn’t teach that. It teaches that eventually God will abolish death (everyone will be alive and conscious permanently) and He will become “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:20-28).** According to 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, by the time God is done with His plan for the ages, there will be no more death (which also means there will be no more sin, since death is the consequence of

sin – see Romans 6:23), and we'll all be in immortal bodies enjoying God and each other, living the way God designed us to live. Again, for a full explanation of God's plan for humanity and the three "vivifications" (Greek word used by Paul to describe resurrections of human beings into immortal bodies) outlined in Scripture that will make this possible, keep reading to the end of this book.

During the five ages of human history (which I'll explain from the Scriptures in Chapter 7), God uses death as a lesson in itself; I'll explain this more fully in a later chapter. He also uses death as way to limit evil on earth during the period (this present age) in which He is allowing evil to run its course. Let me explain.

If you recall, the Bible describes human life spans as being many hundreds of years towards the beginning of human history. After the debacle that made the great flood necessary, (fallen angels mating extensively with humans and their genetic freak offspring and virtually all of humanity giving themselves completely to wickedness as a result, as described in Genesis 6 and explained in my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com), God reduced the lifespan of human beings to around 70 to 100 years. This is long enough for a human to learn some lessons during this life (even if they don't get "saved" in this age, most people have much more wisdom at the age of 70 than they do at the age of 20), but not long enough for those who have dedicated themselves to evil to spread their wickedness too extensively.

In other words, with every new generation there is somewhat of a fresh start. Although the wicked and the righteous both tend to pass on their values to their offspring, long life spans early in history had the tendency of giving the evil members of the population an advantage. If two people are playing a game, and one person cheats while the other doesn't, who is going to win? In this age God is allowing Satan to rule the world (2 Cor. 4:4) and to handpick its highest-level leaders (Lk. 4:5-6) with His permission (Romans 13). He is allowing "cheaters" to win in this age, yet He must maintain a somewhat delicate balance of good and evil (I'll explain why later in this book). The shorter lifespan of human beings in this Satan-ruled age evens out some of the advantage evil has, and helps maintain more of a balance between good and evil than was present earlier in human history when lifespans were many hundreds of years. Of course, towards the very end of this age God will allow Satan to gain more control over the earth's population than ever before, until he is able to install a one world government with the antichrist as its leader; God will allow this temporary drastic tipping of the balance of power towards evil (Rev. 13:7) at the end of this age for a logical reason which you will fully understand by the end of this book.

The ability for "cheaters" to win (evil people to gain a power advantage through deception, corruption, and the willingness to use force and intrigue for any reason that benefits them regardless of how right, just, or fair it is) over good people (those not willing to do such things) will only be fully curbed in the next age (the millennium, when Jesus rules the earth) by the fact that Jesus will be able to use supernatural force, supernatural knowledge, and a supernatural leadership team (incorruptible Christians in immortal bodies)

with the ability to walk through walls, etc., to curb corruption and evil (Rev. 19:15 & 21, Jn. 20:19). In the millennium, the people of earth (those who did not take part in the rapture but lived through the last days of this age, and their descendants) will be just like people who live today – it’s just that world leaders (Jesus and His leadership team, those who took part in the rapture) will be benevolent, using their wisdom and power to benefit the masses, instead of exploitative like the world leaders of this age, who use their smarts and power to deceive and scam the masses. Of course, as you’ll see if you keep reading to the end of this book, the Scriptures tell us that the next age, the millennium, is not the end of the story for the human race. But I won’t get ahead of myself.

As you will learn in later chapters, God has a good reason for allowing evil to prevail in this age and for directing the overall course of human history the way He does (yet without controlling every single thing every person does). But because He is allowing evil to have some leeway in this age, God must also put some “containment mechanisms” in place so that it does not spread *too* rapidly and ruin His plan for this age. (Another classic example of this is how He curbed the evil uniting of all humanity against Him at the Tower of Babel by breaking up their languages, thus delaying it until the right time, the very end of this age.) As you’ll learn later in this book, the lessons God wants humanity to learn from this age as they look back on it later, need *time* to unfold. Humanity must have plenty of *time* to try all sorts of stupid things that don’t work, so that when they look back later on human history, they won’t say, “Yeah, but we didn’t try *that*.”

So God must allow evil to reign in this age (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6), but at the same time buy enough time for all the necessary lessons to be played out. The great flood, the scattering of humanity into many different languages and cultures at the tower of Babel, and the reduction of human life span to around 100 years, are three of the primary containment mechanisms God has used in human history to keep evil from spreading too rapidly for His purposes.

So we see that death is a perfectly just and logical punishment for sin, and God uses death for His wise purposes in this age as well. Now let’s look at a few verses where Paul and Jesus make it perfectly clear what they believe about death. Then we’ll examine a couple of statements each of them made that are commonly misinterpreted by “conscious death and hell minded” Christians who “fill in the blanks” of unclear statements with their preconceived Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited ideas rather than letting the rest of Scripture (and other statements Jesus and Paul themselves made) “fill in the blanks” for us.

Jesus and Paul Make It Clear What They Believe About Death

Jesus said in John 3:13, “No man has ascended into heaven.” He also said, the moment before He died (quoting David), “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Lk. 23:46, Ps. 31:5). The author of the book of Hebrews (probably Paul) said that the

heroes of faith lived their lives radically to get more reward from God so as to have “a better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35) – not a better conscious death! Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 that if there is no resurrection, “our preaching is in vain, and your faith is also in vain” and states that the Christian faith is “worthless” apart from a resurrection. He then states even more starkly in verse 32 that if there is no resurrection it doesn’t even matter how we live our lives, we might as well live however we want for there is no consequence or reward for our actions apart from a resurrection (“If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”) And in verse 18 he tells us that if there is no resurrection, “Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (Some translations say “are lost”.) Contrast all this with the idea Catholicism has taught people that if there is no resurrection...well I guess we’d be hanging out in heaven with Jesus playing a harp and enjoying our reward!

You will notice that modern Christians stuck in the Catholic afterlife mindset *never* use the terminology of “falling asleep” for death – terminology that is used in Scripture much more often than the terminology of “going to be with the Lord in heaven” at death. Both ways of speaking of death made perfect sense to Godly people in Bible days. But modern Christians never use the primary terminology Paul and the rest of Scripture use over and over again for death, that of “falling asleep” (or in the case of Christians, “falling asleep in Christ”). Why do modern Christians completely discard the primary terminology Scripture uses to talk about death? Because it does not fit with the idea of conscious death they learned from Catholicism. It’s hard to picture yourself hugging Jesus’ neck and playing a harp on a cloud while you’re “asleep”! Many modern Christians cherry-pick their *terminology* about death, because they are cherry-picking their *Scriptures* about death. There is a reason you never hear verses like John 3:13, Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:16-18, or 1 Corinthians 15:32 preached on by people who believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife – these verses completely contradict it! (Instead you’ll typically hear, for example, 1 Corinthians 15:19’s reference to the next life cherry-picked totally out of context as if it is a reference to being conscious in heaven immediately upon death, when verses 14, 17, 18, 32, and the entire surrounding context make it absolutely clear that the next life does not begin until the resurrection!)

All the very specific statements by Jesus and Paul I just quoted match up perfectly with David and Solomon’s very specific statements about death (Ecc. 12:7, 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17) as well as what the angel said to Daniel in Daniel 12:13, that he would not get his reward until the resurrection. (“You will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”) However, all these statements blatantly contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife (conscious death, getting your reward/consequence immediately upon death).

Over and over throughout the Old and New Testaments we see the resurrection spoken of as the great hope of Christians (and the Godly people of old like Abraham, David, Daniel, etc.). The apostle Paul speaks of the resurrection as our great – and only – hope throughout writings. We’ll get into error if we cherry-pick his terminology (used a

couple of times) regarding “being with the Lord” at death (by which he meant the same thing all Godly people in Bible days meant by this, the spirit going to be with God in heaven unconsciously), and “death being gain” (for him in his situation when he wrote that, given he was a single man getting up in years, sitting in jail after a life full of persecution, whippings, beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, attempts on his life, etc.), in isolation from the terminology he uses much more often about death (“falling asleep”, “those who have fallen asleep in Christ”, etc.) and the extremely specific and clear statements he made in 1 Corinthians 15:16-18, 32, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, etc. (he was also probably the author of Hebrews 11:35, 39-40).

To give another example, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 he says, “We do not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” Here Paul is getting ready to tell us the great hope of Christians, the hope that sets us apart from unbelievers regarding dead people (those who “are asleep”). What does he launch into next? A passage about the resurrection! Verse 14 says, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” This is followed by more details about the resurrection/rapture. Not a single word about conscious death or getting our reward immediately at death! Paul closes the passage by saying in verse 18, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” What words are we supposed to comfort each other with, regarding our hope, and the hope of dead (“sleeping”) Christians? Words about the resurrection! Not about conscious death!

Needless to say, a person who has bought into the Catholic leftover conscious death mindset would never write 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 in a million years. Such a person would instead write something like, “I don’t want you to be uninformed about dead people. When you die you will not fall asleep – oh no! Of course not. Rather, the moment you die you will immediately reap the consequences or reward of your beliefs – you will go immediately to hell or heaven, where you will remain for eternity. The resurrection? An afterthought. Not all that important. Why would the resurrection be important?” This way of thinking is completely different than what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, 32! (Also see Heb. 11:35, Dan. 12:13, John 3:13, etc.) What is the disconnect between Paul’s way of thinking and the way many modern Christians think? Simple: Middle Ages Catholicism taught people to ignore most of Paul’s specific statements about death, while cherry-picking a couple of less specific statements he made (about “being with the Lord” at death, and death being “gain” for him, which do not specify exactly what state he would be in when he was “with the Lord”, or exactly why death would be “gain” for him), and erroneously placing the assumption of conscious death on top of those less specific statements. That is horrible Bible interpretation work, plain and simple.

(It is amazing the extent to which tradition can cause blindness to things that seem utterly obvious once one begins paying attention. I look back and I realize that I used to read these statements by Paul in my daily Bible reading, and my mind would simply begin flashing “DOES NOT COMPUTE. DOES NOT COMPUTE. KEEP READING UNTIL YOU FIND SOMETHING THAT MAKES SENSE TO YOU.” Every

restoration of truth in church history – the ministries of Jesus and Paul did this as well, with the Old Testament Scriptures – has brought to the forefront important Scriptural statements and passages that were previously being ignored. You will notice this particularly in the chapter you’re reading right now about death where I quote many specific statements about death that modern churches have been ignoring, and in Chapter 6 where I will quote many specific statements about God’s ultimate plan for mankind that are virtually never preached on or mentioned in modern churches. Mark my words: Over the next five to ten years, should the Lord tarry, these Scriptures will begin to be paid attention to again by larger and larger segments of the body of Christ, resulting in the next great restoration of truth in Christianity – a return to what Godly people in Bible days and the native Greek speaking early church fathers taught about this subject.)

I should also point out something else Paul tells us in verse 17 of 1 Thessalonians 4 – he says that *at the rapture* “**thus** we shall always be with the Lord”. The word “thus” tells us that we will *not* “be with the Lord” before the rapture!

Wait a minute! Don’t Paul and Jesus say in other places that we are with God in heaven immediately at death? Yes. So is Paul a schizophrenic? Does he contradict himself? No. *The simple solution is to realize that it is proper to speak of a Christian “being with the Lord in heaven” immediately at death, and it is also proper to speak of a Christian “falling asleep” at death, because although the spirit of a human – their essence, the container of their personality – is with the Lord immediately at death, it is with the Lord unconsciously (due to separation of spirit and soul from the body and from each other), and the person becomes unconscious, like they’re sleeping.* It’s as if I were to walk over to my computer and separate the hard drive (the spirit) from the screen and mouse and keyboard (body), which would cause the screen image and ability to interact with the computer to disappear (soul going to the unseen, consciousness/life disappearing), and then mail the hard drive to a friend in the middle of the Sahara desert where there is no electricity and no computer screens and no keyboards or computer mice. It would be proper to say “the computer is with my friend” but at the same time it would be proper to say “the computer is sleeping” or “the computer cannot be interacted with at this time” because my friend has no ability to interact with it. In the same way, it is proper to speak of a Christian “being with the Lord” at death, as Paul and Jesus did in a couple of places in Scripture, and it is also proper to say – as Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 – that believers “fall asleep” in death, and that we believers will not (in our conscious experience) “be with the Lord” until we are resurrected into a body and become conscious again at the rapture.

(Note: According to Scripture, all people “fall asleep” and become unconscious in death, and the spirit of every human who dies “return to God who gave it” – Ecc. 12:7 – but believers are said to “fall asleep in Christ”, meaning that God knows who the Christians are, and He will make sure that the Christians and Godly people of old like Abraham, David, Daniel etc. are resurrected at the rapture while everyone else has to wait until after the millennium, immediately before the white throne judgment.)

Now, all this brings up another “elephant in the room” logical question that many modern Christians don’t think about. Did you ever ask yourself, “If Christians are supposedly *already* with God in heaven consciously immediately after death, experiencing immortality and enjoying our reward, then *why would we need to be resurrected at the rapture?*” What need would there be for the rapture if we receive our reward and immortality etc. immediately the moment we die? The idea of conscious death makes no logical sense in this regard. But what the Bible teaches makes perfect sense – dead Christians will need to be resurrected into immortal bodies at the rapture because they will be unconscious in death until that moment. Paul states in this same passage that Christians who are alive on earth at the time of the rapture will not “be with the Lord” before a person who is “asleep” (dead); both the living and the dead (believers) will be raptured at the same time, and “**thus** we shall always be with the Lord (consciously).”

Here we see that Paul directly contrasts being “awake” (by which he obviously means alive) with being “asleep” (by which he obviously means dead), further confirming that when the Bible uses the analogy of “sleep” for death, it is referring to the fact that dead people are unconscious, while living people are conscious. When a person is awake, they are conscious, when they are asleep, they are unconscious. Simple.

Then, in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54, Paul tells us plainly that *only when we receive our immortal body* at the rapture, will “death be swallowed up in victory” for us:

“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

When will Christians “put on immortality”? At the rapture. At the last trumpet, when they are raised from the dead. Not before. Before that they “sleep”. Right now, only Christ has immortality, as plainly stated by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:16. The idea that a Christian receives immortality in conscious death, hanging out in heaven consciously chatting with Jesus, the moment they die, is absolutely contrary to all of Paul’s plain statements which I’ve just mentioned. Paul makes it ultra-clear beyond any shadow of doubt that a Christian will not receive immortality *until the rapture at the last trumpet*, and before that, during death, a Christian is *asleep*.

Some of you might be thinking, “Doesn’t the Bible say that a person who believes in Him will never die?” Nope. Go back and read chapter 3 of this book, and then go read that verse (John 11:26) in an accurate translation. Jesus said a person who believes in Him will not die “for the eon/age” (Concordant Version) or “to the eon/age” (Young’s Literal Translation). In other words, a person who believes in Jesus in this current age will not be dead but will be alive during the next age (the millennium). This makes perfect sense, of course, because the rapture will occur towards the end of this current age, before the millennium. (See also Rev. 19:11-20:6, Chapter 2 of this book, and Chapter 9 of this book.) The word “never” that you see in John 11:26 in some English Bibles is a ridiculous creative

invention of the translators.

All of this makes perfect sense so far and matches up perfectly with Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Psalm 146:4, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, etc. So why is there so much confusion in the body of Christ about what happens at death? We've already looked at how the pagan idea of conscious death infected Christianity in the Middle Ages and became solidified into an official and/or common doctrine during that time in history; and we've seen how the Old English word 'hel' morphed from meaning "the unseen" to carrying the idea of conscious torment in death. But as I briefly mentioned a moment ago, another reason the confusion about death in modern Christianity clings on is the tendency for modern Christians to ignore virtually the entire testimony of Scripture about death, and instead cherry pick a couple of statements by Jesus and the apostle Paul and artificially superimpose their own pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited ideas onto those statements instead of *assuming that Jesus and Paul agreed with the rest of Scripture*. So let's unravel the confusion caused by these misinterpretations of a couple of things Jesus and Paul said.

The confusion many Christians experience about the subject of what happens at death is caused by the fact that in different places in Scripture, Jesus and Paul talk about "being with the Lord" or going to be with God in heaven after death in two different contexts, in two different ways. Paul uses it in the passages I just quoted to refer to *physically and consciously* being with the Lord in an immortal *body*, which will only occur at the rapture. But then, in a different passage, he talks about "being with the Lord" immediately at death. Jesus used the analogy of unconscious sleep for death (Jn 11:11, 13) and talked about the rapture too (Matt. 24:29-32), but then He told the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in paradise."

So which one is it? Are we "with the Lord" immediately at death, or only later, at the rapture? Or both? If we sleep unconsciously in death and don't get an immortal body until the rapture, as the apostle Paul makes abundantly clear, then how is it that we are "with the Lord" immediately at death? How is it that Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in paradise", if neither of them would get an immortal body until later? (Jesus would get His immortal body three days later; the thief will not get his until the rapture.) And if a person is "with the Lord" immediately at death, how can he even know it, since Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Psalm 146:3-4, Psalm 115:17, etc. say that a dead person knows nothing and dead people do not praise God – not to mention the fact that Jesus and Paul both use the analogy of "sleep" to describe unconsciousness in death? What gives?

As I've mentioned, the simple answer is that when a believer dies, he (the essence of him, his spirit, the container of his personality, experiences, memories, etc., like a computer's hard drive) is immediately "with the Lord" "in paradise", but *not consciously* (there is no screen or keyboard or mouse – no physical body – that would enable the hard drive – the person's spirit – to interact with the outside world). Let's look at the Scripture that states this plainly. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says,

“...Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

This verse tells us exactly how a person can “be with the Lord” immediately at death. The physical body goes back into the ground, its source, and the spirit returns to its source too – God. When you understand the difference between spirit and soul as revealed by a careful study of the Scriptures, it is clear that the soul refers a person’s consciousness, but *a human’s spirit is not conscious without the body and the soul* – the soul, consciousness, is the result of the union of the spirit and the body (Gen. 2:7). We know with 100% certainty that the spirit returning to God at death as referred to in Ecclesiastes 12:7 *must be unconscious*, because if any person, believer or not, is conscious in death, Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 10, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, and Psalm 146:2-4 (among other verses) would be lies, David and Solomon would both be schizophrenics, the analogy of sleep for death used throughout Scripture would make no sense whatsoever, the apostle Paul would be lying in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:52-54, etc.

Again, Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us plainly, **“The dead know nothing”**, and Ecclesiastes 9:10 reinforces that thought: **“In sheol, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”** Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, did not contradict Himself by stating later in Ecclesiastes 12:7 that at death **“the spirit will return to God who gave it”**. He simply gave us more details about what happens at death. The soul/consciousness goes to sheol/the-unseen where there is no knowledge or working or planning, where there is only silence, and the spirit returns (unconsciously) to God. By putting Solomon’s straightforward statements about death together, we can see that a person becomes unconscious at death, and his or her spirit (unconscious, having no soul/consciousness without the body – see Genesis 2:7) returns to God. (Also notice, these people that claim to have had visions of hell where people are conscious in death, plotting and planning to try to get out of hell and begging Jesus to let them out of hell, etc., have obviously never read Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, which plainly state that in death there is no knowledge or planning or working. And these translators who translate “sheol” ridiculously as “hell” are completely out of line; apparently they haven’t read Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10 either.)

Godly people in Bible days understood all this detail in Scripture about exactly what happens to a human’s soul and spirit at death. It was second nature to them. They took it for granted. What Catholicism taught later (conscious death and its various related ideas) would have seemed absurd to them, and they would have correctly identified it as paganism. (It is only by ignoring these key Scriptural details Godly people in Bible days took for granted, that Catholicism got away with teaching what it did, and much of modern Christianity gets away with it in carrying on the tradition of conscious death.) Of course Jesus, his disciples, and the apostle Paul all knew the Old Testament Scriptures well, and they would have understood exactly, in detail, how a human being is composed as described by Genesis 2:7 and exactly what happens to each of the three parts of a human being at death according to the writings of Solomon and David. They knew that there is no

soul/consciousness without a spirit from God united with a physical body, and that when a person dies their body goes into their ground and their spirit returns to God, causing the person to become unconscious (their “soul/consciousness” to go to “the unseen/unperceived”).

That is why throughout Scripture sleep is used as an analogy for death and being “awake” is used as an analogy for being alive/conscious. Paul himself, Jesus Himself, an angel in the book of Daniel, etc. *repeatedly refer to death as “sleep”*. And the apostle Paul refers to being alive as being “awake” (1 Thess. 5:10, referring to the fact that dead believers and believers alive on earth will be raptured at the same time). This analogy makes perfect sense. Just as you are only conscious/aware when you are awake (not when you’re sleeping), so you are only conscious – you only have a soul/consciousness – when you are alive (when your spirit from God is united with your physical body). Are you planning when you're asleep? Are you conscious? Are you working? Nope. *Neither will you be when you are dead. For a human being, life only happens when you are alive. No, this is not rocket science.*

Unfortunately many Christians ignore Jesus’ and Paul’s (and other Bible verses’) references to death as “sleep”, as well as other statements they made that clearly line up with this concept and the clear teachings of David and Solomon on unconscious death, and instead constantly quote a couple of unclear statements by Jesus and a couple of unclear statements by Paul (in which they *do not specifically state* whether going to be with God at death is conscious or unconscious), misinterpreting those unclear statements to match a pagan leftover “conscious death” mindset instead of interpreting these statements in a way that matches the rest of Scripture and the rest of Jesus’ and Paul’s own clear statements about death. Let’s look at the most potentially confusing statements made by Jesus and Paul. When we study them carefully, we’ll see that they actually line up perfectly with everything else Jesus, Paul, and the Bible say about death.

Jesus’ and Paul’s Commonly Misunderstood Statements About Death

The apostle Paul made two statements in Scripture that to the “conscious death minded” modern Christian *seem* like they refer to being with God immediately at death. But, as you will see, in both cases Paul is actually referring to being with God at the rapture or to our spirits being with God unconsciously, thus confirming his other statements and the rest of the teachings in Scripture about death. Let’s look at these two statements by Paul.

The first is 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 where Paul says, “While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord” and “We prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord”. Many Christians *assume* that here Paul is talking about Christians going to be with the Lord *consciously* right away when we die. But if you read this passage carefully, Paul says absolutely nothing, zero, nada, about being with God consciously. Paul only *seems* to

“conscious death minded” modern Christians (who are starting with that assumption) to be referring to being with God *consciously, immediately* at death. In reality, his statements here say nothing about whether we are *conscious* when we go to be with Lord, and nothing about the *timing* of *when* or *how soon* a person will be with the Lord *consciously/ knowingly*. And his statements in these verses do not make it clear whether he is talking about the *spirit being with God unconsciously* or being with God *consciously*. Therefore we must let the rest of Scripture, and Paul’s own statements at other times (such as 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 1 Cor. 15:14, 17-18, 32, Heb. 11:35, also in perfect agreement with Dan. 12:13 and all David’s and Solomon’s statements about death) “fill in the blanks” for us. When we do that, what Paul actually meant by these statements becomes obvious; he was referring to his spirit, the essence of him, being with God unconsciously, in combination with the realization that we will eventually be with the Lord consciously at the rapture. This is what every Godly person in Bible days would have assumed automatically without even thinking about it, upon reading Paul’s words. (Remember, many or most of the people reading this letter from Paul had been taught directly by Paul, and they did not have Catholicism to teach them to ignore Paul’s other very specific statements throughout his writings.)

Modern Christians tend to think, “Why would I want to go be with God – my spirit being with Him unconsciously – right now if I wouldn’t even be aware I was with Him?” We forget that the apostle Paul and the believers back then did not have nearly such a nice experience in life as modern western Christians do; they experienced a lot of persecution and hardship in the natural, and they did not have the modern Western cushy lifestyle that we think of as normal. Their leaders were even more corrupt, unpredictable, cruel, violent, and unfair than ours. (Think about a world where a person could be summarily crucified, stoned or whipped simply for *saying things that offend the powers-that-be*. This happened routinely in Bible days, as recorded in Scripture itself.) Paul’s life after He came to Christ was filled with hardship, one big long pain-in-the-neck persecution experience! And this is the perspective from which he writes here; just two sentences earlier, in verse 4, he says, “While we are in this tent (body), we groan, being burdened”. Then, in the same verse, he gives us *the key* to understanding exactly what he’s talking about when referring to going to be with God: “...so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life”. This phrase is virtually identical to the terminology he uses in his other letter to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 15:54, “death is swallowed up in victory”. When does this “death being swallowed up by life/victory” occur? *At the rapture.* (See 1 Cor. 15:50-54.) It is absolutely clear when you match up 2 Corinthians 5:4-10 with 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 (and all of Paul’s other statements about this topic) that Paul is looking forward to getting an immortal body *at the rapture*. He wants the painful, troublesome experience of life in this mortal body to be replaced by death/rest (relief from pain in this age, which would be “gain” for him) followed by the wonderful experience of getting an immortal body *at the rapture*.

Paul’s phrase “we prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord” is a simple statement of fact; what Christian in his situation (or in the difficult life situation experienced by other Christians in that era) wouldn’t prefer to get rest/relief from the difficult circumstances Paul was in at the time, and experience death, thus in terms of

conscious experience, skipping ahead to the rapture? There is actually no mention in this phrase itself of being with God consciously at death. Even if we assume he's talking about being with God immediately at death (you'd have to read a meaning into Paul's statement that is not actually there, but for the sake of argument let's entertain the thought), he would have to be talking about being with God *unconsciously* so as not to contradict many other plain Scriptures and many of his own specific statements. But the whole context of the passage starting in verse 1 all the way through verse 10, is clearly referring to the rapture. Verse 2 clearly talks about our "longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven", obviously referring to the immortal body we will receive at the rapture. If you compare this passage with 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 you see Paul is using similar language and concepts to talk about the great hope of Christians: the rapture, which will occur "at the last trumpet" when we will stand "before the judgment seat of Christ" and will be "clothed with immortality".

Paul is not saying, "We wish we could die so we could be with God consciously right away" (as many Christians assume only because their starting assumption is a belief in conscious death); he's saying "We wish we could *get rest/relief from our difficult circumstances by jumping ahead in time to the rapture* so we could be with God consciously *at the rapture*." He could also be referring to the believer's actual *experience*; in other words, from the believer's perspective, when you die and become unconscious, the next thing you know, you're being raptured!

So Paul was either referring to being with the Lord unconsciously immediately at death according to Ecclesiastes 12:7, 9:5, 10 and getting rest/relief from his difficult circumstances in this age, or he was referring to the believer's actual experience, which will be death/unconsciousness followed immediately (in our experience) by the rapture; or he was simply referring to the believer's natural desire for the rapture to hurry up and get here already so we can escape the difficulties of this age. Or, some combination of all three of those thoughts. All of those thoughts line up perfectly with all of Paul's specific statements (and the rest of Scripture) about death. It is absolutely clear when we take into account all of Paul's statements about death that his assumption about the timing of when Christians will be with the Lord *consciously is at the rapture*. The great hope of the rapture is what Paul always taught his churches as evidenced by his other writings in Scripture. To artificially superimpose the idea of conscious death on top of 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 would require ignoring the immediate context, ignoring all of Paul's other specific statements about death, and would make Paul into some kind of schizophrenic who can't make up his mind about what happens at death. There is no need to get into nonsense land. When we simply use Paul's most specific statements (in perfect agreement with the most specific statements in the rest of Scripture) to interpret a few of his statements that are less clear in and of themselves (using Scripture to interpret Scripture), everything makes perfect sense.

Now let's look at another example of a New Testament passage (probably written by the apostle Paul) that is used as supposed "proof" of conscious death, but upon close examination says no such thing. In Hebrews 12:1 the Bible talks about a "great cloud of

witnesses surrounding us”; this phrase comes immediately after a long passage about dead men and women of faith.

People who have a conscious death mindset might say, “Why would the Bible use the term ‘witnesses’ for these people if they are not conscious right now, watching us?”

Well, let’s look at what the Bible itself – the immediate context of this phrase about the great cloud of witnesses – says about these dead men and women of faith. First of all, it says that these dead people *have not yet received the promises* (Heb. 11:39). Obviously, if these people were already in heaven consciously, they would already be enjoying the reward promised them by God. The only possible way these people can “not yet” have received the promises is if they are not in heaven consciously. This seems to directly contradict the “cloud of witnesses phrase”, or at least the idea that the witnesses are literally watching us from heaven. Let’s keep examining this passage carefully...

The context also says that these great men and women of faith did what they did so that they could “obtain a better *resurrection*” (Heb. 11:35). Their goal was not to “obtain a better conscious death”; it was to “obtain a better *resurrection*”. This matches up perfectly with every other statement in Scripture about the reward we will receive: we will receive it at the resurrection – the rapture – not before!

This passage again highlights one of the great nonsensicalities (ridiculous self-contradictions) of the idea of conscious death: If men and women of faith are conscious in heaven immediately upon death, why in the world would they need to be resurrected at the rapture? And why would the Bible continually tell us that our great hope is the rapture? This passage in Hebrews 11 and 12 (specifically Chapter 11 verses 35, 39, and 40) makes it clear that all men and women of faith expect our reward *at the resurrection – at the rapture – not before*.

Then, the sentence immediately preceding the “cloud of witnesses” sentence says that these dead men and women of faith will not be made perfect apart from us (Heb. 11:40, which immediately precedes Heb. 12:1). Notice how Hebrews 11:40 matches up perfectly with 1 Thessalonians 4:15, another passage where Paul makes it absolutely clear that the hope of Christians is the resurrection (with not a single word about conscious death). Dead men and women of faith will not be made perfect apart from us men and women of faith who are still alive! This is even more confirmation that dead men and women of faith are not conscious in heaven right now, having already received their promises and having already been made perfect. They are dead. They are unconscious and will only receive the promises and be made perfect at the same time as living Christians will – at the resurrection/rapture.

Notice that Hebrews 11:35, 39-40 matches up perfectly with Daniel 12:13 (where the angel tells Daniel he’ll “rest” while dead and won’t receive his reward until the resurrection),

John 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18, 32, and all the specific statements David and Solomon made about death (Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17).

So why would the apostle Paul use the term “great cloud of witnesses surrounding us” to describe these dead men and women of faith, if they had not yet received the promises and would only receive their reward and be made perfect at the rapture? The only possible conclusion we can come to without blatantly ignoring several statements made in the immediate context, is that Paul must have been using the phrase “great cloud of witnesses surrounding us” in a *figurative* sense, in the sense that as we live our lives we should keep in mind these dead heroes of faith, their faith-filled actions, and what they would think of our actions if they could observe us. Notice, we are not jumping to a figurative interpretation of this phrase just because we want to. We are strictly following the “take it literally unless it makes no sense to take it that way, in which case you must take it figuratively” common sense rule of communication that I explained to you in Chapter 2. We are *forced* to take this phrase figuratively, to mean “Think about what these dead heroes of faith would think of your actions and whether your actions measure up to theirs” rather than “These dead heroes of faith are literally watching us consciously from heaven at this very moment”, because taking it literally as if these “witnesses” are literally consciously watching us right now, would blatantly contradict several phrases in the immediate context as well as the rest of what (accurately translated) Scripture says about death.

I am a stickler about only taking Scriptural statements that seem to be literal figuratively *if* there is a clear indication that we *must* take it figuratively rather than literally. (See Chapter 2 of this book, and my book on the end times where I further explain why this Bible interpretation rule is so important.) In this case, Hebrews 11:35, 39 and 40 (along with Dan. 12:13, 1 Cor. 15:14, 17-18, 32, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, etc.) *force us* to take the first phrase of Hebrews 12:1 figuratively rather than literally.

Now let’s take a peek later in that same passage for more confirmation that the writer of Hebrews (probably Paul) matches up perfectly with David, Solomon, and the rest of Scripture rather than contradicting them. Hebrews 12:22-24 says that in the heavenly Jerusalem (in heaven) there is “the ecclesia (Greek word somewhat clumsily translated as “church”) of the firstborn who are *registered in heaven*” and “the *spirits of just men made perfect*”. The key words in Hebrews 12:22-24 are “*registered*” and “the *spirits of just men*”. Do you see how this lines up perfectly with Ecclesiastes 12:7 + Psalm 16:10 + Luke 23:46, Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 10 + Psalm 6:5 + Psalm 115:17 + Psalm 31:5 + Acts 2:27, Genesis 2:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, etc., along with Daniel 12:13, 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18, 32, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? At the time of their death the *spirit (unconscious when not connected to a body – Gen. 2:7)* of every single one of these dead people of faith went to be with God, while their souls/consciousness went to sheol/hades/the-unseen where there is no remembrance of God, no knowledge, silence, etc. (they became unconscious).

These dead people in heaven as described in Hebrews 12:22-24 are not there consciously, only their unconscious spirits (Ecc. 12:7, 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17) are there. Their spirits have already been made perfect by the blood of Christ, which provided justification for all men for all time (Heb. 12:23, Rom. 3:23-24). But they, themselves as whole persons, will not be made perfect until they receive their immortal bodies and become conscious again at the rapture (Heb. 11:40, Phil. 3:10-11, 1 Cor. 15:50-54, Genesis 2:7).

If you see some type of phrase like “general assembly” in Hebrews 12:23 in your English Bible, don’t be confused. That word “assembly” makes it sound like a school assembly, where everybody has to physically show up. The Greek word is simply “ecclesia” – the church (not a church building or gathering, but the body of Christ). This verse is not talking about *just* dead people of faith, it’s talking about *all* people of faith, including us alive on earth right now! All people of faith (Christians and dead Godly people of old like those listed in Hebrews 11) are “registered” (Heb. 12:23) “citizens” (Phil. 1:27, 3:20) of heaven. The “church of the first born” are “registered in heaven”. We are “registered” there. We are not actually there physically, or (in the case of the dead saints whose unconscious spirits are there) there consciously. You see, I am registered at the Department of Motor Vehicles. I am not actually at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The DMV simply has information about me on file. I am on their list. The church is not consciously in heaven right now. We are “registered” there. The “spirits” of righteous men both dead and alive are registered there. For those who are dead, their spirits are there but they are unconscious in death according to Ecc. 12:7, 9:5, 9:10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17, etc. These dead people are not mentioning or thanking God (Ps. 6:5). They are not praising God – they are silent (Ps. 115:17). Those who have “fallen asleep in Christ” (terminology used repeatedly by Paul) are “registered” as “citizens” of heaven, and they will take part in the rapture. For those of us alive on earth right now, our spirits are registered in heaven as well, although we are conscious because our spirits are currently united with a physical body (Gen. 2:7).

Philippians 1:27 and 3:20 make it clear that we are to live our lives on earth right now in remembrance of the fact that we are “citizens of heaven”. Hebrews 12:23 clarifies for us exactly what happens when a Godly person dies: in perfect harmony with Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Psalm 31:5 and Luke 23:46, our *spirit* returns to God *where it is registered*. God keeps track of the essence of us – the part of us that came directly from Him (Gen. 2:7). We simply have to remember the fact that *according to many other plain Scriptures by the same Scriptural authorities (David, Solomon, Paul, Jesus, etc.), which talk about our spirits going to God in heaven where they are registered, our spirits are not conscious without a body* (Gen. 2:7, Ecc. 12:7 + 9:5 + 9:10, Ps. 31:5 + Lk. 23:46 + Ps. 6:5 + Ps. 115:17 + Ps. 146:4, etc.).

You have to understand that Paul (along with Jesus, and every Scriptural author/teacher in Bible times) knew that the people to whom he said things and wrote his letters almost 2,000 years ago would understand his meaning perfectly in passages like 2 Corinthians 5:2-10 or Hebrews chapters 11 and 12, because he had taught them well in

person himself, so he did not have to put a whole lot of explanatory words in these passages to make his meaning ultra clear to his audience back then. He assumed they would understand that he was talking about unconscious death, spirits that are not conscious when not attached to a physical body (Gen. 2:7), our spirits being registered in heaven but still dependent on a physical body for consciousness, and our spirits being with God and/or remaining registered with God in heaven at death *unconsciously* because of the separation from the physical body.

The modern Christian, however, lifts one phrase in 2nd Corinthians 5, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”, completely out of context, ignoring the fact that the context is clearly talking about the rapture. They then make the same mistake in Hebrews 12:1, lifting one pet phrase, “great cloud of witnesses”, out of context, completely ignoring several clear statements in the immediate context that make it clear that no dead hero of faith is conscious in death. Again, all the confusion is caused by the fact that most modern Christians start with a *different assumption about death* than Paul and his audience 2,000 years ago, and then cherry-pick certain verses and phrases and ignore everything else in Scripture on the subject. Paul and his audience back in Bible days started with the assumption based on the Old Testament Scriptures that death is unconscious, but modern Christians start with the assumption they inherited from Catholicism/paganism that death is conscious. Therefore, modern Christians lift one or two isolated phrases out of context, *artificially superimpose their own incorrect starting assumption*, and jump to the conclusion that Paul is talking about being with God consciously in death. In doing this they are completely changing what Paul actually meant and ignoring the rest of what Scripture says about the subject including Paul’s own extremely specific statements in other places in Scripture.

Let me further explore another interesting possibility about this passage in 2nd Corinthians 5. Paul could have been referring not just to the rapture, but also to the believer’s experience, which will be the rapture immediately after death. Just like me falling asleep at midnight and waking up at 8 AM – in my experience, for all intents and purposes I woke up immediately after I fell asleep. Eight hours went by but I was completely unaware of them, I did not get impatient – I felt nothing. In my experience it was as if I woke up immediately after I fell asleep. This is exactly what it will be like for me if I die before the rapture. The moment I die, the next thing I know, I’ll be rising up into the sky in an immortal body to meet Jesus in the air! “To be absent from the body” (to die) “is to be present with the Lord” (in the believer’s experience, the moment you die you are immediately taking part in the rapture). As a Christian, even if many years go by between the time you die and the rapture, you will be completely unaware of the passage of time – just like in sleep – so for all intents and purposes, for the believer, “to be dead is to be present with the Lord”.

I invite you to read 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 side by side with 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; I believe you’ll see what I mean. Take the “conscious death” glasses off and put on the “Paul is talking about the rapture” glasses on, and I believe all Paul’s statements make perfect sense in context, and don’t contradict anything else he says or anything else in Scripture (1

Cor. 15:14, 17-18, 32, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Heb. 11:35, 39-40, Dan. 12:13, John 3:13, Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17). And even if you insist that Paul was talking about being with God immediately upon death, in the whole passage he says nothing about being *conscious* when we will be dead and “with the Lord”. He would have to be referring to his spirit being with God unconsciously according to Ecclesiastes 12:7, or else, as we’ve seen, he would be contradicting many of his own specific statements elsewhere in his writings.

Everything I’ve said about 2nd Corinthians 5:2-10 is also true for the other statement of Paul’s that is commonly misinterpreted, Philippians 1:21-23, where he says,

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both sides, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.”

First let me point out that the phrase “the desire to depart and be with Christ” as it is often translated, is translated by the more accurate Concordant Version “*a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ*”. This largely removes the idea of “leaving one place and going to another” that the inaccurate translation “to depart” implies, and leaves us with the idea that Paul wants a solution to his predicament, and he also wants to be with Christ.

What Christian can’t relate to this? Which one of us wouldn’t prefer to be with Christ (at the rapture, as the rest of Paul’s and Scripture’s teachings tell us) than to live in this age under the temporary rule of Satan? Also keep in mind that Paul’s particular predicament when he wrote this passage was that he was in jail. He mentions his imprisonment three times in verses 13 through 17, and speaks of his distress. So the reason “death is gain” to Paul is fairly clear; it certainly would be much nicer for him to die and be unconscious – and the next thing he knows he’s with Christ at the rapture – than to continue suffering indefinitely in prison.

Notice that – again – nowhere in this passage does Paul state that he would be with Christ *consciously immediately* upon death. A Christian who ignores the rest of the Scriptural testimony about death (including statements made by Paul himself) might think “he must be talking about hanging out with Jesus and playing a harp as soon as he dies”, but just as in 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, that idea must be *assumed* or *read into* the passage, it is not stated. If it was stated it would directly contradict many of Paul’s own statements and the rest of the testimony of Scripture.

So here again, Paul could very well be referring to the fact that when he dies the next thing he knows he’ll be with Christ. In this passage he is saying, “Dying is gain because I’ll get to go to sleep for awhile and escape this harsh world and then later wake up and be with Christ – and for all intents and purposes, in my experience, the moment after I die I will be partaking in the rapture”. Or he’s simply saying he’d prefer to die/sleep/rest and thus get relief from his difficult earthly circumstances, and he also looks forward to the rapture

when he will be with Christ consciously. When you read how the accurate Concordant translates it, he has “*a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ”*, either of those interpretations of his words in this passage would make sense due to the fact that he’s not having much fun in prison. Either of these interpretations, of course, would match up completely with the rest of Paul’s statements about death and the rest of what the Bible says about death.

On the other hand, interpreting this passage as “Paul thinks he’s going to be consciously talking to Jesus and playing a harp in heaven the minute he dies, long before the rapture, and will remain conscious in heaven until the rapture” makes Paul into a schizophrenic who can’t make up his mind whether we will be with the Lord consciously only at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17, 1 Cor. 15:14, 17-18, 32, 50-54, Heb. 11:35, 39-40, etc.), or before it.

There is something else many Christians miss about this passage. Paul says to be *alive* “is Christ”. Death is *not* “Christ”; death is only “gain”, in and of itself. On the other hand, Paul says that to be *alive* “is Christ”. This terminology “is Christ” obviously refers to experiencing Christ. Folks, the only way you can experience Christ (or experience anything at all) is to be *alive*. For Paul, being *alive on earth now* was to experience Christ spiritually along with tough physical circumstances, and to be *alive on earth later at the rapture* will be to experience Christ directly (both physically being with Him and spiritually too of course). But being *dead* is *not* Christ! It was only *gain* for Paul. It was gain because of the relief from tough physical circumstances. But it was *not* Christ. You only *experience* Christ when you’re *alive*. You *experience nothing* when you’re dead – not Christ, not pain, not anything! (See Ecc. 9:5 & 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, 146:2-4.) Then, *after* the gain (relief) of death, Paul knew he would get something else, later – to *be with Christ* at the rapture.

So we see from Paul’s use of terminology in this passage that he agrees 100% with what David and Solomon and the rest of Scripture say about death – in his life on earth he experienced Christ spiritually along with some tough physical circumstances; he felt that death would bring him “gain” or relief from those tough physical circumstances; and later on he would be with Christ physically and consciously at the rapture.

In Philippians 1:21-23 Paul is referring to the three stages of the Christian’s experience: we experience Christ spiritually in this first earthly life (along with sometimes tough physical circumstances), we experience nothing in death (which if your earthly circumstances are tough right before you die, would be relief, just as sleep is relief from pain), and then we’ll get to be with Christ physically at the rapture. Simple. This lines up perfectly with everything else the Bible and Paul himself teach about death. **On the other hand, any interpretation that would artificially superimpose the idea of “hanging out in heaven enjoying our reward and experiencing immortality consciously immediately at death, long before the rapture” into any of these passages without warrant, would make Paul into a schizophrenic who contradicts himself and the entire testimony of Scripture about what happens at death.**

Because these two statements by Paul about death that can seem confusing to modern Christians (2nd Corinthians 5:2-10 and Philippians 1:21-23) are a bit vague in some ways, and are not explicit about some of the details of the timing, whether a person goes to God consciously or unconsciously at death, etc., these details must be *assumed*. We must look at context of the statements Paul makes, the rest of Paul's words in Scripture about death, and the rest of the testimony of Scripture to fill in the blanks and fully understand what he means. The key to correctly understanding these two statements of Paul's is to *assume he agrees with the rest of his own statements and rest of the testimony of Scripture* (death is unconscious, the spirit goes to God unconsciously at death, and Christians will only consciously be with the Lord and receive their reward at the rapture) and to *look carefully at the context of these statements* (2 Cor. 5:6-10 is about the rapture, for example) rather than making the mistake many modern Christians make, which is to *assume he contradicts the rest of his own statements and the testimony of Scripture and agrees with a pagan/Catholic-inherited "conscious death" mindset*.

I should also point out another "elephant in the room" nonsensicality that the Catholic version of the afterlife leaves us with. The Catholic idea of conscious death says that we Christians receive immortality (the inability to die) when we die! Huh? How can we receive immunity from death...when we die? How can we receive the inability to die, permanent freedom from death...when we die? This is the epitome of nonsense land folks. The Bible does not speak of death as a second life, but as the absence of life. (To speak of death as a second life is an obvious contradiction in terms – death is commonly understood as the absence of life. It is only silly paganism that asks us to believe that death can be the same thing as life.) The Bible never speaks of death as a friend. (The closest thing would be Paul's statement that death would be "gain" for him because it would mean escape from very difficult physical circumstances.) The Bible always speaks of death as an enemy, to both the believer and the unbeliever. (See for example 1 Cor. 15:25-26, 32, 14, 17-18, 1 Thess. 4:13-14, etc.)

Now let's look at Jesus' most commonly misunderstood statements about death. Jesus made two statements about being with God immediately at death – both while He was hanging on the cross. The first was when He said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise". The second was the moment before He died, when He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my **spirit**" (Lk. 23:46). When we put these two statements together it is clear what Jesus was saying: His spirit and the thief's spirit would go to God when they died that day. If Jesus is not to contradict the entire testimony of Scripture including His own repeated use of the analogy of "sleep" for death, He had to have been referring to the spirit being with God *unconsciously* according to Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 and 12:7 and in perfect agreement with the rest of Scripture. This was a very common way of speaking for Godly people in Bible days, and they experienced no confusion when hearing and using this type of terminology. (See a more detailed explanation in the last chapter of this book of how Godly people in Bible days would have naturally and automatically understood Jesus' statement to the thief. It will greatly help you to absorb the

information in chapter 9 of this book, so that you more fully understand what Godly people in Bible days thought when they heard the term “the kingdom”, before I give you a more detailed explanation of Jesus’ statement to the thief on the cross.)

When we think the way Godly people in Bible days did about terminology such as “the kingdom” and “being with God in heaven at death”, it is not difficult to see how Jesus’ statements on the cross match up perfectly with Solomon’s straightforward description of what happens at death in Ecclesiastes 12:7, 9:5, 9:10 and David’s straightforward description of what happens at death in Psalm 31:5, 6:5, 115:17, and 146:4, along with all Paul’s statements about death, Daniel 12:13, John 3:13, etc. Jesus became unconscious when He died, just like every other human being who ever lived, and His spirit (along with the spirit of the thief) went to God unconsciously. As if it were not enough that the Scriptural statements all match up with each other perfectly, *Jesus quoted the prophet David word for word* when He said the moment before His death, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” (See Luke 23:46 and Psalm 31:5.) **This confirms that Jesus understood David’s statements about death and agreed with them.**

Of course, it would be absurd to argue that Jesus *agreed* with David’s statement in Psalm 31:5 and Solomon’s statement in Ecclesiastes 12:7 about what happens to the spirit at death but *disagreed* with David’s statements in Psalm 6:5, 115:17, and 146:4 and Solomon’s statements in Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10 about what happens to the soul/consciousness/thoughts at death. In Luke 23:46 Jesus quoted David about what happens to the spirit at death, and in Acts 2:7 Peter quoted David about what happened to Jesus’ soul/consciousness at death. Solomon’s statements about death match up perfectly with David’s, and with the New Testament account of what happened to Jesus at death in which David was directly quoted word for word, twice. The case is airtight; it cannot get any clearer that Jesus and every single passage in the Bible about death fully agree with and are perfectly explained by David and Solomon’s statements about death.

Let’s revisit 1 Peter 3:19 just to be ultra-clear here. Some people say, “Doesn’t the Bible say Jesus preached to people in hell while He was dead?” No, the Bible doesn’t say that. Some preachers say it, but the Bible certainly doesn’t. 1 Peter 3:18-20 says that *after His resurrection* (after He was “*made alive in/by the Spirit*” – the reference to His resurrection a few sentences later in the passage makes it extremely clear that this is another way of talking about His resurrection, and this Greek word “made alive” is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to talk about His resurrection), He went and preached to “*the spirits in prison*”.

What spirits, in what prison? “Conscious death minded” modern Christians often simply assume these spirits are human spirits, because they don’t bother to read the context, and they don’t understand that in the rest of Scripture, a human spirit is not conscious without a body, and that only when they are united is a soul (consciousness) produced. Let’s determine what these spirits referred to in 1 Peter 3:18-20 are, and what prison they’re in, *from Scripture itself*, not from pagan/Catholic-influenced imaginations.

The context, verse 20, tells us that these spirits were disobedient “*when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah*”. What was going on in the days of Noah that tried God’s patience to the point where He had to bring a flood to wipe out most of the population of earth? Yes, there were humans who were disobedient in those days, but there were “*disobedient spirits*” too! The source of the problem in Noah’s days was *fallen angels*. I won’t take the time to explain it in depth here; if you want more details you can read Genesis 6:1-13, Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4-5 and my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* in the Common Questions section of www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com.

In Scripture, humans are said to *have* spirits, but not *be* spirits. For example, Jesus said on the cross, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” – He said He *had* a spirit, but did not refer to Himself or define Himself *as* a spirit. This is because a human being is not *just* a spirit – we also have a body, which is visible to the human eye, and therefore it is not proper to refer to a human being as merely a spirit. But of course it is proper to say that a human being *has* a spirit. Jesus said to the thief, “Today you will be with Me in paradise” in agreement with Ecclesiastes 12:7; here Jesus reveals that a human being’s spirit is the essence of them, but 1 Thessalonians 5:23 makes it clear that a human being is not by definition a spirit only. That is why the Bible does not call human beings “spirits” – because a human being is not only a spirit, it is *a spirit united with a body to produce a conscious soul* (Gen. 2:7).

The term “spirits”, as in a being that *is* a spirit, by definition, is reserved for spirit beings such as God the Father, angels, demons, and other types of beings such as those described in Revelation 4:4-11. A spirit like this, a spirit being, has a body or makeup that is not physical and cannot be perceived with the physical eyes, and it does not need a physical body that can be perceived by the five physical human senses in order to be conscious. A human being, by contrast, must have a spirit united with a physical body to produce a conscious soul (Gen. 2:7). A non-human spirit or spirit being, however, is conscious without a physical body that can be perceived by the five human senses.

You see, the word “spirit” in Greek is the same as the word “breath”, obviously implying something that is real but usually cannot be seen with the natural eyes. So the Scriptural definition of a “spirit” – not a human being’s spirit, but a spirit being such as an angel or a demon, referred to only as a “spirit” and not as a human or a person – is a being that does not (usually) have or appear in a physical body that can be perceived by the five physical human senses and unlike humans, does not require such a physical body to be conscious. Again, humans are never referred to in Scripture as “spirits” because we are not spirits (or unseen beings) by definition.

The “disobedient spirits in prison” to whom Jesus preached after His resurrection are not human beings. They are clearly the same fallen angels talked about in other passages such as Genesis 6:1-13, 2nd Peter 2:4-5, and Jude 6, that were “disobedient in the days of Noah”. 1st Peter 3:19-20 is clearly a parallel passage to these. Later in this book you will find

out what will happen to these fallen angels later on in God's plan, and you will see why Jesus went to the dark place where they are currently trapped (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6) and preached to them after He rose from the dead. (Also keep in mind that the word in Jude 6 is not "eternal bonds" but "imperceptible" bonds as translated by the most strictly accurate Concordant Version. That Greek word translated "imperceptible" is only found in one other place in Scripture, and there is no proof whatsoever that it refers to endlessness or eternity. And of course the word in the next verse is not "eternal" fire, but "eonian" fire. Never forget, you will always be confused if you don't get the translation right!)

Unfortunately, many Christians quote and misinterpret a few statements made by Paul and Jesus with a careless and blatant misinterpretation of the "spirits in prison" passage thrown in for good measure, and then ignore the rest of the testimony of Scripture, including multiple straightforward statements (Ecc. 9:5 & 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, 146:4, etc.), the repeated use of the analogy of sleep for death and being "awake" for being alive, and many other statements made by Paul and Jesus themselves on the subject of what happens at death where they clearly refer to the fact that we will be with Christ consciously at the rapture and not before. This failure to study the subject of death in the Bible carefully results in the pagan idea of conscious death continuing to cling to the minds of some Christians. Only those who never take the time to study the subject will continue to carelessly misinterpret a couple of statements made by Jesus and Paul to fit their pagan leftover belief about the conscious afterlife and ignore the rest of what Scripture says about the subject.

But once you have the entire testimony of Scripture on the subject of death before your eyes, it is crystal clear that these commonly misunderstood statements by Jesus and Paul line up perfectly with Ecclesiastes 9:5, 9:10, and 12:7. Jesus knew that at death He would become *unconscious* according to Ecclesiastes 9:5, 9:10, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, and Psalm 146:4, while His *spirit, unconscious without His body and soul*, would *return to God* according to Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Psalm 31:5. Paul knew the same.

As I mentioned earlier, to some modern Christians the idea of being with God unconsciously might sound strange at first. Well, think of it this way...Is it possible for me to be with my wife while I'm asleep and unconscious, but she's awake? Of course! Just because I'm unconscious doesn't mean I'm not with her! Is it possible for a believer (the believer's essence, God-breathed part of them, "breath" or spirit – see Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 12:7) to be with God even while they're dead and unconscious? Absolutely! The invisible part of you, the part God put into you directly, your spirit, the God-part of you as I like to say, is like Him – invisible. It interacts with the physical world through your body, producing consciousness/soul.

This is why the word for "spirit" in both Hebrew and Greek is also the word for "breath". Your breath is real, but invisible (unless it's cold out obviously – it's not a perfect analogy). God created invisible human breath and the invisible wind as physical counterparts or analogies to the human spirit and spirit beings, which are real but not able

to be seen with physical eyes. Our human spirits (one of our three parts in addition to our body and soul), God's Holy Spirit, and evil spirits (demons & fallen angels) are real but not perceived by the physical eye – just like breath is not perceived by the physical eye.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 tells us that there are three parts to each human being: spirit, soul and body. As we've seen, according to the Bible, at death, *these parts separate*. Your body obviously goes into the ground. At the same time, according to Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Psalm 146:4, the God-part of you, your spirit, the God-breathed invisible essence of who you are, goes to be with God (unconsciously, because your soul is your consciousness). Simultaneously, your soul, defined Biblically as your consciousness and ability to interact with your environment, goes to the “unseen/unperceived” (Greek) or to “sheol” (Hebrew) (see Acts 2:27 & Ps. 16:10), which is a fancy or poetic way of saying the same thing Ecclesiastes 9:5 says plainly – you become unconscious. Or as the Bible says repeatedly, you “fall asleep” or “sleep” or “are sleeping”.

We see this three-part separation with Jesus. The Bible clearly tells us that His spirit went to be with God (Luke 23:46), His soul went to the unseen (Acts 2:22-32 & Ps. 16:10), and He, Himself, is said to have been in the tomb during the days He was dead (1 Cor. 15:3,4; Matt. 12:40). This reveals that when a person's body dies, *the person* dies. The Bible always speaks of the *person* dying, not just the body. This tells us that the person is in the same state as the body – dead, unconscious, unable to interact with its environment.

This is why the analogy of sleep for death and being “awake” for being alive is so appropriate and is used over and over again in Scripture. When your body is asleep, you are also asleep, and unable to interact with your environment. When your body is dead, you are dead, and unable to interact with your environment. As you can see, the Bible's repeated use of the analogy of sleep for death makes perfect logical sense. To get even more confirmation of all this, let's look at several more of the Bible's references to what occurs at death.

In John 11:11-14, Jesus tells His disciples that Lazarus died, using the terminology of “sleep”. (And if you read on to John 11:25-26, be sure to do it in the accurately translated Concordant Version; Jesus didn't say you'll “never” die if you believe in Him, He said you won't be dead “for the eon” – during the next age. Also don't misinterpret His statement that a person who believes in Him “will live even if he dies”; the context along with an accurate translation of the Greek verb tenses makes the timing clear, that He is referring to the promise of life in the next age on earth – what we would now call the millennium – for those who believe in Him in this age: “He who is believing in Me, even if he should be dying, shall be living. And everyone who is living and believing in Me, shall by no means be dying **for the eon.**” Any interpretation of these words of Christ that claims He was talking about being with God consciously immediately at death, would make Christ into a schizophrenic liar who contradicts many other plain statements of Scripture such as Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 10, Psalm 6:5, 115:17, etc. and His own use of the analogy of sleep for death.)

Acts 7:60 tells us that when Stephen died he “fell asleep”. Acts 13:36 uses the same terminology about ancient King David.

And in Daniel 12:13, the angel tells Daniel, “You will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.” In verse 2, the angel said, “The multitude of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake.” Here we see more examples of the *person* being in the exact same state as the *body* – “asleep”, dead. This passage is another example of how the Bible is extremely clear about the fact that dead Christians and/or Godly people will get their reward when they “wake up” or “awake” and get immortal bodies at the rapture at the end of this age, not before. (Don’t be confused by the lack of specifics in Daniel 12:2 about the exact timing of the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous; Old Testament prophecies often leave out timing details that are clarified in the New Testament. And make sure to read the rest of the verse in Young’s Literal Translation or The Concordant Version so you realize that the contempt/abhorrence/repulsion that the unrighteous awake to will not be “everlasting” or “eternal”, but “age-during” or “eonian”. And see Concordant Version for accurate translation of the last phrase of vs. 3.)

Now let me ask you a simple question: Why would the Bible repeatedly use the phrase “fall asleep” or “asleep” or “sleep” when referring to death if a person remains conscious at death? Do you remain conscious when you fall asleep? I sure don’t! Why would you need to “awake” from death if you’re already conscious?

Please realize, *if a person remains conscious at death, the “sleep” analogy used so often in Scripture makes no sense! The whole analogy falls apart!* If people are conscious in death, how does the analogy of sleep for death make *any* sense whatsoever? It doesn’t! Would Jesus, Paul, an angel, and the Scriptures repeatedly use an analogy that makes no sense? Of course not. The Scriptures use the analogy of sleep for death because it is perfectly appropriate and makes perfect logical sense. As Ecclesiastes 9:5 plainly tells us, death = unconsciousness, and for that reason sleep is an effective, simple, easy to use, and easy to understand analogy for death.

As we saw in Daniel 12:2 for example, the Bible takes this analogy even further, referring to the state of being alive as being “awake”, and specifically uses the verb “to awake” or “to be awakened” to talk about being resurrected from the dead. To “be awakened” or “to awake” obviously means to become conscious from a previous state of unconsciousness. To be “awake” obviously means to be “conscious”. In 1 Thessalonians 5:10 Paul tells us that whether we are “awake” or “asleep”, we will (future tense) live together with Him (referring to receiving our future immortal bodies at the rapture). Paul is explaining to us in no uncertain terms that a living person is “awake” (conscious) and a dead person is “asleep” (unconscious). **These two passages explain for us beyond any shadow of doubt the exact meaning of the analogy of “sleep” as used in Scripture to describe death – it is the *contrast* of being *conscious* vs. being *unconscious*.**

The Bible uses the terminology of “falling asleep” for dying much more often than it uses the terminology of “being with the Lord” or “being in heaven/paradise” at death. So why is it that people who believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife (conscious death, etc.) *never* use the terminology of “falling asleep”? When was the last time you heard someone say, “Sister Edna fell asleep last week after a battle with cancer.” They never say it that way. They stick exclusively to the “be with the Lord” terminology: “Sister Edna went to be with the Lord.” The reason people who are stuck in the Catholic afterlife mindset never use the “sleeping/resting” terminology is because it brings to mind a very clear picture of something (falling asleep, losing consciousness) that clearly contradicts the Catholic afterlife. But the Bible uses this terminology over and over again.

Let’s go back to Stephen in Acts 7:59-60. *“They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ Having said this, he fell asleep.”*

Here we see, once again, confirmation of exactly what it means when a human’s *spirit* “returns to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7) – when the person’s spirit returns to God in heaven at death, the person *falls asleep* (in perfect agreement with Ecc. 9:5, 10). Yet people who believe in the Catholic afterlife conveniently never get specific about exactly what happens to the soul and spirit of a human at death, and conveniently never mention (as the Bible does over and over) that at death a person falls asleep when their spirit returns to God. Instead they artificially superimpose a pagan Catholic-invented idea (conscious death) on top of the “be with the Lord” or “in heaven/paradise” terminology.

You will also notice that Christians stuck in the Catholic afterlife mindset rarely if ever mention the resurrection as the great hope of Christians, but rather talk about being with the Lord (by which they mean consciously) and getting their reward in death, as their great hope. This makes sense from their perspective; why would you need to mention the resurrection when you think you’ve gotten everything you could ever ask for (reward and being consciously with Jesus) in death? The conscious death lie propagated by the Catholic afterlife has stolen all the thunder of the resurrection! But this is not how the apostle Paul spoke! He spoke over and over again about dead people having “fallen asleep” in the same passages where he makes it abundantly clear that our great hope is the resurrection. Why do Christians who believe the Catholic version of the afterlife *never speak that way*? This is so important that I think we should revisit the classic passage by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

“If there is no resurrection of the dead...our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain.” (vs. 13-14)

A person who believes in conscious death would never say this!

“If the dead are not raised...then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (vs. 16-18)

Another statement people who believe in conscious death would never make! Here Paul tell us that if there is no resurrection, dead Christians will have “perished”. A person who believes in the Catholic afterlife would say, “If the dead are not raised, well at least dead Christians are partying in heaven!” But Paul said they would be “perished” if they don’t get raised from the dead, not partying in heaven!

Here we also see Paul clearly make a differentiation between Christians and non-Christians: everybody who dies “falls asleep”, but Christians are spoken of as having “fallen asleep *in Christ*”. Because they fell asleep “in Christ” (having come to know Christ), Christians will be resurrected sooner than everyone else (a fact Paul points out immediately in the next section of the chapter).

In verses 20-28, Paul follows these amazing statements about the hopelessness of Christians and the uselessness of our faith if there is no resurrection, with the specifics of how just as everyone dies, everyone will eventually be “vivified” (more on that in an upcoming chapter of this book). He then continues in verse 30:

“Why are we also in danger every hour?” He continues talking about the hardships he goes through for Christ: *“If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?”* (vs. 32) Paul is saying, “There is no human reward in this age for all the hardships I’ve been through for Christ; there is no point whatsoever in going through all this trouble for the Lord, unless... Unless what?”

“If the dead are not raised...” (vs. 32)

Unless there is a resurrection so he can get his reward for all he’s done for the Lord! This of course matches up perfectly with Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, and everything else I’ve taught you in this chapter. And Paul finishes his thought with this astounding statement:

“If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Wow. Paul just said it doesn’t even matter how we live our lives...unless there is a resurrection. There is no reward or consequence for our actions...unless there is a resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then we may as well live however we want. Yet ask a person who believes in the Catholic afterlife why it’s so important to live our lives for God, and they won’t even mention the resurrection! Instead they’ll tell you, “Because you’re either going to hell or heaven (consciously) when you die, and you want to go to heaven and get lots of reward to enjoy while you’re dead!” This is the exact opposite of what Paul said! Paul said apart from the resurrection there would be no reason to live any particular way!

Further on in the chapter Paul continues,

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...” (In the verses immediately

preceding this, he tells us Christians that the bodies we'll get at the rapture will not be made of flesh and blood, but of a different type of spiritual substance.) So, *when* do we “inherit the kingdom of God, Paul? At the resurrection!

“...*inherit the kingdom of God...Behold, I tell you a mystery*” – and he goes on to describe the rapture. Folks, we will not “inherit the kingdom of God” until the rapture! This is totally different timing than what is claimed by the Catholic afterlife! The Catholic afterlife claims we will “inherit the kingdom” the moment we die! But Paul said it won't happen until the rapture! (Also see Chapter 9 of this book for more information on the huge difference between the concept that came to the mind of Godly people in Bible days upon hearing “the kingdom”, and what has been taught to people by Middle Ages Catholicism.)

Paul gives us even more confirmation of all this in verse 53: “*This mortal must put on immortality.*” OK Paul, exactly when is this going to happen? At the rapture, of course! (The entire context of the passage!)

He then says, “*When this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that it is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’*”

When exactly will death be defeated for the Christian? At the rapture of course! (The entire context of the passage!)

When exactly will we Christians get immortality? At the rapture, of course! (The entire context of the passage!)

But the Catholic afterlife acts as if death is defeated and we get immortality the moment we die! The Catholic afterlife treats death as a *friend* to the Christian (as if death is when we get our reward and get to be consciously with Jesus). But the Bible says it is our *enemy* – an enemy that will not be defeated in our lives until the rapture! Part of the confusion Christians have about this is a blatant mistranslation in John 11:26 in many English Bibles, “Everyone who lives, and believes in Me will never die.” Young's Literal translates it accurately: “Everyone who is living and believing in Me shall not die – to the age.” Those who are living (now in this age) and believing in Christ (now in this age) will not be dead during the next age (what we'd now call the millennium). Why? Because we'll partake in the rapture shortly before the millennium starts. This is not rocket science when we translate accurately.

Paul confirms even further in 1 Timothy 6:14-16 that dead Christians do not yet have immortality: “*Our Lord Jesus Christ...who alone possesses immortality.*” Paul stated specifically and plainly, in no uncertain terms, that at this moment only one human possesses immortality – Jesus Christ. Yet if you ask a person who believes in the Catholic afterlife whether dead Christians have immortality already, they'll say, “Why of course they do! They're in heaven talking to Jesus and enjoying their reward!” Apparently they've never read John 3:13, Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18, 32 (and the entire

chapter), 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, or 1 Timothy 6:14-16. It is utterly astounding how a Catholic afterlife mindset causes people to simply ignore dozens of Biblical statements as if they don't even exist.

And it's utterly astounding how it causes people to cherry-pick Bible verses totally out of context. I've heard people take verse 19 of 1 Corinthians 15, "*If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied*" and then act as if "the next life" refers to conscious death rather than the resurrection, utterly ignoring the immediate context and the entire rest of the chapter that talks about dead people being asleep and mentions the resurrection over and over and over again as the great hope of Christians, making repeated statements that if not for a resurrection our faith would be useless and Christians would be "perished", if not for the resurrection we might as well live however we want, etc. etc. The blatant cherry-picking of Scriptures out of their immediate context and without regard for the entire testimony of Scripture required by the Catholic afterlife mindset is a testimony to the blinding power of tradition.

If we take just a little time to study the specifics of human death in Scripture, it is really not rocket science. The only thing that causes confusion is a false, pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited conscious death and eternal punishment mindset.

There are more verses I could quote, but you get the point. Over and over again the Bible makes it clear that death is unconsciousness, and it frequently uses the terminology of "sleep" to describe it, along with the terminology of "awakening" for resurrection. All the Bible's passages about death agree perfectly with one another and corroborate the specific statements about death made by David and Solomon. It would be absurd to conclude that David (a prophet of whom God said, "I have sworn by My holiness, I will not lie to David") and Solomon (the wisest man besides Christ who ever lived) had incomplete or incorrect information about death based on a few passages that must be interpreted with creative license in order to artificially superimpose the idea of conscious death upon them.

Remember the question I posed earlier? *If you go to be with God consciously immediately at death, why would you need to be resurrected?* Many Christians would be stumped by that question, but what I've just explained to you easily answers it. Dead believers will need to be resurrected in the future at the rapture, because while a dead believer's spirit returns to God unconsciously at death, the soul (consciousness) goes to "the unseen" (the person becomes unconscious), and the body goes into the ground. Therefore, only at the rapture, when we receive an immortal physical body, will we become conscious again as our spirit is united with our new incorruptible body – see 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 49-54 and Genesis 2:7.

Let me also briefly answer the question of what happens to a person who dies in this age without knowledge of or belief in Christ. What happens to such a person the moment they die? We have no evidence in Scripture that anything happens other than what Ecclesiastes 12:7, 9:5, and 9:10 say: the person becomes unconscious and their spirit "returns to God who gave it". Am I saying that pretty much the same thing happens to an

unbeliever in this age who dies as happens to a believer in this age who dies? *Yes. At least during this age.* The spirits (container of the person's personality, memories, and thoughts, like a computer hard drive) of both believers and unbelievers "return to God" at death according to Ecclesiastes 12:7. *The difference in reward between believers in this age and unbelievers in this age does not manifest itself in death, but will only manifest itself once the next age, the millennium, arrives.* Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death" and Romans 2:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". The reward and freedom from death that a believer gets *does not manifest itself until the rapture.* The Christian, because he has "fallen asleep *in Christ*", will be resurrected sooner than everyone else. Again, see Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:13-32,49-54, 1 Tim. 6:14-16, etc.

The difference between what happens to a Christian who dies in this age, and a non-Christian who dies in this age, is that the Christian will get immortality (an immortal resurrected body) at the rapture and will be alive throughout the millennium and the New Jerusalem age (will have "eonian life", life during those two ages), while the nonbeliever who dies in this age will remain dead throughout the millennium (will not have "eonian life" but rather the "eonian punishment" of remaining dead – "the wages of sin is death" – throughout the millennium age, the punishment of missing out on a great life during that age, the punishment of "losing their soul/experience" during that age), and will only be resurrected (into a mortal body) after the millennium at the white throne judgment. (Later in this book I will explain directly from Scripture exactly what will happen to these people after that.)

The bottom line is, when a person dies, they are dead. They are unconscious and cannot experience anything anyway so God does not give Christians who die in this age a different type of "death experience" than that of non-Christians who die in this age; death is not an experience. Death by its very Biblical definition is a lack of experience – unconsciousness, no life, no ability to interact with anything or anyone else in any way. This is the normal state of human beings in death. (See two Bible passages I mention in a moment, one about Samuel and one about the 5th Seal of Revelation, to see how it may be possible Scripturally for a dead/unconscious person to be temporarily awakened from unconsciousness and then go back to unconsciousness/sleep, but both those passages also make it clear that the *normal state* of human beings in death is unconsciousness/sleep. For example, the souls who are awakened at the 5th Seal of Revelation are then told to "*rest a little while longer*", and Samuel was upset at being "disturbed" from his rest. You see what I mean.)

The pagan Middle Ages Catholic idea of the "immortal soul" or human beings supposedly having an "immortal spirit" (both terms by which people mean to refer to conscious death) is utter nonsense. (Not to mention that these terms, often used interchangeably, muddle the definition of soul and spirit, treating them as if they're the same). We know for sure that **at this moment in time, only one human being is immortal:** the One who is in an immortal resurrected body. 1 Timothy 6:13-16, written by Paul after Christ's resurrection, tells us plainly that right now only God and Christ have

immortality. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Paul then refers to dead Christians as “the dead in Christ”, and in 1 Corinthians 15:18 as “those who have fallen asleep in Christ”. If dead Christians were sitting in heaven chatting with Jesus, they would not be asleep, they would already have immortality, there would be no need for the rapture to occur, and Paul would be contradicting himself. But of course Paul didn’t contradict himself – because dead believers do not yet have immortality! Their unconscious spirits are with God (they are asleep) and they do not yet have immortal bodies. When will believers get their immortality – their immortal bodies? 1 Corinthians 15:53 says, “This mortal shall put on immortality...” – when? The context tells us. *At the rapture.*

Hebrews 11:39 states that the heroes of faith who died in faith “did not receive what was promised”. They haven't gotten what God promised them yet! Why? They're dead! They're unconscious. They “know nothing” (Ecc. 9:5). Their spirits have returned to God, unconsciously, but since they are unconscious they are not able to enjoy or receive the reward God promised them yet. They died in hope of “a better resurrection” (not a better conscious death) and will receive what God promised them *at the rapture.*

All of these statements by Jesus, Paul, and the rest of the Bible match up perfectly with each other. However, as soon as you try to artificially introduce the false, pagan-originated, Middle-Ages-Catholic-inherited idea of conscious death and creatively twist a couple of Scriptures to match, many of the Biblical statements suddenly contradict each other!

When you study the Bible carefully, making sure that certain key words are translated accurately, its teaching about death could not be any more clear and consistent. It tells us that humans are made up of three parts (1 Thess. 5:23), and death is a return of each of those three parts to where it came from – a return of the spirit to God (Ecc. 12:7), the soul (consciousness) to the unseen/unperceived (the person thus becoming unconscious) (Ecc. 9:5,10, Acts 2:27), and the body to the ground (Gen. 3:19). A person coming to life or being resurrected from the dead is just the opposite: the spirit from God is united with a physical body to produce “a living (conscious) soul” (Genesis 2:7).

If you’re not convinced of this simple truth after reading this chapter, I encourage you to study this in detail on your own, and read all the way to the end of this book. It will be good for you to “test everything” I’m saying here and “hold on to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The greatest compliment you could ever pay me would be to test what I say! I think you’ll find that people who teach the Catholic version of the afterlife conveniently fail to mention many Biblical statements about death, whereas in this book I am covering virtually all of them. (Any not covered are very similar to others that I do cover.) So let’s look at a few more Biblical passages about death that sometimes confuse people.

I recently received an email from a reader who asked about Revelation 6:9-11, which describes the souls of the martyrs crying out to God. He was testing what I was saying, pointing out a passage that he thought contradicted the idea that dead people are

unconscious. He essentially said, “How can people be unconscious in death if these dead souls in Revelation 6:9-11 are talking to God?” I wrote him back, and first complimented him for testing what I was teaching. Then I pointed out that if these souls were really conscious and talking to God throughout their death experience, then Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Daniel 12:13, John 3:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:13-19, 30-32, and the other plain statements of Scripture about death that I’ve quoted to you in this book, are lies, the analogy of sleep for death used throughout Scripture makes no sense whatsoever, and the Bible has no more credibility because it contradicts itself and uses analogies that make no sense. He wanted me to explain Revelation 6:9-11; my first point to him was, “If Revelation 6:9-11 teaches that a soul is continually conscious throughout the death experience, or that the normal state of a dead person is to be conscious, then David and Solomon’s statements about death are lies, Luke 23:46 and Acts 2:27 should not have quoted David about Jesus’ death, and the analogy of sleep for death (and being “awake” for being alive) used in Scripture is suddenly incomprehensible...which means the whole Bible is untrustworthy.”

You see, many times people cling to what they’ve been taught, and when they hear something that contradicts what they’ve been taught, as a knee-jerk reaction they fling out verses that they have never examined carefully, and don’t even consider the fact that if their interpretation is correct, it makes other plain Scriptures into lies and the Bible into a self-contradictory mess! The key is to examine *all* the Scriptures about a subject *carefully*, making sure to read an accurate translation and to explain unclear Scriptures with clear ones, and if you do that, the answer will *always* come to light. Not once have I ever found the Bible to contradict itself when *all* the pertinent verses about a subject are examined carefully (and translated accurately). And many times I’ve noticed that to find the perfectly cohesive, perfectly logical answer, a *religious preconception must be cast aside*, because the religious preconception in people’s minds is *causing all the confusion by making some verses seem to say something that they don’t really say (at least to people stuck with that religious preconception in their minds)*.

This is exactly the case with Revelation 6:9-11. If this passage teaches that the normal state of the dead is consciousness, other Bible verses suddenly become lies. What gives?

The simple answer, which I pointed out to this reader, is that the souls of the martyrs were “resting” (typical of the Bible’s use of the “sleep” analogy for death) both *before and after* they were woken up *temporarily* to cry out to God. After their brief conversation with God, these souls were told to go back to sleep/rest: “...and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer.” This tells us beyond any shadow of doubt that the normal state of these souls, both before and after their short conversation with God, is rest/sleep/unconsciousness, in perfect harmony with the rest of Scripture. When Revelation 6:9-11 is fulfilled (it will happen outside the realm of human/earthly perception so it’s impossible to know exactly when it happens), God will wake up these dead souls temporarily and make them conscious for a brief conversation, after which they will go back to sleep/rest/unconsciousness again. God has the right and the ability to wake these people up temporarily if He wants. He’s God. But this passage does not change the

Bible's teaching about death at all – rather it confirms it by telling us that these souls are “resting” both before and after their short conversation with God.

Some people might say this passage is not literal, but a symbolic message to end times believers; how can dead souls without bodies wear white robes as verse 11 says? Maybe God gives them bodies temporarily; the passage doesn't say. Or maybe the white robes are figurative, not literal. A figurative interpretation of the 5th Seal obviously would not contradict the rest of the Bible's teaching about the normal state of humans in death being unconsciousness. But even if this passage describes a literal event, the event is obviously a temporary exception to the normal state of humans in death – the martyrs are unconscious (they “rest” or “sleep”), are only temporarily woken up to cry out to God, and then are told to go back to sleep/rest (unconsciousness). This passage does not contradict the rest of the Bible's clear teaching that the normal state of the dead is unconsciousness, but confirms it.

The same with the Bible's account of Saul talking to dead Samuel (1st Samuel 28:7-19) through a medium. The way this passage reads, I think we should probably assume he really was talking to Samuel, since the Bible states matter-of-factly twice in the passage that it was Samuel. But this passage does not contradict anything else in Scripture about death. The rest of Scripture tells us that Samuel's normal state in death would have been unconsciousness/sleep, and Revelation 6:9-11 tells us that it is possible for that normal state to be interrupted temporarily under certain circumstances. Thus this passage cannot be used as proof that the normal/continuous state of the dead is consciousness. It can easily be interpreted in such a way that it matches up with the rest of Scripture's clear teaching that the normal death state is unconsciousness. This is another one of those cases where we must not “go off the reservation” and assume things about a passage that it doesn't actually say or try to use it to prove things it doesn't actually prove. We must always stick to letting Scripture explain itself and match up with itself. Samuel was upset at being “disturbed” (vs. 15); he said to Saul, “*Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?*” What was Samuel disturbed from? The rest of Scripture gives us the answer: rest/sleep/unconsciousness. (See Dan. 12:13 – we have no reason to assume that Samuel would be any different than Daniel; both are “resting” in death and will have to wait for the rapture to experience their reward.)

Now let's talk about the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. (Chapter 10 of this book is dedicated to helping you understand it the way Godly people in Bible days would've naturally understood it, but let's touch on it briefly here.) Read Luke 16:23 where Jesus says the rich man is suffering in “this flame” in “the unseen” (Greek “hades”). This *seemingly contradicts* everything else in Scripture about “hades” and its Hebrew counterpart “sheol”, including Ecclesiastes 9:10 which plainly states, “There is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol”. If there is no knowledge in sheol, then how does the rich man even know that he's suffering? If there's no planning in sheol, then how is this rich man planning a way to get out of there? The parable of Lazarus and the rich man *seemingly contradicts* David's and Solomon's statements about death, the New Testament's confirmation of David and Solomon's statements about death, the Bible's (and Jesus' own)

repeated use of the analogy of sleep for death and of being “awake” for being alive, and Jesus’ statement in John 3:13, “No man has ascended into heaven.” (How can Lazarus be in heaven if “no man has ascended into heaven”? How can the rich man and Lazarus have a conversation if they’re both dead/“asleep”?) The setting of this parable *seemingly contradicts* everything else in Scripture about death (much of which we have looked at in this chapter).

So what gives? What's going on here? Is Jesus schizophrenic, or what? Why is He contradicting Himself and the rest of Scripture so blatantly?

Simple answer: *He's not contradicting Himself at all, because the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is exactly that – a parable, a fictional illustrative story, and Jesus did not take the setting and details of the fictional story from the Scriptures, but from the Pharisees' pagan Babylonian Talmudian traditions.* In Chapter 10 I will quote the exact passages from the Talmud that Jesus virtually quoted from in the fictional setting of the parable. There are also several details in the parable that tell us it cannot possibly be a literal teaching by Jesus about the afterlife, but rather that Jesus was making a joke out of the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian traditions and mocking its pagan beliefs about the afterlife, as an affront to the Pharisees and as a lesson to the others listening. These details and the fact that it is a parable (parables by definition are not literal, but fictional stories) are overlooked by many Christians who interpret the setting of the story superficially and ignorantly as being a literal teaching about the afterlife.

Modern Christians don’t interpret the setting and details of the parable of the seed and the sower as being a literal teaching about agricultural practices; so why do they blatantly switch interpretation methods with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, and immediately assume its fictional setting is a literal teaching about the afterlife? Leftover paganism stuck in their minds. Carelessness. Failure to study what all of Scripture says about death. Failure to realize that they are interpreting this one parable in a vastly different manner (as if the fictional setting is a literal teaching) than they interpret every other parable of Jesus (with which no one would ever dream of treating the fictional setting as a literal teaching). Failure to read past the fictional setting to the *points Jesus Himself made* with the parable, which had *zero, nothing, nada to do with the afterlife.* Failure to realize that the fictional setting is *lifted straight out of the pages of the Pharisees pagan Talmudian traditions (later written down as the Talmud),* which is why the setting matches up perfectly with pagan Talmudian ideas and terminology regarding death while blatantly contradicting everything Scripture teaches about death.

For a more thorough explanation of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, you can read Chapter 10 of this book, in which I explain it clearly and logically using the same common sense rules we use to interpret all parables. In Chapters 9 and 10 we'll dive into the culture, knowledge, and beliefs of the Israelites and Pharisees of Jesus' day, which will help us realize that with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man Jesus was simply using false pagan Talmudian conceptions of the afterlife that would have been familiar to His audience as the setting of His fictional illustrative story, and that the points He made with this illustrative story had everything to do with the next age of life on earth and nothing to do

with the “pagan afterlife” setting of the story, which was just a vehicle to get to the point while mocking the Talmud at the same time. Jesus could have used any fictional story set in any setting to get across the same point, but He chose a pagan Talmudian “afterlife” setting for the story, and made the “pagan afterlife” into a joke, mocking it, to make an additional point to His audience, which included Pharisees, that He did *not* approve of the Pharisees embracing paganism and mixing Talmudic beliefs with the teachings of the Old Testament Scriptures. After you read Chapters 9 and 10 it will be clear to you that the point of the parable had nothing to do with “the afterlife”, but with life in the next age *on earth*.

I placed a few brief comments on Jesus’ parable of Lazarus and the rich man in this chapter because I want you to know I’m not ignoring it. Having said that, **please do not read Chapter 10 on Lazarus and the rich man until you read Chapter 9**, because it is difficult to fully understand the points Jesus was making with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man until you understand what I teach in Chapter 9 about the cultural context and knowledge of the Israelites to whom Jesus was speaking, and the fact that Jesus’ main message to Israel was *not* about “the afterlife” or “going to heaven” but about life in the next age on earth. Understanding Jesus’ message to Israel correctly will enable you to see that with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man Jesus was not giving a teaching about the afterlife, but was mocking the Pharisees’ ridiculous pagan Talmudian beliefs about the conscious afterlife, while simultaneously making the same point He always made to Israel in His preaching, about how they could earn themselves a good spot in the next age of life on earth by obeying the Old Testament Law of Moses and doing good works.

Again, do not judge what I’m saying until you read Chapters 9 and 10! I placed the chapter explaining the parable Lazarus and the rich man toward the end of this book for a reason. The fictional setting of this parable has been irresponsibly, superficially, and inaccurately interpreted as being a literal teaching about the afterlife for so long by so many Christians that I wanted to leave it until last so that the overwhelming weight of evidence from the rest of this book will help you realize that the only possible way to interpret the parable without it contradicting everything else in (accurately translated) Scripture is to realize that it’s fictional setting is *not* a literal teaching on “the afterlife”, but a fictional illustrative story with a setting lifted right out of the pages of the pagan Talmud, and that it would have been understood as such by Jesus’ audience of Israelites living 2000 years ago.

In any case, I again ask you to read all the way to the end of this book before you come to a final judgment on what I teach here. There are several Scriptures that are commonly twisted, and many others that are completely ignored, to try to fit a pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited “hell mindset”, so it takes *all the chapters of this book, in order*, to unravel each thread of misunderstanding and confusion, and sew them all back together logically in a way where Scripture agrees with itself and makes perfect sense. Throughout this book I must continually resist the urge to jump to other threads to let you know that I’m aware of them and that I have a Scriptural and logical explanation for each thread that matches perfectly with everything else in accurately translated Scripture. So suffice it to say, *please read to the end of the book before jumping to conclusions. In this book I cover*

every possible Scriptural question I can think of on the subjects of what happens at death and God's plan for humanity.

That being said, once you've seen how I address the various Bible verses and passages that sometimes confuse people on this subject, I invite you to test what I say. It can never hurt to test and study a subject on your own; doing so will either correct you (a good thing), fine-tune your knowledge (also a good thing), or reinforce your current knowledge and beliefs as being correct (also a good thing). *You can't lose when you test. The truth is not afraid of being tested.*

Unfortunately, many Christians just swallow what they hear from people they perceive as “experts” or any preacher who is a good/smooth/professional communicator, without testing or studying much on their own. This is a big problem in the church. Christians who don't test or “study to show themselves approved” (2 Tim. 2:15) on their own will be easily deceived. This is why I *insist* that you test what I say!

What happens to a human being at death, like the broader subject I cover in this book, God's ultimate plan for humanity, is one of those subjects where you're either going to put the puzzle pieces together the way I'm showing you, or you're going to put the puzzle pieces together the way much of Catholic-influenced modern Christianity does. I've tried it both ways. With the “conscious death and eternal punishment way” I keep running into Scriptural self-contradictions, logical problems I can't solve, and philosophical problems I can't solve. But when I put it together the way I'm showing you in this book, all those pesky Scriptural self-contradictions, logical problems, and philosophical problems with God disappear. It is up to you to decide whether you agree with me, or whether you want to stick to the Catholic-inherited way of putting the puzzle together.

I want to cover the subject of death in Scripture thoroughly, so let me close this chapter by explaining Enoch and Elijah. Some of you astute Bible students have been wondering about them as you read the Scriptures I've quoted to you about death. You may be thinking, “Doesn't the Bible say Enoch and Elijah went to heaven where God lives – alive, and conscious?” Well...the short answer is *no*. *It does not say that*. If it *did* say that, Jesus would be a liar! Let me explain.

Enoch & Elijah Went to the Sky Where the Birds Fly, Not to Heaven Where God Lives

The Bible's phrases “caught up to the heavens” or “caught away”, etc. in reference to Enoch and Elijah are misunderstood by many modern Christians who do not know anything about the Hebrew language in which the Old Testament was written. When we read the word “heaven” or “the heavens” in the Bible we can't just make it mean whatever we want it to mean, we have to find out what *they* meant by it and what it really meant in

Hebrew.

“Heaven” or “the heavens” to the ancient mind and in the ancient Hebrew language basically meant *anything you saw when you looked up*. It could refer to either the atmosphere around earth, or outer space, or heaven where God lives, depending on the context. That’s why, for example, the Bible talks about “the birds of heaven” or “the birds of the heavens” in 1 Kings 14:11 and other passages (the atmosphere around earth), or “the stars of the heavens” in Deuteronomy 4:19 and other places (outer space where the stars and planets are).

Now, sometimes the ancients did refer to “heaven” where God lives. This is why the apostle Paul made it clear that he was caught up to “the *third* heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2), the heaven where God lives...the atmosphere around earth being the *first* heaven, and where the stars and the sun and the moon are being the *second* heaven. Paul was making sure his readers knew he wasn't just caught up into the atmosphere or up by the stars, but was caught up to the heaven where God lives (in or out of the body he didn't know, but he did know it was the heaven where God lives).

So when the Bible says Enoch & Elijah were caught up into “the heavens” or “caught away”, *we have to figure out from the rest of Scripture exactly which heaven was being referred to – first, second, or third*. Let’s do that.

First of all, if they did really go to the heaven where God lives, then Jesus would be a liar, because He said many years after Enoch and Elijah lived:

“*No man has ascended into heaven.*” (John 3:13)

From the context of Jesus’ statement in John 3:13 we can see He was clearly referring to the heaven where God the Father lives. So Enoch and Elijah cannot possibly have gone there! If they did, Jesus is a liar!

John 3:13 *by itself* is enough for us to conclude that Enoch and Elijah never went to the heaven where God lives, but were simply taken into the sky (where the birds are, the first “heaven” to use the ancient and Biblical terminology) and then plopped down on earth somewhere else. (We have to assume they weren't lifted up to outer space – it would be very hard to breathe!) But let’s look at some other Biblical proof, just in case you’re not convinced yet.

In Enoch’s case, the Bible says he was taken away “so he would not taste death”. It does not say he would *never* taste death, just that God moved him supernaturally from one place to another so he wouldn’t taste death *right then (at that moment in time)*. When we read Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5 carefully in an accurate translation such as the Concordant Version, Hebrews 11:5 says

“By faith Enoch was transferred, so as not to be acquainted with death, and was not found, because God transfers him. For before his transference he is attested to have pleased God well.”

Nowhere does the Bible say Enoch never died; it simply says he was “transferred” at some point (obviously out of a dangerous situation) so he wouldn’t die *right then*. (Or else Jesus is a liar – see John 3:13!) The phrase “not found” also implies that somebody was looking for him (with evil intent, because if he wouldn't have been “transferred”, he would've died). This verse does not say anything about going to heaven where God lives; that idea has to be artificially inserted into the passage by the mind of the reader.

And here is the real clincher (as if there wasn’t enough proof already): We know with 100% certainty that Enoch eventually died, not just because of John 3:13, but also because he is listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of faith, of whom it says **“all these died” (Heb. 11:13)**.

And if that's still not enough proof for you, Genesis 5:23 tells us exactly how long Enoch lived – 365 years, after which, according to Hebrews 11:13, he died.

Don’t be confused by Genesis 5:24, which says, “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”. According to Hebrews 11:13 and John 3:13, this *cannot* be a description of him God taking him consciously to heaven. Such an interpretation would make Genesis 5:24 blatantly contradict Jesus’ own words, and Hebrews 11:13 too. The first part of Genesis 5:24 must be a brief summary of his earthly life (“he walked with God”, he was a Godly man). The second part of the verse – “he was not, for God took him” – could be interpreted correctly in a couple of ways. It could be a description of the most spectacular event in his life which was evidence of his extraordinary godliness (when he was transferred from one place on earth to another to escape a dangerous/deadly situation as Hebrew 11:5 describes). Or, since the Young’s Literal Translation of this verse says, “...and he *is* not, for God hath taken him”, it could be a description of his death (God taking his spirit unconsciously), which would match up perfectly with Ecclesiastes 12:7, Luke 23:46, and Luke 23:43. (Even with the literal translation of this phrase with the past-tense verbs in English, it could be a description of his transference from one place on earth to another; sometimes Biblical writers say stuff in ways that sound funny in English because it’s kind of clumsy to translate into English, but which make perfect sense when you look at the context and the other information in the Bible about it.)

No matter which way you interpret the second phrase of Genesis 5:24, Genesis 5:23 tells us, *“All the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.”* That was all the days of Enoch; there were no days for Enoch after that. He is not hanging out consciously in heaven according to Jesus in John 3:13. He is dead and unconscious according to Hebrews 11:13 and Ecclesiastes 9:5 (etc.). He did not go consciously to heaven where God lives after three hundred sixty five years, because if he did, Jesus lied in John 3:13.

You have to understand that the pagan “good people go directly and consciously to

heaven when they die” idea that has been mixed into Christianity, is the only thing that causes people to assume Enoch was “transferred” by God to heaven (where God lives), *consciously*. That idea has to be artificially read into these passages about Enoch. Nowhere does the Bible say Enoch was “transferred” *to heaven*. It just says He was “transferred”. It says he was transferred out of a deathly situation – “so as not to be acquainted with death”. It doesn’t say he would *never* be acquainted with death, just that he would not be acquainted with death *at that moment*. It doesn’t say “God has taken him to heaven consciously”, it just says that God “took him” and/or “transferred” him – which from the rest of God’s Word we must assume to mean he was transferred out of a dangerous/deathly situation to somewhere else on earth, or that his unconscious spirit was taken by God according to Ecclesiastes 12:7.

You see, the Bible does not say, “transferred *to heaven*”, “*never* acquainted with death”, or “God has taken him *to heaven consciously*”. The tricky thing is, it doesn’t say “transferred *to another place on earth*”, “not be acquainted with death *at that moment*”, or “God has taken *his unconscious spirit*” either. So how do we know which meaning is correct?

Well, a person who is looking at Genesis 5:34 and Hebrews 11:5 with pagan conscious death glasses on would add the words “transferred *to heaven*”, “not *ever* be acquainted with death”, and “has taken him *consciously to heaven*” into these Scriptures to make it match his or her belief in conscious death. On the other hand, the author of Hebrews, who later in Hebrews 11 plainly stated that Enoch eventually died, and who understood what the rest of Scripture says on the subject of death including Jesus’ statement in John 3:13, would never dream that Hebrews 11:5 and Genesis 5:34 would be interpreted as if Enoch was taken to heaven consciously! He would naturally have added the words “transferred *from one place on earth to another*” or “took *his unconscious spirit to heaven*” or “not be acquainted with death *at that moment*” into these Scriptures to clarify the meaning.

So why didn’t he? The author of Hebrews did not feel the need to add the phrases “transferred *from one place on earth to another*”, or “not acquainted with death *at that moment*”, or “God has taken *his unconscious spirit*”, because he was *assuming* these phrases/ideas, *as was his audience*. His audience (the Hebrew people back then who would have originally read the letter that we now know as the book of Hebrews in the Bible) did not need him to add these clarifying phrases because it was obvious to them that Enoch did not go consciously to heaven. You have to realize that the book of Hebrews was written long before the Middle Ages when pagan conscious death and “going immediately to heaven consciously” ideas became the default belief of Christianity! Hebrews was written shortly after the birth of Christianity, when the correct Scriptural teaching of *unconscious* death, the spirit (unconscious without the body) going to be with God *unconsciously* at death, and going to heaven consciously in an immortal body *only at the rapture* were still the default belief of Christians! (See a book called *Universalism: The Prevailing Doctrine of the Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years*, by John Wesley Hanson.)

So as modern Christians, since there are no explanatory phrases added around the

words “transferred”, “not be acquainted with death”, and “has taken him”, **we must look to the rest of Scripture to clarify these phrases for us, not to pagan/Middle-Ages-Catholicism-inherited ideas.** When one Scripture isn’t perfectly clear in and of itself, we must look to the rest of the testimony of Scripture (not pagan ideas) to help us interpret it. **The rest of Scripture (John 3:13, Hebrews 11:13, Genesis 5:23, etc.) tells us with 100% certainty that Enoch did *not* go to heaven consciously, but rather he *died* when he was 365 years old.**

Any other interpretation would makes Jesus and the author of Hebrews into liars – which in turn would make the whole Bible and the whole basis of true Christianity fall apart. The simple conclusion is, Enoch was not taken to heaven; he was supernaturally taken from one place to another on earth in order to escape death at that moment in his earthly life, he ended up living 365 years, and at the end of his earthly life, when he died (Heb. 11:13), God took his unconscious spirit. This interpretation matches perfectly with the rest of Scripture.

So that explains Enoch. What about Elijah?

We also know with 100% certainty that Elijah did not go to heaven where God lives because of Jesus' statement in John 3:13: “*No man has ascended into heaven*”. Elijah, like Enoch, lived before Jesus walked the earth, and Jesus stated plainly while He was walking the earth that no human being had yet been taken to heaven where God lives. So let’s look at the Scriptures about Elijah and see what really happened to him.

First, in case you were wondering about the vision of Moses and Elijah which the three disciples had with Jesus, Matthew 17:9 makes it clear that it was a “vision” (Young’s Literal Translation). A vision could be when something real is seen, or when something not real is seen and it’s simply something that is shown to a person (or persons in this case) by God. In other words, because the Bible tells us that this was a “vision”, there is the possibility that it was not really Moses and Elijah standing there, but God simply created this vision to communicate something to those who saw it.

To show you another example of this, the book of Revelation is a record of a vision given to the apostle John. Were the people and events he saw in the vision, really there in front of him, right then, in real time, in reality? Of course not. He was seeing something that was not actually there in real time in physical reality. Since Jesus and the disciples saw Moses and Elijah in a “vision”, it is possible that Moses and Elijah were not actually there at that moment in time. If I told you “I had a vision of Alexander the Great” would you think he was actually there with me when I had the vision? Of course not. *It's a vision, not a reality.*

The other possibility is that it was a vision of Moses and Elijah being actually there, similar to Samuel or the souls of the 5th Seal of Revelation being temporarily awakened from the dead. But even if Moses and Elijah were really there, that does not mean that they were normally or continually conscious during death, or that they were hanging out in

heaven consciously. John 3:13 rules out the idea that they were hanging out in heaven consciously. And the incident with Saul talking to dead Samuel along with the incident in the 5th Seal of Revelation where the dead souls wake up from sleep/death temporarily to have a brief conversation with God, tell us that there may be a Scriptural precedent for dead people being awakened temporarily from death and made conscious temporarily under certain circumstances. But none of this changes the fact that at the time Jesus walked the earth “no man (had) ascended into heaven (consciously)” (Jn. 3:13) or the fact that the normal state of a dead person is unconsciousness (as I’ve proved to you beyond any shadow of doubt.) The bottom line is, Elijah was not hanging out in heaven consciously (and still isn’t), and if he really did wake up and appear to Jesus and the disciples with Moses, they were only woken up temporarily.

Either way you interpret his appearance with Moses in a vision to Jesus and the three disciples, there is no doubt that *Elijah is dead and unconscious right now*. He’s definitely not consciously hanging out in heaven (John 3:13), and for him to be consciously hanging out somewhere else for a long period of time (not just a little while like dead Samuel talking to Saul, the dead souls in the 5th Seal of Revelation, and possibly the short vision Jesus and the disciples had of Moses and Elijah) would be an extreme anomaly of a kind not found anywhere in Scripture. In other words, we have no Scriptural proof that Moses and Elijah are conscious right now. Without Scriptural proof otherwise, we must assume that Elijah, at this very moment, is dead and unconscious, just like every other person in history who has died (other than Christ, who obviously was resurrected into a physical immortal body). Again it comes down to “filling in the blanks” with the testimony of the rest of Scripture and not allowing ourselves to make stuff up out of our own brains or pull ideas from the list of pagan teachings that were combined with Christianity in the Middle Ages.

So, now that we’ve got that straightened out, let’s figure out what happened to Elijah when he was “caught up to heaven” or “to the heavens”. It’s actually very simple. Again, the key is to determine *which of the three “heavens” he was caught up into*. If you read 2 Kings 2, which describes Elijah being taken away from Elisha’s side into “heaven” or “the heavens”, *there is absolutely no indication or proof in that passage that he went to heaven where God lives*. If there was – remember John 3:13 (and its context which makes it clear Jesus was referring to heaven where God lives) – the Bible would contradict itself and Jesus would be a liar!

Notice, in 2 Kings 2:3 Elijah says that God would take away Elisha’s “master from over him today” – Elijah declared that the major purpose of that day’s occasion was *to transfer Elijah’s ministry to Elisha*. God did not have to take Elijah to heaven where God lives to accomplish that – not at all. All He had to do was take Elijah up into the sky where the birds fly, and plop him down somewhere else. And that’s exactly what He did. This *must* be what He did, because it is the only other logical option, since we know Jesus did not lie in John 3:13.

God had to lift Elijah up and plop him down somewhere else on earth because Elisha stuck to Elijah like a fly on flypaper, and such a dramatic parting was necessary to

help Elisha get the point that he was anointed to go minister on his own. If Elijah had just taken his cloak and put it on Elisha and said, “Here you go mate, go for it”, Elisha probably would’ve protested and said, “No, master, I’m gonna stick with you, you’re an awesome anointed prophet of God”. So it was necessary for God to suddenly and forcibly remove Elijah physically from Elisha's side so that Elisha could no longer follow Elijah around.

The point of this was not to take Elijah to heaven where God lives – according to Jesus in John 3:13, Elijah definitely did not go there! Rather, Elijah himself makes it clear in 2 Kings 2:3 that the main goal of the day’s events was to remove Elijah’s leadership from Elisha’s life and transfer his anointing to Elisha. Several times in this passage the phrase “taken from you” (“you” being Elisha) is used, and the phrase “separated the two of them” is used when Elijah was actually taken away; these phrases drive home the point that the purpose of the separation was not to take Elijah somewhere special and amazing, but rather to separate him from Elisha. Unfortunately modern Christians with their pagan-leftover conscious-death-heaven-or-hell-immediately-at-death mindset mistakenly place the emphasis of the day’s events on “Elijah being taken someplace special, consciously to heaven where God lives”, not understanding that the context shows the main purpose of the event was simply to separate him from Elisha and that the word “heaven” to the ancients would mean “the sky where the birds are” in the context of a story like this. Again keep in mind that, unlike modern Christians, people in Bible times would assume that the Old Testament’s statements and teachings about unconscious death were correct; it would never cross their minds that someone would consciously go to heaven where God lives in the absence of abundant proof. To a person in Bible times it would have been exceedingly obvious from the context and details of this story that Elijah was simply lifted up into the sky where the birds fly and plopped down somewhere else on earth, far enough away that Elisha couldn’t find him.

In 2 Kings 2:15-16 we see another piece of evidence: the other prophets *assumed Elijah had been dropped off somewhere else on earth*. They asked Elisha if they should go looking for him! Elisha had to tell them not to bother (apparently he’d gotten the point that he was not supposed to tag along with Elijah anymore). Obviously, if these guys had seen Elijah go up into heaven, and rise, and rise, and rise, or disappear into thin air, or some such thing, they never would have thought of going to look for Elijah. The fact that they thought they might be able to find him if they went looking for him tells us that they must have seen him go in a certain direction (north, south, east, west, sideways, toward the horizon in a certain direction, you know what I mean), causing them to think that if they went in the direction they’d seen him go, they might be able to find him. Again, from these details in the story itself, it never would have crossed the mind of a person in Bible times that Elijah might have gone to heaven where God lives; they would have immediately and unconsciously assumed that Elijah was simply lifted some ways up into the air where the birds fly, taken in a certain direction until he was out of the prophets’ sight, and plopped down on earth.

One other interesting thing I’ll note about Elijah is that the Bible seems to record him, in 2 Chronicles 21, acting *on earth, chronologically after* his dramatic exit away from

Elisha's side. 2 Chronicles 21 along with 2 Kings 1-3 seem to show that *Elijah handed his mantle to Elisha as the reign of King Jehoram began*; yet 2 Chronicles 21 records *Elijah writing a letter to King Jehoram, after he had been caught up "to the heavens"* and his primary ministry had been handed over to Elisha. I am not 100% sure about this point, but I thought I would at least mention it in case you want to study it on your own. To be honest I simply haven't taken the time to study it in depth, because the testimony of the rest of Scripture is so clear that I don't need any additional proof that Elijah did not go consciously to heaven where God lives.

The bottom line is, Elijah cannot possibly have gone to heaven where God lives because of what Jesus said in John 3:13. On the day Elijah handed his mantle to Elisha, he was simply taken into the sky (the first "heaven" or "heavens", where birds fly), dropped down somewhere else on earth, and died later on – just like Enoch.

Summary

The testimony of Scripture is clear. Death is unconsciousness. At death the spirit/breath returns to God who gave it, the body returns to the dust where it came from, and the soul (consciousness, ability to interact with the environment) goes to the unseen (becomes unconscious, ceases to exist at that moment, ceases to operate – just like a light stops shining when the bulb is smashed or the electricity stops flowing). Later, when God resurrects each human being in the future, He will combine the spirit/breath with a resurrected body, and the result will be a living soul – a conscious entity capable of interacting with its surroundings, a living human being.

To put it in a simple phrase, the Bible speaks of death not as a new phase of life, but as the absence of life.

All of this makes perfect logical sense as far as I can tell – unlike the self-contradictory and unscriptural leftover pagan "conscious afterlife" ideas that still cling to the minds of many wonderful and well-meaning people who have simply never carefully studied the subject of death in Scripture. God and the Bible make perfect sense. It's leftover paganism that causes all the confusion.

In the next chapter I'm going to give you another vital piece of the puzzle when it comes to understanding God's plan for humanity. I will show you that the lake of fire referred to in the book of Revelation – just like the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem to which Jesus referred – will be a physical fire that destroys physical corpses.

Chapter 5

The Physical Lake of Fire

In this chapter I'm going to explain what the lake of fire will be. To be more specific, I'll explain what every Godly person in Bible days would have naturally and automatically assumed the lake of fire will be – a physical fire on earth that destroys the corpses of dead people. (Just like the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that will destroy corpses at the beginning of the millennium, referred to by Jesus when quoting Isaiah 66:23-24.)

Many people start with the assumption that the lake of fire is hell. Let's debunk that silliness right away.

Revelation 20:14 says “...*death and hades* (the unseen, “un-perceived”) *were thrown into the lake of fire*”.

Christians who think the lake of fire is hell, treat the Greek terms “hades” and “the lake of fire” as if they are both “hell”. Revelation 20:14 illustrates that this makes no sense. If the Greek word “hades” means “hell” (which as I've shown you, it doesn't, but many people assume it does), and “hell” and “the lake of fire” are the same thing, then I have a simple question:

How can hell be thrown into itself?

Hades and the lake of fire cannot both be hell – yet this is what is claimed by people who believe in hell!

Friends, neither “hades” nor “the lake of fire” is “hell”. I've already shown you that “hades” is “the unseen”, not “hell”. Again, “hades” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “sheol”; there is no evidence anywhere in the Bible that either of these words refers to any kind of fire or place of fire. The Scriptures seem to describe sheol/hades (the unseen) almost more as a *state* than a place, but regardless, it is clear that it is a state or place in which there is complete silence, with no consciousness, activity, planning, or thought (Ecc. 9:5 & 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, 146:4). So since the lake of fire *is death* for the people that will be thrown there (“the lake of fire is the second *death*”), we must assume that the Bible is not changing its consistent definition of death, and that after a person goes to the lake of fire, they are not conscious and have no activity, planning, or thought. (As I'll explain in a moment, there is a logical reason why Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet *will* be

“thrown alive” and remain conscious there, but humans, for whom the lake of fire “*is...death*”, will *not*.)

Godly people in Bible days, because of their assumptions about death (they assumed death was unconscious), would never have dreamed of thinking of the lake of fire as a nebulous spirit place. The notion that the lake of fire is “hell” or a place of suffering for fully human people is not found anywhere in Scripture. There is no indication that it is somehow a nebulous spirit fire rather than a physical fire. And there is no indication that it is eternal.

Remember, the words “forever”, “eternal”, and “everlasting” are always mistranslations of the Greek words *eon*, which means *age*, or *eonian*, which means “pertaining to the age” or “pertaining to the ages”; and the phrase “forever and ever” is a ridiculously creative way of translating the plural form of *eon* – *eons* – to match pagan leftover beliefs. There is nothing, zero, nada in Scripture about “eternal punishment” or punishment that lasts “forever and ever”. These are blatant mistranslations. Again, as used in Scripture, the word *eon*, *eons*, *eonian*, etc. do not refer to eternity; they refer to ages, stages in God’s plan. (I will explain the five ages of human history planned by God as outlined in the Scriptures, in a later chapter.) When we study the Scriptures carefully we see that the lake of fire is not “hell”, nor is it a nebulous spirit realm, nor is it a place of suffering for fully human people, nor is it eternal. None of these ideas about it are supported by Scripture. Godly people in Bible days would have found these ideas absurd, and would have correctly identified them as paganism.

Despite this, many Christians hear “the lake of fire”, and they think “hell” or “eternal burning”. They assume it is where God will enforce “eternal punishment”. They don’t notice that the lake of fire passage in Revelation 20:14-15 says nothing about it lasting forever. And they never think about the fact that one of the words sometimes mistranslated as “hell” (“hades”/“the unseen”/“sheol”) is described as being thrown into a *different place*, which they treat as if it’s the *same place* – the lake of fire, resulting in confusion. I repeat, if “hades” and “the lake of fire” are both hell, *how can hell be thrown into itself?*

The only way to resolve this conundrum created by nonsensical pagan leftover beliefs regarding “hell” is to realize that *neither* the unseen/hades/sheol *nor* the lake of fire is “hell”, because hell does not exist – it is just a mistranslation. (Again, I’ll repeat, the word “hell” is not found anywhere in the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and is always a mistranslation if you see it in your English Bible.)

Now, the Greek term “lake of fire” found in Revelation 20 *is* translated accurately into English in pretty much any English Bible. It could also be translated “pond of fire”. So what is this lake or pond of fire then, if it’s not hell?

Like the fire in the Valley of Gehinnom at the beginning of Jesus’ 1,000-year earthly reign, the “lake” or “pond” of fire will be a *physical fire* where *physical bodies* will be destroyed.

The people whose bodies will be destroyed in this fire will either be killed before their bodies go into the fire, or they will die instantly when thrown into it, experiencing a brief moment of pain before they die.

How do we know this? Well, there are seven keys to unraveling the misunderstandings about the “lake/pond of fire” that prevail in the minds of most Christians. Here they are:

1. The people who will be thrown into the lake of fire will be in temporarily resurrected mortal physical bodies before they are thrown there.

Revelation 20:5 and 13 make it clear that those who will be judged at the white throne after Jesus’ 1,000-year reign on earth, will be dead people who will be *temporarily* resurrected into *mortal* bodies.

You see, the Bible uses two different terms for two different types of resurrection. When describing how most of humanity (anyone not given faith in this current age, see Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) will be resurrected to be judged at the white throne of God in the future, the Bible uses the term “come to life” (Rev. 20:5). But a different, special term is used to describe people getting an *immortal* body - “vivification”. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 we see the Apostle Paul describe the three distinct instances of “vivification” that will occur in human history. (The first, the resurrection of Christ into a physical immortal body, has already occurred of course; the other two “vivifications” Paul refers to – the rapture, and a third one I’ll explain more about in a later chapter – have not yet occurred.)

Now, the resurrection of unbelievers (those who don’t have faith in this age) who are to be judged at the white throne (described in Revelation 20:5 & 13) is *not* mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 as one of the three “vivifications” (resurrections into an *immortal* body). Why? Because in Revelation 20:5 & 13, those who are resurrected to be judged will be given *mortal* bodies, and after being judged by God they will *die a (second) physical death, just like people die physical deaths today*.

I use the term “physical death” because that is how most modern people might think of what the Bible simply calls “death” – the body ceasing to function. The Bible tells us that when the physical body ceases to function, the spirit returns to God unconsciously and the soul/consciousness becomes unconscious (goes to “the unseen/sheol/hades” where there is silence and no activity or knowledge).

This brings us to point #2...

2. The lake of fire “is the second (instance of) death” (Rev. 20:14) for those human beings who are thrown there. It is death!

In other words, the human beings who will be thrown there, will physically die for the second time (the first time being their first death after their first physical lives on earth). Simple.

There is no such thing as “spiritual death” in Scripture. That is a concept invented by man. All death in Scripture is what we would call physical death. The *person* is said to be dead.

Some claim God’s statement in Genesis to Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die refers to “spiritual death”, but there is no proof of that; the moment Adam ate the fruit of that tree the process of physical death began in his previously immortal body. The apostle Paul used the term “this body of death” in Romans 7:24 and made it clear it was “the members” of his physical body that caused him to struggle with sin, and used physical death *as an analogy* to help us understand spiritual problems, but he never used the term “spiritual death” or referred to spiritual death as a reality. There is nothing in the Bible about “spiritual death” as an actual reality, especially not in reference to any such concept as remaining conscious in death.

To claim that “the second death” referred to in Revelation 20:14 is some type of “spiritual death” or “separation from God while remaining conscious in death” is to completely invent a concept and term (“spiritual death”) not ever used or spoken of in Scripture, while completely ignoring the clear Scriptural definition of death outlined over and over in Scripture, and on top of that ignoring the most logical way to interpret “the second death” as merely being the second time these people will physically die (the first being their first physical death). In Scripture, when a person in a physical body, with a soul, and a spirit, dies, their body goes into the ground, their spirit returns to God, and they cease to be conscious. As I explained in the last chapter, the Biblical definition of death is found in Ecclesiastes 9:5 – “the dead know nothing” and many other Scriptures; it is unconsciousness.

So when Revelation 20:14 says, “the lake of fire *is* the second death”, it means that when you go there, you die. We must use the Bible’s clear definition of death rather than inventing our own or inventing the concept of “spiritual death” which is a term never used in Scripture and a concept never spoken of as a reality in Scripture (Paul only used physical death *as an analogy* to speak about spiritual problems; he did not ever use the term “spiritual death” or speak of it as a reality.)

So when these people are thrown in the lake of fire they will die. They will become unconscious. Their souls (consciousness) will go to sheol/hades/the unseen, where there is silence and no activity or knowledge whatsoever, because obviously dead people have no means – a body connected to a spirit (Gen. 2:7) – with which to interact with their surroundings anymore. Simple. *There is no Biblical indication in Revelation 20:14 that we should change the simple definition of death which it uses in the rest of its sixty six books.*

Again, this is much more simple than everybody makes it out to be in a desperate attempt to make the Bible fit their pagan-inherited conscious-death-and-eternal-punishment mindset. Those who have their temporarily resurrected mortal bodies thrown into the lake of fire will be physically dying for the second time. (They died after their first earthly life, then were resurrected temporarily into mortal bodies to be judged at the white throne of Christ in Jerusalem, and then they will die again.) That is why the Bible calls it “the second death”. This is not rocket science once you get the leftover paganism out of the way.

Of course, the method of these people’s death (or possibly just the method of disposing of their physical bodies) will be their bodies/corpses being thrown into the lake of fire. This is why the Bible says the lake of fire “is the second death”. It will be the method of death or the method of disposal of the physical bodies of people. The physical lake/pond of fire will be where the physical bodies/corpses of these people are thrown. It will be the second instance of physical dying for these people. It will be a physical fire for physical mortal bodies, just like the fire in the Valley of Gehinnom during the millennium will be a physical fire for physical mortal bodies (Is. 66:23-24) (see Key#3 below for more information on this).

So here's the chronology of what will happen to those who die in this age without having been given (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) faith in Christ:

1. They will die
2. They will be resurrected into mortal bodies so they can be judged at the white throne
3. They will die (for the second time – the “second death”)
4. They will be resurrected and get *immortal* bodies later on at the consummation of the ages

In upcoming chapters I’ll explain how in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 the Apostle Paul clearly outlines three “*vivifications*” (the Greek term used to describe resurrection into an *immortal* body) which occur at three different times – first, Jesus’ resurrection to an immortal body (which has already happened of course); second, Christians’ resurrection to immortal bodies (at the rapture); and third, the consummation (not “the end”, the accurate translation is “the consummation”) of God's plan, which Paul tells us is the same point in time at which “death will be defeated” and “God will be all in all”. So we see that everybody else (besides those who become Christians in this current age) will be resurrected into an immortal body in the *third “vivification”* at the consummation of the ages. (Again, see later chapters for more details.)

The main point I want you to see here is that 1 Corinthians 15 teaches us that the special term “vivification” means “getting an immortal body”, while the Bible uses a less specific term, “brought to life” or “live”, in Revelation 20:5 to describe those who receive *mortal* bodies so they can be judged at the white throne and later die again. The raptured

saints in the previous verse are also described as “brought to life” or those who “live”; obviously this refers to a resurrection into an immortal body. So we see that the generic term “brought to life” or “live” can refer to a resurrection into a mortal body *or* an immortal body. The important fact here is that the special term “vivified” is *not* used of these people who will be judged at the white throne and later die again. This along with the fact that these people will die for a second time, and the fact that the Bible’s definition of death (a physical body dying, the person losing consciousness, and the unconscious spirit returning to God) does not change, we know that these people will be in *mortal* bodies when they are judged.

Therefore, the lake of fire into which these mortal bodies will be thrown will simply cause physical death – just like the first time these people died. Because it is their second instance of physical death, the Bible logically and plainly calls it “the second death”. Simple. In Key #7 below I will share even more proof that the lake/pond of fire will be a physical fire that will destroy physical human bodies/corpses.

3. The phrase “death and hades (the unseen, the death state) were thrown into the lake of fire” in Revelation 20:14 is simply a poetic or flowery way of saying what the next verse says plainly – that those people temporarily resurrected into mortal bodies to be judged will be thrown (in their mortal bodies) into the lake of fire.

As you learned earlier in this book, “hades”, which is referred to in Revelation 20:14 and in other places in the New Testament, is the equivalent of the Hebrew “sheol” (Acts 2:27). Both words mean “the unseen” or “un-perceived”, and refer to where a person’s consciousness is said to go, as a fancy way of saying they become unconscious or a poetic way of referring to the death state (Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, 146:4). And even if “sheol/hades/the-unseen” is an actual place and a human being’s “soul” is an actual entity of some sort rather than merely the manifestation of consciousness, the aforementioned verses make it clear that there is no knowledge or activity for souls in “the unseen”.

Some people get confused about the statement in Revelation 20:14 that “death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire”. There is no reason to be confused. Revelation 20:14 and 20:15 both say the same thing in different ways; verse 14 says it in a flowery poetic way, verse 15 says it plainly. Both verses tell us that those people who were resurrected into physical mortal bodies to be judged – those who came from death and the unseen – will be thrown into the physical lake of fire.

You see, death and “sheol/hades/the-unseen” (the death state, the state or condition of being unconscious) are abstract concepts. Concepts cannot be thrown into each other, nor can they be thrown into a physical lake of fire. Even if “sheol/hades/the-unseen” is some type of actual place invisible to the human eye, it still makes no sense for it

to be “thrown into” anything. And obviously death is an abstract concept and cannot be “thrown into” anything. So let’s trigger the common sense “take it literally unless it makes no sense that way, at which point we must take it figuratively” communication rule that I’ve mentioned a few times in this book.

Revelation 20:14 makes no sense taken literally, so we are forced to take it figuratively. On the other hand, Revelation 20:15 makes perfect sense taken literally, so we are forced to take it literally. And suddenly it is obvious that both verses say the exact same thing – one figuratively, one literally.

We know that the lake of fire is indeed physical, because physical people in physical resurrected mortal bodies (rev. 20:5, 13, Gen. 2:7), who have just been judged by God at His throne, will be thrown there, and this fire is the same fire as the physical fire in Gehenna to which Jesus referred when quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 (see key #7 below). So with his phrase “death and the unseen were thrown into the lake of fire” the apostle John (the author of Revelation) is simply saying the same thing in picturesque, flowery language that he says in plain language in the surrounding context – the people who were dead a while before, will be thrown into the lake of fire after being judged. Simple. “Death and the unseen” (those who were dead and unseen a short while before) “are thrown into the lake of fire”.

There's no reason to get your head all twisted into a pretzel trying to understand how abstract concepts can be thrown into anything or go into a literal physical fire. It’s just fancy language, a neat poetic way of saying something. John sees an event occurring in the prophetic vision, and describes it using picturesque figurative language (vs. 14), then repeats it using plain literal language (vs. 15).

The flowery/poetic phrase “death and the unseen were thrown into the lake of fire” is not confusing if is interpreted using common sense communication interpretation rules, as I just did.

4. Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet will *not* be tormented day and night “forever and ever”, but rather – accurately translated – “for the ages of the ages”.

The lake of fire does not burn “forever and ever” because “forever and ever” is a laughably ridiculous translation of two instances of the plural Greek word “eons” or “ages”. The lake of fire will certainly end at some point, because ages/eons *by their very definition* have an ending (e.g. see 2 Cor. 4:4), and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 tells us that the ages will have a consummation. The “ages of the ages” will have an end; the end of “the ages of the ages” is the end of God's plan for the ages – the consummation of God's plan which Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

The phrase “the ages of the ages” used in Revelation 20:10 is a phrase that uses the

same speech convention as “king of kings”, referring to the greatest of a group. So “ages of the ages” refers to the greatest ages of a group of ages.

We see that Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet will be tormented during the greatest period of the ages of human history planned by God (see later chapters of this book where I explain the five ages of human history) until the consummation of His goal for mankind (to be “all in all”, 1 Cor. 15:20-28).

I repeat, all ages/eons have an ending. If you want to argue that the lake of fire burns forever, you must also argue that Satan, the god of this “age” (Greek “eon”) will be god forever (2 Cor. 4:4), because *both time periods use the same Greek word “eon”*. The fact that there the plural form of the word “eon” is used often in Scripture is additional proof that an “eon” cannot be an endless period of time or “forever”; “forevers” makes no sense whatsoever. If “eon” means “forever” (as it is sometimes erroneously translated), then the lake of fire burns “for the forevers of the forevers”. “Eon” cannot possibly mean “forever” because the plural form of this word is used repeatedly in Scripture, and it is a logical impossibility to have “forevers” or “eternities”.

So what will happen to Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet *after* “the ages of the ages”, after the greatest time period of the five ages of human history, when the lake of fire ends? You will learn more about the ultimate destiny of Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet, and all evil supernatural beings in a later chapter. (The Scriptures tell us plainly, I will simply point out what the Bible says.)

Let’s move on to the next key to understanding the physical lake of fire.

5. Satan is (obviously) not human, and the antichrist and the false prophet will only be partially human, not fully human.

You can see my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com (More Questions section) for more details on this point.

This is the only possible reason by which God could justify throwing the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire *immediately, without giving them a chance to be judged* with other human beings at the white throne first (see Rev. 19:20).

The fact that they are not fully human is also the reason that they along with Satan *will not die* when they are thrown there, as fully human beings will. Revelation 19:20 clearly states they will be “thrown *alive* into the lake of fire” (the accurate Concordant Version says, “*Living*, the two were thrown into the lake of fire...”), while Revelation 20:14-15 clearly states that fully human beings will experience *death* when they are thrown into the lake of fire. As non-human or part-human beings, Satan, the false prophet, and the antichrist

apparently will not experience death/unconsciousness as regular humans whose bodies are destroyed in the lake of fire will. We have to assume that the physical bodies of the false prophet and the antichrist will be destroyed in the physical fire, of course. But because they are not fully human it seems there is a non-human/fallen-angel-like/spirit-being part of them that will continue to be conscious and tormented somehow. In my article referenced above I demonstrate additional Biblical precedent (direct from the mouth of Jesus) that explains how hybrid beings (the offspring of humans and fallen angels) like the antichrist and the false prophet can remain conscious after the death of their physical human-like body (unlike full-blooded humans).

We've seen that a fully human being experiences separation of their body, spirit, and soul at death. Without both spirit and body joined, a fully human being made in God's image has no soul (consciousness). However, from the descriptions and actions of Jesus in the Gospels, it is clear that evil spirit beings ("evil spirits" or "demons" as Jesus called them) can inhabit a body, or not inhabit a body, and remain conscious either way. In other words it seems their soul (consciousness) is tied to their spirit, and can operate with or without a physical body. And in the culture of Jesus' time, "daemons" (demons) were believed to be the spirits of former human/fallen-angel hybrids (see Genesis 6); amazingly, Jesus did not correct this belief but confirmed that these "daemons" (also called "evil spirits") were real.

So, because the antichrist and the false prophet will not be fully human, they will not become unconscious even if their physical body gets burned up in the lake of fire (and their spirit will not return to God like a fully human's spirit would). Rather, these evil spirit-beings will remain conscious, like the former-hybrid "daemons"/demons or "evil spirits" Jesus described who were conscious regardless of whether they had a body to inhabit or not. (Again, see my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com for more Biblical information on this.)

The same goes for Satan himself. The Bible tells us he "entered into" Judas. So he is conscious with or without a physical body, and can apparently inhabit a physical body if he wants to.

So we see that when Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet are forced by God into the lake of fire during the most wonderful period of human history (the "ages of the ages") until the "consummation" of God's plan (1 Cor. 15:28), the antichrist's and the false prophet's physical bodies will burn up immediately in the physical fire of course, but like the fallen-angel/human hybrids of Genesis 6 days, when their physical bodies cease to operate they will remain conscious in spirit form (unlike full human beings), and will experience suffering or torment of some type as God restricts them to the area of the physical lake of fire.

We don't know exactly what type of torment this will be – it can't be physical torment, because anything physical (the physical bodies of the antichrist and false prophet) will obviously burn up in the physical fire; but it will be some type of torment. Does the

Bible gives us any clues as to what type of torment they will experience?

Well, remember the evil spirits that Jesus cast out of the man and into the pigs, and how they wanted to go *to the water* (Matt. 8:31)? And remember how Jesus said evil spirits “wander *in waterless places seeking rest*” but don’t find it, and therefore they want to inhabit a person (Matt. 12:43)? People’s bodies are 90% water. Perhaps the torment these evil spirit-beings – Satan and the antichrist and false prophet stripped of their human bodies – will experience, will be similar to that experienced by demons: a constant desire to be around or in water, a constant lack of “rest”. I don’t know why a body-less spirit being would want to be in a place with water rather than a waterless place, but that’s what the Bible indicates. A physical lake of fire is certainly a “waterless place”, and if these spirit beings, like the demons Jesus described, have some type of desire to be in or near water but are stuck in a place where there is only fire (about as dry a place as could be imagined), even if they don’t have physical bodies to be burned anymore, that certainly could be described as “torment”.

Again, see my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com for more information on the fascinating Biblical and historical evidence that tells us the antichrist and the false prophet will not be fully human, and for more fascinating information on evil spirits and hybrid beings that will help you understand this topic further.

6. The Bible says nothing about the (fully human) people who are thrown into the lake of fire suffering for any length of time, or even at all; on the contrary, it says exactly the opposite – they will *die*.

You have to realize that God in this passage of the Bible goes out of His way to tell us exactly what fully human people who are thrown into the lake of fire will experience: “death”. As we’ve seen, Scripturally this means the separation of spirit (which goes to God), body (which goes to the ground in this case by being burned up), and soul (which becomes unconscious). The word of God uses the straightforward term “the second death”.

Notice that in Revelation 20:10, the description of what happens to Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet when they are thrown into the lake of fire *says nothing about death but rather goes out of its way to say they are thrown there “living” or “alive”*. Why don’t they die when thrown there, while humans do? I already explained it to you: Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet are not fully human (or in Satan’s case, not human at all). Many Christians *wrongly assume* that because Satan, the false prophet, and the antichrist are tormented (and conscious) in the lake of fire, that humans will be too. This is because they don’t understand that death for a human being in the Bible equates to being unconscious, nor do they understand that the antichrist and the false prophet will not be fully human and therefore they will not experience death as a fully human person does.

In Revelation 19 and 20 the Bible actually gives us *a stark contrast* between what will

happen to fully human people and what will happen to Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet when they are thrown into the lake of fire. The Word of God could not be any clearer about what fully human beings experience when they are thrown in their physical mortal bodies into the lake of fire: *death*. And “*the dead know nothing*” and experience “*no activity...or knowledge*” (Ecc. 9:5, 10).

As I've explained, God has a good reason for making *death* (unconsciousness, “knowing nothing”, the grave, the unseen, “sleep” - choose your Biblical term) the penalty for humans who sin. And of course, God – as always – has a good reason for allowing these three spirit beings to suffer (whatever this “torment” is like) in the lake of fire for a whole age – or two ages, in the case of the antichrist and the false prophet.

In Chapter 7 I will give you a detailed outline of the five ages of human history, but for now let me give you a brief summary of the final three ages, so you can understand the lake of fire, and what happens to the three evil non-(fully)-human beings when they are thrown into it.

The age we now live in is the 3rd age. God is allowing Satan to rule the world during this age and handpick its highest-level leaders (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6, Romans 13). The 4th age will be the millennium in which Christ will rule over the earth for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-5). At the beginning of the 4th age, the antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), and Satan will be bound in an abyss (*not* the lake of fire).

One thousand years later, at the end of the 4th age, Satan will be released from the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3, 7). (By the way, later in the book I explain *why* God will bind up Satan only to release him again later!) When Satan is released from the abyss he will gather the world together to fight against Jesus, and will be defeated by fire that will come down from heaven and devour the armies (Rev. 20:7-9). Satan will live through this fire that defeats his army because he is a spirit being that is not killed by physical fire, and will be thrown into the lake of fire “where the beast (the antichrist) and the false prophet are also”.

Then the 5th age will begin – the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 21-22). During this 5th age, the antichrist, the false prophet, *and* Satan will be tormented somehow in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). After the 5th age comes “the consummation” (1 Cor. 15:20-28) of God’s plan, the “consummation of the ages” when Christ will do away with sin in practicality, which will then allow Him to do away with death as well (Heb. 9:26, 1 Cor. 15:20-28). In the later chapters of this book I will point you to plain statements of Scripture that talk about what will ultimately happen to evil supernatural beings in God's grand plan; but for now let's see what we can learn from the details I've just described about what happens to them during the 4th and 5th ages.

We see that the antichrist and the false prophet (non-fully-human, fallen-angel/human hybrid beings, as I explain in my article referenced earlier) will be in the lake of fire for *two ages* – *the 4th and the 5th*. And Satan will be in the lake of fire with them during

the 5th age. This explains why the Bible uses the phrase “*for the ages of the ages*” to describe how long they will be in the lake of fire. “The King of kings” refers to the greatest of multiple kings. “The ages of the ages” uses the same language convention; it refers to two or more ages that are the greatest of multiple ages. The *4th and 5th ages* are the greatest two ages of the five ages of human history, because during those two ages, Jesus reigns over the earth. These two ages are what is referred to as “the kingdom of God” in Scripture. (After these two ages, at the consummation of the ages, Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father and there is no more need for governmental authority – the primary purpose of which is to curb and punish evil – because there will be no more sin.)

So that is why the Bible uses the term “*for the ages of the ages*” to describe the length of time Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet will be in the lake of fire. The antichrist and the false prophet will be there for the greatest two ages (the 4th and the 5th) out of the five ages of human history in God’s plan, and Satan will join them for the 5th age as well.

Some of you astute Bible students may wonder, “Hey, wait a minute, if the present earth is destroyed at the end of the 4th age, and a new earth is formed for the 5th age (Rev. 21:1), and the lake of fire is an earthly physical fire, how can Satan, the false prophet, and Satan stay in the lake of fire during the transition from one physical earth to the next?” Excellent question, although not too difficult to answer.

It seems from Jesus’ descriptions of evil spirit beings in the Gospels, that even though they don’t have physical bodies, they still can move around in three-dimensional space like humans do, and can inhabit physical locations (like a human body, pigs, or the lake of water the evil spirits who went in to the pigs drove the pigs into – remember they don’t have physical lungs to keep them from inhabiting in water; and apparently, according to Jesus, they like water and dislike waterless places). So during the time when this present earth is being destroyed by fire and a new earth is being formed between the 4th and 5th ages (Rev. 21:1, 2 Pet. 3:10), the antichrist, the false prophet, and Satan *will be in fire – a waterless place they don’t like – the whole time.*

The antichrist and the false prophet will be stuck, conscious, suffering somehow, in the lake/pond of fire in Jerusalem during the 4th age (Rev. 19:20, 20:10, and see Key #7 below), and Satan will join them at the end of it (Rev. 20:10). Then, during the transition between the 4th and 5th ages when this present earth and its works are being destroyed by fire, all three of them will (obviously) *still be in fire* (since fire will either engulf the whole earth as described in 2 Peter 3:7-10 or will burn up all the evil works and monuments to evil on it, depending on how you interpret those verses). And since Revelation 20:10 uses the phrase “for the ages of the ages”, we know that there will be some sort of location with fire that could be described as a “lake” or “pond” “of fire” on the new earth during the 5th age, and the false prophet, the antichrist, and Satan will be confined there.

And as I said, later in the book I will point out the Scriptures that talk about the

ultimate destiny of fallen angels, Satan, and hybrid beings.

7. The lake of fire is not “hell”, it will be the same physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that Jesus referred to when He quoted Isaiah 66:23-24.

The lake of fire referred to in Revelation 20:14-15 will be a physical fire where temporarily resurrected physical people in physical bodies (Rev. 20:5, 13, Gen. 2:7) will be thrown to die (or after death as disposal of the bodies). We know this for certain for two reasons. First, as I explained in Keys #1 and #2 above, a “living soul” (Gen. 2:7) or a living, conscious human being is described in Scripture (Genesis 2:7) as the combination of a spirit with a physical body producing consciousness/life; and this is what we see happening in Revelation 20:5 and 20:13. There is not a single instance in Scripture of a human being described as being alive or conscious apart from a physical body, nor is there a single instance in Scripture of a human being described as dead remaining conscious as their normal state. This tells us that when these people “come to life” and then die a “second death” a while later, the life being spoken of is what we would call physical life and the death being spoken of is what we would call physical death (which the Bible makes it clear causes the person to become unconscious).

The second reason we know the “lake/pond of fire” will be a physical fire that destroys physical bodies is that it can be easily proven that the “lake/pond of fire” is the same fire as the physical fire in Gehenna to which Jesus referred when quoting Isaiah 66:23-24. Let me show you.

Revelation 19:20 tells us that at the very end of this current age (at the transition into the next age, the millennium), the antichrist and false prophet will be thrown into the lake/pond of fire. So *the lake/pond of fire will exist at the beginning of Jesus’ millennium reign over the earth.*

This matches up perfectly with Jesus’ comments about the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that will burn at the beginning of the millennium. As I explained in Chapter 2, when He talked about the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem, He quoted Isaiah 66:23-24, which clearly is a prophecy about the millennium reign of Christ on earth (and the transition to it from this current age), when Jesus will kill evil people (particularly those who were previously ruling the world corruptly) and throw their “corpses” (dead physical bodies) into a physical fire with “all flesh” (all physical humanity) watching.

So it appears that the “lake/pond of fire” will be the exact same fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem to which Jesus referred when He quoted Isaiah’s prophecy about a physical fire at the beginning of the millennium.

We have further confirmation of this. Revelation 20:10 tells us that the lake/pond of fire lasts “for the ages of the ages”. This means that it will burn during the millennium and

the New Jerusalem age. (See Chapter 9 for further explanation of the fact that the terms “eonian life”, “the kingdom”, “the kingdom of God”, “the kingdom of heaven”, and “the ages of the ages” are all used to describe the millennium and the New Jerusalem age.) We know that the physical fire in Gehenna (Is. 66:23-24, Mk. 9:47-48) will definitely burn during the millennium, for Jesus also called it “eonian fire” (fire that pertains to or lasts for an age or ages) - see Matthew 18:8 and 25:41, for example. The term “eonian fire” could refer to the New Jerusalem age in addition to the millennium; the term “eonian” does not specify whether it is referring to one age or more than one age.

So, the fact that Jesus sometimes used the term “eonian” to describe the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem (Is. 66:23-24, Mk. 9:47-48), combined with the fact that Revelation 20:10 tells us the lake/pond of fire will burn throughout “the ages of the ages” (the millennium and the New Jerusalem age) and thus could also definitely be called an “eonian” fire, leads us to the conclusion that the “eonian” physical fire of Gehenna described by Jesus will be the same fire as the “lake/pond of fire” described in the book of Revelation.

There is even more proof: Jesus’ warnings about how some people will be thrown into the physical Gehenna fire *at the very end of this current age* (e.g. Matt. 13:40), and the description in Revelation 19:20 of the antichrist and false prophet being thrown into the lake/pond of fire *at the very end of this current age*, match up perfectly.

All this tells us quite clearly that the physical fire in Gehenna (at the very end of this age and into the millennium reign of Christ) is also called “the lake/pond of fire” in the book of Revelation. They are one and the same.

And since they are clearly one and the same fire, this is further confirmation that the lake/pond of fire will be a *physical* fire – the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem is 100% proven to be a physical fire by Isaiah 66:23-24 + Mark 9:47-48 and Gehenna/Gehinnom is only referred to in Scripture as a physical location (never as any kind of nebulous spirit-place).

Of course, it is not hard to prove that the lake/pond of fire will be a physical fire even without taking into account all the evidence that it is the same as the physical Gehenna fire. Keys #1 and #2 above, especially when combined with all the evidence that the lake/pond of fire is the same fire as the physical Gehenna fire of Isaiah 66:23-24 and Mark 9:47-48, leave us with no doubt whatsoever that the lake/pond of fire is a physical fire, not some kind of nebulous spirit-fire.

It also makes perfect sense that the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem is called a “lake” or “pond” of fire in Scripture as well. Gehenna is a small valley in Jerusalem; a simple glance at some pictures of this valley (spend two minutes on Google), and it’s easy to see that it is an ideal place for a large pile of thousands of burning/rotting bodies and a fire to be kept burning there throughout the millennium and New Jerusalem age (“not quenched”, not purposefully put out, but rather purposefully kept burning during that time). It is easy to see how such a scene and such a fire would be called a “lake” or “pond”

of fire.

All the puzzle pieces fit together perfectly. The lake/pond of fire is the same physical fire that will burn in Gehenna in Jerusalem during the millennium as described in Isaiah 66:23-24 and Mark 9:47-48. Some might argue that it is theoretically possible that there will be two separate fires – that the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem will be different than the lake/pond of fire – but that idea would require us to invent something that is not in Scripture. When we let Scripture explain itself without introducing creative outside ideas of our own, it makes perfect sense to come to the conclusion that the lake/pond of fire will be the same physical fire as the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem.

Now that you understand that the words “hell”, “eternal”, “everlasting”, and “forever” should not appear in any English Bible, and now that you have learned what happens at death and what the physical-Gehenna-fire/physical-lake-of-fire is according to the Bible, you are ready for the big picture. In the next two chapters I'm going to explain God's ultimate plan for humanity revealed in the accurately translated Bible, and how the five ages of human history will accomplish His goals for mankind. At this point in the book you may be wondering, “In the light of the fact that hell is just a mistranslation and death is an unconscious state for (fully) human beings, what is the ultimate destiny of those people who don't believe in Christ in this lifetime?” We are going to answer that question straight from the pages of the Bible.

Let's keep unraveling the confusion.

Chapter 6

God's Ultimate Plan For Humanity Revealed In the Accurately Translated Bible

At this point in the book, many of you are probably wondering, “If the word ‘hell’ is not in the accurately translated Bible, then what happens to unbelievers exactly?” and “When we get the translations right and sort out all the related misinterpretations of Scriptures, what does the Bible say is God’s plan for mankind?” This chapter and the next will answer these questions, the most important questions in the world.

If God does exist, and He truly did create us in His image, then He must have a plan for us that actually makes sense – a plan that lines up with the sense of justice and common sense He built in to us. Otherwise, why would anyone want to serve Him?

Unfortunately, the world’s religions do not offer such a view of God – they claim that God’s plan is to party with a few while torturing everyone else forever (or some equally tragic variation thereof). Hmmm...Why would He create us all in the first place if He knew that would be the ending? It makes no sense.

Thankfully, the accurately translated Bible reveals that God has good a plan for mankind that makes perfect sense. In Chapter 12 I will list twelve unique characteristics of a worldview based on the accurately translated Bible, that set it apart from all other religions and worldviews, and in my opinion, make it superior to all other religions and worldviews. That may seem like a grandiose claim, but by then I believe you'll understand that what I'm explaining in this book is the only God-based worldview that makes any logical sense. You are finally going to understand how God thinks and why He is doing and allowing everything in human history. You will finally understand God’s plan for humanity, right from the pages of the Bible.

We’re going to start by looking at several Bible verses that are completely ignored by most Christians. I am willing to bet that even if you’ve been going to church for decades, you’ve never once heard a sermon preached on any of these Biblical statements. Christians tend to ignore these plain statements of Scripture because they cannot explain them. They cannot explain these verses because they are reading badly mistranslated Bibles which give

them a reason to think that their pagan-originated “hell mindset” (inherited from the Christian-pagan-combo Catholic church of the Middle Ages) is the truth, even though as you’ll see, this belief system and its resulting mistranslations cause all sorts of seeming contradictions within the Bible itself.

The verses I am about to quote cannot possibly be true if hell and eternal punishment are real, so most Christians understandably ignore them. But we’ll see how these statements by Jesus and the Apostle Paul, which are totally ignored by mainstream Christianity, are actually the most important Scriptures for understanding God’s ultimate plan for humanity.

Then I’m going to give you some rarely talked about Biblical insights into the white throne judgment, which is one of the keys that will make God’s plan for mankind possible. And in the next chapter I’m going to explain to you how God’s purpose is unfolding throughout human history as revealed in the Bible – we’ll see how He is using five ages of time, five ages of human history, to accomplish what He wants and needs to accomplish in the hearts of all human beings.

Along the way I’ll be giving you many Scripture verses that support what I’m saying – sometimes I’ll quote the verse, sometimes I’ll give the reference for you to look up. Be aware that some of the verses I’m going to reference, especially in the last part of the article about God’s plan for the ages, may not make sense to you if you try to read them in many English Bible versions, because they contain some form of the word “eon”, which is frequently mistranslated. As you learned in previous chapters, the word “age” (Greek “eon”) is all over the place in the New Testament, but you’d never know it by reading many English Bible versions, which have a nasty habit of translating it in a ridiculous fashion, into words that mean the exact opposite of “age/eon”, like “forever/eternal/everlasting/forever-and-ever”.

So I highly recommend you read the verses I quote in this article in the Concordant Version, which translates the word “age/eon” accurately. (You can go to http://www.concordant.org/version/CLNT_Intro.htm to read the Concordant Version of the New Testament for free and look up verses as you read the rest of this book if you so desire.)

And as always, I’ll never ask you to “just believe” anything I say; instead, I encourage you to do as the Bible commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – “Test everything and hold on to what is good”. That being said, I will say that what you will learn in the next two chapters is the greatest thing you could ever learn. At least I personally consider it to be the greatest thing I’ve ever learned.

I want to start by inviting you to read some amazing Bible verses that reveal God’s ultimate goal.

Simple But Amazing Bible Verses That Reveal God's Ultimate Goal

I invite you to read the following Bible verses, and instead of trying to explain them away somehow, take them for what they plainly say.

1 Timothy 4:10 – *“We have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”*

Notice it does not say “only” of those who believe, it says “especially” of those who believe.

1 Corinthians 15:28 – *“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”*

Notice it does not say God will be “all in some” or “all in a few”, but “all in all”.

1 Corinthians 15:22 – *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”*

We see plainly stated in this passage that all people will end up in immortal bodies. From the context we see that “made alive” – Greek “vivified” – means getting an immortal body, as opposed to merely being resurrected into a mortal body. We know this because Paul’s list of “vivifications” in this passage does not include the resurrection of the dead to mortal bodies described in Revelation 20:5 & 13 (after which people will be judged by God and then die again in the lake of fire), for which a different term is used, “come to life”. Right after the verse quoted above, Paul lists three specific “vivifications”, the third of which results in death being abolished and God becoming “all in all”.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 plainly declares that all people will end up in immortal bodies. If you find this hard to believe, read it in the accurately translated Concordant Version (that includes the word “consummation” rather than the badly-translated “end”), and then keep reading to test what I'm saying.

Romans 11:36 – *“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”*

Are we to believe that the “all things” that are “to Him” do not include 90 percent or more of His most precious creations, human beings?

Romans 11:32 – *“For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.”*

This statement is possibly the most profound and revealing statement in the Bible about God’s plan for humanity. Yet it is absolutely impossible to understand this verse unless you understand what I’m explaining in this book. Why would God trap everybody in

disobedience? If you have a “hell mindset”, this verse is horrific! God traps everyone in disobedience and then throws most of them in hell because of their disobedience? Huh?

Fortunately, that’s not what the verse says. When you take the verse to mean exactly what it says, and put it together with the message of the rest of the accurately translated Bible, you suddenly understand that it expresses in one phrase how God is solving His #1 problem (getting humans to realize He is smarter than they are). Towards the end of this book I’ll explain this profound verse. You’ll see that God has a very good reason for trapping mankind in its own disobedience temporarily. (Please don't imagine that this means you can disobey God whenever you want because “God trapped you in it”, that’s *not* what this verse means.)

Romans 3:23-24 – *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, having been justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”*

Why does everybody quote verse 23 but ignore verse 24, while also ignoring the fact that verse 24 refers to the same “all” who have sinned? This verse plainly states that the exact same “all” who have sinned, have also already been justified (made as if they had never sinned) by Christ's work on the cross! Think about it... Why would Jesus die for the whole world, and then take it back from most people, saying, “Sorry most of mankind – including those billions of you who never even got to hear My Name or hear the gospel preached – My death doesn't count for you”? Thankfully, the Bible does not teach that God will do that; instead, it teaches what Romans 3:23-24 tells us plainly, that Jesus' death paid the price for all mankind's sin, once and for all, and He's not taking it back. It's already done. That's why Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished.” The price for sin had been paid at that moment, once and for all.

Romans 5:18 – *“So then as through one transgression (Adam’s sin) there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness (Christ’s death on the cross) there resulted justification of life to all men.”*

This verse again raises the question: Would God justify all men, and then “take it back” for most of them? The next few verses I quote, along with 1 Tim. 4:10 and 1 Cor. 15:28 which I quoted above, answer that question even further.

John 12:32 – (Jesus speaking) *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth (the next verse tells us He is referring to His crucifixion), will draw all men to Myself.”*

Ephesians 4:6 – *“...one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”*

Ephesians 1:9-10 – *“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, with a view to an administration of the fullness of the times, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”*

James 1:18 – *“Of His own will He gave us birth through the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”*

Notice that we Christians (those of us who believe in Christ in this current age, to whom James was speaking when he wrote James 1:18) are a firstfruits of His creatures; we are not the only creatures God is interested in or will harvest, we are just the first part of the harvest.

Isaiah 45:23 – *“I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and will not return, that to me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear allegiance.”*

Some versions translate this last phrase “take an oath” or “(by Me) every tongue will swear”. This is the verse the apostle quoted twice in the New Testament (Philippians 2:10-11, Romans 14:11). Modern Christians quote it all the time – “every knee will bow, every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord!” – without even thinking about what they are saying! Modern Christians ignore Isaiah 45:23 which makes it clear that eventually every single person who has ever lived will “swear allegiance to” or “swear by” or “swear an oath to” God! That’s what it means to “confess Jesus Christ is Lord”! The hell and eternal punishment crowd claims that God will then turn around and sentence all these people who just swore allegiance to Him, to trillions of years of torture! But that’s not what the Bible says, thankfully. The next verses I’ll quote tell us that when Isaiah 45:23 is fulfilled it will be the fulfillment of God’s grand purpose:

Colossians 1:16, 17, 19-20 – *“All things have been created through Him and for Him...in Him all things endure...For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether things on earth or things in the heavens.”*

All these verses are in the Bible, and as written above, they are accurately translated. You cannot just rip them out of God’s Word. They all plainly state that God has a plan for all His precious creations – to reconcile them all to Himself, so that all things can be summed up in Christ and God can be all in all.

You can see why most Christians ignore these verses completely. These straightforward Biblical statements simply do not make sense with – in fact they blatantly contradict – a “hell mindset” or an “eternal punishment” mindset. But once you realize that hell is just a mistranslation and that the concept of eternal punishment is nowhere to be found in the accurately translated Bible, these verses make perfect sense.

These verses also make perfect sense to the heart and head of any thinking person; if God created billions of precious humans in the first place, wouldn't you think He'd have a good plan for them? Wouldn't you think that an all-powerful God would be capable of reconciling them all to Himself after He allows them to “sow their wild oats” and reap the

consequences of sin for a while (to allow them to learn from experience that sin causes pain)? Why, of course! It makes perfect sense!

If you are struggling to believe what I'm teaching you here simply because it is new to you, I'll simply remind you that the verses I quoted above cannot simply be ripped out the Bible. They are simple, straightforward, plain statements of Scripture. It matters not that many Christians totally ignore them. As I mentioned, most Christians are confused when they read these verses because they can't logically reconcile them with the rest of their badly mistranslated Bible. (It is understandable that many modern Christians ignore the Bible verses I just quoted, since they are also reading the word "hell" and the phrase "eternal punishment" elsewhere in their English Bibles, not realizing that those are blatant mistranslations.)

However, as soon as you translate a few key words in the Bible accurately, the words "hell" and "forever/everlasting/forever-and-ever" disappear from it along with the concepts of conscious death and eternal punishment (because they were never there in the first place), and it is much easier to understand and put it all together. Suddenly the Bible and God's plan for humanity start to make logical sense. Suddenly one can easily see how the verses I quoted above mean exactly what they say.

You may be thinking, "But didn't Jesus say, 'The way is narrow that leads to life and few find it?'" Yes He did. Excellent question. *How is this statement of Christ's reconciled with the verses I just quoted above?* You can't rip any of these statements out of the Bible – so what gives? Well, in Chapter 9 of this book I'll explain the simple solution. In short, when Jesus said this He was speaking to *the narrow audience to which He was sent at that period in history – Israelites – at a particular stage in God's plan*, during which the way *was* narrow to find "life" as it was offered to the Israelites then, and truly very few Israelites found it. (It is a very important rule of Bible interpretation that we take into account the audience that a person, in this case Jesus, was speaking to. See Matthew 15:24 and read Chapter 9 of this book to learn why many of Jesus' statements applied to Israel back then but not necessarily to us today, although some of them do apply to us of course.) The "way" back then, for the Israelites to whom Jesus was preaching (see Matthew 15:24), was to *obey the Law of Moses*, which was indeed very difficult to do, or "narrow".

Read Matthew 23:3 and Chapter 9 of this book before you pooh-pooh this statement; Jesus during His earthly ministry to Israel did *not* remove their requirement to obey the Law of Moses, He continued and reinforced it. Only *later* did Paul brought the true significance of Jesus' *death* to light, and with that revelation Jesus brought *through Paul*, the requirement to obey the Law of Moses was removed for all mankind. So this "narrow way" statement of Christ's definitely applied to Israelites back then, but is not necessarily a statement of truth for all time (it no longer applies to believers under the gospel of Paul, which is very different than Jesus' message to Israel only under the Law of Moses). Jesus said, speaking to Israelites living under the Law of Moses 2,000 years ago, "The way *is* narrow that leads to life, and few *find* it" – *present tense verbs. At that time in history, before Jesus*

died on the cross, when the requirement for the Israelites to “find life” was to obey the Law of Moses (see Deut. 30:19), the way was indeed narrow and few found it. And notice that Jesus made this statement about the narrow way *immediately after mentioning the Law of Moses* (see Matt. 7:12-14). Again, you will learn more details about all this in Chapter 9.

As you’ll learn more about in Chapter 9 of this book, God chose Paul to be the first person on earth (other than Jesus) to truly understand the significance of Jesus’ death (Gal. 1-3). This is why Paul’s writings contain the most detailed explanations of God’s ultimate plan for mankind, which was made possible by Jesus’ death (Rom. 3:23-24, 5:18). (Jesus said some brief things about it, like John 3:16-17, but usually in private, and it was not part of His main message to Israel.) So it is Paul who explains to us God’s ultimate goal – all humanity being one with Him in immortal “vivified” bodies, as 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 puts it, God being “all in all”. The next question is, “*How is God going to accomplish this?*” Getting all of humanity to eventually love Him and operate the way He designed us to operate, is a pretty tall order! Let’s answer this question. How is God going to accomplish His ultimate goal for mankind?

Above I quoted some of the main Bible verses that reveal God’s ultimate plan for humanity. But there is another very important Biblical event that will allow God to “get there” – to reach His goal of “reconciling all things to Himself” (Col. 1:20). This event is a major key to correctly understanding God’s plan for humanity. Once you understand the “whole picture” of this Biblical subject, it is easy to see how it’s possible – and indeed, easy – to take all the above verses for what they plainly say.

The event I’m referring to is the future “great white throne judgment” of those who are unbelievers in this present age. What makes it logically possible for us to interpret the amazing verses I quoted above, literally for what they plainly say, is the fact that *the great white throne judgment is much different than most “false hell-mindset” Christians think.*

Let’s examine God’s great white throne judgment now that we know that the words “hell” and “forever/eternal/everlasting/forever-and-ever” are not in the Bible.

God Will Judge Everyone – But What Does That Mean?

Hebrews 12:23 says that God is “the judge of all”. Everyone will eventually be judged by God. But “judgment” doesn’t mean “getting thrown into hell” – it *can’t* mean that because the word “hell” is not even in the accurately translated Bible.

So what *does* “being judged by God” mean? First of all I should point out that the English language does not really have a good equivalent for the words used in the Bible that are translated “judgment”. The Biblical words, if you study their usage throughout the Bible, really mean, “to set things right” or “things being set right”. The word “judgment”

technically means that in English, but it generally has more of a negative connotation to English speakers than the Biblical use of the word warrants. We'll talk more about that in a moment.

Although every one will be judged by God, God's judgment will be slightly different, and at a different time, for those who believe in this age, than it is for unbelievers in this age – let's look at what it means for each group.

Those to whom God gives the grace to believe and come to the knowledge of the truth in this age (see Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9, Rom. 8:9-10) are judged somewhat – taught, corrected, etc. – during their lifetimes in this age (1 Pet. 4:17). Then, after they are raptured (and given an immortal body) towards the very end of this age, they will be presented at the “dais” (Greek word) of Christ (Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10).

A “dais” is an elevated place, usually of honor. It can actually be used as an English word. I recently saw this word used in a news report that talked about how the newly elected President of the United States was “presented on the dais”.

Being “presented” “before” or “in front of” Christ's “dais” implies sharing honor with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us that these recently raptured Christians will receive any correction that is needed and receive their reward for good things done. We should also remember that recently raptured believers will be in immortal bodies when they are presented at the dais, and I would imagine any correction would be much easier to take because of this. This is in contrast to those who don't believe in this age – when they go before the white throne to be judged, they'll be in mortal bodies (Rev. 20:5, 12-13).

It is important to realize that the language the Bible uses to describe the scene of the appearance of recently raptured Christians before the “dais”, is somewhat different than that which describes the scene of “white throne judgment” of the rest of mankind. In Revelation 20, the Bible is extremely clear that there will be “judgment” for those who have not believed in this age. But Paul simply uses the word “dais” in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 in writing to believers in this age. Translators who translate the word “dais” as “judgment seat” are inserting the “judgment” part of it on their own. The Greek word in those verses is simply “dais”. I'm not saying there will be no judgment (setting things right) at the “dais” of Christ for believers in this age, I'm just pointing out that the Bible doesn't seem to make quite as big of a deal out of the “judgment” part of the experience like it does in Revelation 20 for unbelievers.

Believers in this age will definitely answer to God at the dais of Christ for how they lived their lives. However, because of the way the Bible describes the scene, it seems like it may be a gentler or easier experience than what unbelievers in this age will go through at the white throne over 1,000 years later (see Rev. 20:12). This would make sense, since (by God's grace and choosing – Eph. 1:4) recently raptured believers are those who have *already* acknowledged their need for God to save them from sin, and have *already* acknowledge that

God is smarter than they are.

Also, any type of judgment or correction God doles out to raptured believers directly at the dais must logically be short-lived, since within a short period of time (a few days) they'll have to start helping Christ rule the earth! (See my Easy-To-Understand Revelation Timeline in my book on the end times.) 1 Corinthians 3:15 seems to imply that for the person who believes in this age, any punishment for bad things done will essentially amount to a lack of reward – some people will “make the cut” (my expression) through the faith in Christ which God gave them in this age (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9), but because of their lack of good works will have little or no reward, and will only “make the cut” (my expression) “as though passing through the fire” (the Apostle Paul’s God-inspired expression). On the other hand, some Christians will have much reward.

“So,” you say, “I understand what will happen to Christians (those of us who believe in Christ in this current age) – we’ll get raptured into immortal bodies and get presented before Christ to be rewarded for the good things we’ve done, and the bad things we’ve done, although we’ll be corrected for them, will be treated mainly like water under the bridge; and then we’ll go on to reign with Christ for 1,000 years. *But what about unbelievers in this age? What happens to them? If they’re not thrown into hell as mainstream Christianity teaches, then what happens to them?*”

Glad you asked.

Before I go into any further detail, it’s worth reminding you again here that *both “fire-events” described in Scripture are physical fires that destroy physical mortal human bodies*. The first, the fire in the Valley of Gehinnom near Jerusalem, is an “eonian” (“age-lasting” or “pertaining to the age”) fire that will burn throughout Jesus’ 1,000-year earthly reign, and will burn up the dead physical bodies of bad guys who are given capital punishment (Is. 66:23-24 – and Jesus quotes this verse in Mark 9:44-48). It will be Jesus’ version of the electric chair during the millennium.

The second fire-event in Scripture, the lake of fire, will cause (the second instance of) physical death for those who have just been judged at the white throne (Rev. 20:14). I explained this earlier in the book. The important fact to remember is that **there is no such thing as an eternal “spirit-fire” of pagan mythology in the Bible. Both the fires referred to in Scripture that everybody is so afraid of, will be physical fires that burn up and destroy mortal physical bodies.**

So, having reminded you of that, let me explain what will happen to those who don’t become believers in this current age, directly from the (accurately translated) Scriptures.

What Will Happen To Those Who Don't Believe In Christ In This Age?

Those people who do not become believers in this age will be resurrected into mortal physical bodies after the millennium, and will stand before God's throne to be judged (Rev. 20:5,13). We're not told in the Bible how long this judgment will last; it could be many years for all we know. Then, some time after being judged at the white throne, these people will be killed and their bodies will be thrown into the lake of fire, where they die physical death – for the second time (Rev. 20:13-15). We don't know if they'll be killed before their bodies are thrown into the fire, or if they'll be thrown in alive and experience a second or two of pain before dying. We can trust God to be kind and humane.

Again, I want to be very clear, Revelation 20:5 uses the term “come to life” to describe the unbelievers' resurrection to be judged at the white throne; it says nothing about these people being “vivified” (the term Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to describe people getting immortal bodies). Those who don't believe in Christ in this age will be temporarily resurrected into *physical mortal* bodies to be judged at the white throne of Christ in Jerusalem, and after their judgment they will die *physically* for the second time and their bodies will be thrown into the lake of fire in Jerusalem. Again, this fire *must* be physical because it causes death. The definition of death throughout Scripture is what we might think of as “physical death” – a physical-body/soul/spirit union being separated in such a way that

- a) the body ceases to operate,
- b) the spirit/breath (unconsciously so as not to contradict Ecclesiastes 9:5) “returns to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7), and
- c) since the spirit has no body to operate through, the soul (consciousness) becomes unconscious or disappears or goes “to the unseen” and the person “knows nothing” (Ecc. 9:5).

So unbelievers will be temporarily resurrected into physical bodies after the millennium, God will judge them at the white throne, and then they will die physically again. This is why the Bible calls their second death the “second death” (Revelation 20:14). No, this is not rocket science once you understand it correctly! (*See the Note after the Suggested Reading at the very end of this book for more details about what may happen to some of these people after the White Throne judgment, before they die again.*)

So is that it? What happens after their second death? Do they ever come back to life again? And what will happen to these people at the white throne? What will their white throne “judgment” be like?

Let's put a several Biblical statements together to answer these questions.

The End Result of God’s Judgment of Unbelievers

The word “judgment” has come to have an overly negative connotation in the Christian mind, because of the Middle-Ages-Catholicism-leftover pagan eternal punishment mindset that still dominates mainstream Christianity. But if you do a careful study of the Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture that are translated into English as “judgment”, you will see that it has less of a negative connotation, and frequently has a positive connotation. I won’t go into a lot of detail about this here, you can do a study of this word in Scripture on your own if you want, but the bottom line is that it really simply means to “set things right, to administer justice”. “Judgment” is the closest translation if you take away any “automatically negative” connotation that comes to mind. Really, judgment, even in this age, can be negative or positive, *depending on what is fair, reasonable, and right*.

For example, if you’re innocent and you are declared “not guilty” at a trial, that is a positive judgment. On the other hand, a serial killer being declared guilty would be a negative judgment for the murderer, but a positive judgment for society. The word judgment is a neutral word in and of itself. In its purest sense, and the way it is used in Scripture, it simply means, “to set things right”.

Now let me give you something to think about concerning judgment and justice. It would be ridiculous for a human judge to throw every person who comes before him – regardless of the crime they committed – into a torturous fire-pit where they burn endlessly (for trillions upon trillions upon trillions upon trillions of years) but never die. Such a “judgment” would be both unethical and unfair. It would be far out of proportion with even the most horrendous crimes it is possible to commit on this earth.

When we use the word “judgment” in everyday speech, we don’t mean “eternal punishment”; we mean “wise decision-making about a difficult or critical issue, and setting things right while being fair”. This is the same way the word “judgment” is used in Scripture. Ideally, the whole point of judgment is correction. That’s why prisons are called “correctional facilities”. Of course in this age ruled by Satan and his handpicked leaders (2 Cor. 4:4, Luke 4:5-6), the so-called “justice” system doesn’t work very well a lot of the time, and “correctional” facilities sometimes end up being permanent residences for people who don’t know how to live any other way. But my point stands. When we use the word “judgment” in everyday speech, we don’t mean “throwing everybody, regardless of their level of crime, alive into a fire pit to be tortured for all eternity”; we simply mean “wise decision-making about a difficult or critical issue”.

It is only in the context of a pagan-inherited hell mindset that some Christians falsely superimpose the idea of eternal damnation onto the word “judgment” in Scripture. But nowhere in Scripture (and never in common usage) does the word judgment automatically imply “eternal punishment”. As I’ll explain in a moment, people dying in the physical lake of fire comes *after* the judgment; dying in the lake of fire is not the judgment

itself.

True and righteous judgment varies according to the crime committed and the circumstances. No judge in his right mind would give a 16-year-old homeless shoplifter the same punishment as a 45-year-old millionaire axe murderer. Revelation 20:12 states clearly that at the white throne God will judge each person according to his/her deeds. Each person's judgment will be individually tailored and administered to that individual by God.

Yet, how can this be if – as it says a couple verses later – all these people will be given the same exact end-punishment (death and their bodies/corpses thrown into the lake of fire)? *Why would God even bother raising them into mortal physical bodies temporarily, just to yell, “You’ve all been very bad!” and then kill them again?* What would be the point of that?

There must be something *more* to “judgment” at the white throne than everybody just being told “you’ve been bad” and being killed again.

Think about it – according to some (well meaning) Christians, a nice Chinese guy who worked hard to feed his family for many decades, committed some sins like the rest of us, but never heard the word “Jesus” in his lifetime gets...burning and screaming forever and ever and ever and ever, the same punishment as Hitler? C’mon. Really?

That makes no sense. That violates the very sense of common sense justice God built in to us. How could God expect us to treat each other with the sense of fairness and justice He built in to us, and then turn around and treat us completely differently? It can’t be – and as you’re seeing in this book, that’s not what the (accurately translated) Bible teaches at all!

The accurately translated, accurately interpreted Bible teaches that *God is fair*. As Revelation 20:12-15 tells us, *God will judge each person according to their own individual deeds*, and then these people will die a second time (thus missing out on the fun of the new Jerusalem age) as an *additional lesson for them all*.

The death comes *after* the judgment. The death, if it is part of the judgment, is at most only *part* of the judgment of each individual at the white throne.

God, like a wise human judge would do, will judge fairly and wisely in each individual case, “according to their deeds” – and then the death that follows is an additional lesson for everybody.

What a thought! God is actually fair and just! And not only in His own “mysterious way” that is impossible to understand, but in a way that makes sense to the heart and head of every human being. If you’re still wondering about why God would do and allow some things the way He’s doing, keep reading to the end of this book! “God is so mysterious and impossible to understand” is the catch-all excuse many Christians use when their pagan-

inherited doctrine morphs God into a monster whose actions violate our sense of justice. But why would you want to serve a God who isn't even nice enough to explain *why* He does what He does, or *why* He (supposedly) violates the very sense of fairness and decency He built into us, even to those who seek Him?

Thankfully, God actually makes sense, and in a way *that lines up perfectly with the sense of justice He built into every human being!* God's thinking processes and reasons for doing what He does actually make logical sense! Imagine that! And He has explained it all perfectly in Scripture so that those who seek Him can understand exactly why He's doing everything He's doing.

God will judge "every one" – the Word goes out of its way to let us know that He will judge each individual separately – "according to their deeds". *Then, after this occurs*, they all get the same temporary punishment – death as a lesson for all of them. My point is simple:

God's judgment is about correction and learning lessons, not just about punishment.

If it were just about a blanket punishment for all, God would not bother to judge "every one" individually; He'd just kill them and throw them straight in the lake of fire. But then again – what would be the point of waking them up from death only to kill them again right away? You can see how **the main point of this whole scene in Revelation 20:11-15 is the personal judgment of each individual, not the temporary putting-back-to-death. And what would be the point of going over the specifics of each person's earthly life, if not to help and correct the person?**

I said it once, I'll say it again: *God's judgment, just like any wise father's, is about correction and learning lessons, not just about punishment.*

This *must* be the case, because otherwise how could God ever be "the Savior of all mankind" (1 Tim. 4:10) and "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). How could He "reconcile all to Himself" (Col. 1:20)? How could "every knee bow and every tongue swear allegiance" to Him (Is. 45:23)? God must do some major correcting and teaching – not *just* punishment – at the white throne, because if not, how could He ever trust all of mankind with immortal bodies (later on, at the consummation of God's plan, after their white throne judgment and second death, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28)?

1 Corinthians 15 tells us plainly that God will eventually abolish death completely. Since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), how could God ever defeat death and be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:20-28) if He doesn't first take care of mankind's tendency toward sin through correction and teaching?

Isaiah 26:9 says, "When Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." This is not only a simple statement of truth, it is a prophecy of

the same future event Revelation 20:11-13, 1 Timothy 2:4, Philippians 2:9-10, Rom. 14:11, and Is. 45:23 describe – humanity coming to the knowledge of the truth.

So according to the Bible, **the end result of God’s judgment is the elimination of the sin problem – which will make possible the elimination of death (later on, after the New Jerusalem age, at the consummation of God’s plan), so God can be “all in all”** (Rev. 20:11-15 + Rom. 6:23 + Rom. 3:23-24 + 1 Cor. 15:20-28).

Let me put it this way: In order for God to end up at the consummation of His plan as “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28), with “all” beings “reconciled to Him” (Col 1:20) and “death abolished” (1 Cor. 15:20-28), two things must happen:

1) The people (the vast majority of humanity) who are judged at the white throne must be raised from the dead and given *immortal bodies* some time after their second death in the lake of fire, thus living “happily ever after” (my term) in unity with God (without rebelling/sinning any more), *and therefore*

2) Something must happen at the white throne that *changes the hearts* of these former unbelievers, so that they can be trusted with an immortal body and are able to live in unity with God so God can be “all in all”.

Is there any Biblical evidence that these two things will occur? Absolutely. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 describes three “vivifications” into immortal bodies, the third of which is the remainder of mankind being vivified at the consummation of the ages. And Philippians 2:9-10, Rom. 14:11, and Is. 45:23 plainly state, “Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord (swear allegiance to God)”.

The Bible Explains How God Will Correct All Humanity

Let’s look at the Apostle Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 15 of how those who’ve been judged at the white throne and killed in the lake of fire, will receive immortal bodies at the “consummation” of God’s plan for humanity. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 says (in the accurately translated Concordant Version):

“Yet now Christ has been roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are asleep. 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 VIVIFIED. Yet EACH in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ’s in His presence; thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power...”

“For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. The last”

enemy is being abolished: death. For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him. Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be ALL IN ALL.”

In these verses Paul clearly outlines three “vivifications” or occasions when humans are given immortal bodies. We know these are descriptions of humans being given *immortal* bodies on *three separate occasions*, because

a) the resurrection of most of dead mankind into *mortal* bodies in Revelation 20:5 is missing from Paul’s description,

b) it would make no sense for the first two resurrections Paul describes in this passage (Jesus and believers at the rapture) to be into immortal bodies, and the third to be different; and

c) Paul uses a specific word, “vivified”, which is not used for the resurrection of most of mankind into mortal bodies in Revelation 20:5; in Revelation 20:5 they just “come to life”, they are not “vivified”.

So let’s look at the three “vivifications” – resurrections of human beings into immortal bodies – Paul describes. First is Jesus’ resurrection; second, the rapture of believers who have been given the grace to believe in this age (see Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9 & 1 Cor. 15:52); and third “the consummation, when Christ hands over the kingdom to the God and Father” and the last enemy, death, is abolished.

Paul tells us that this “consummation” is the point in time when the last enemy, death, will finally be abolished, when Jesus will have defeated every enemy (obviously including sin and death), and when Jesus, since He has now finished His job of subjecting everything and everyone to Himself, hands everything over to the Father so God can be “all in all”.

You may see “end” in 1 Corinthians 15:24 in your Bible, but “end” is not an accurate translation of this Greek word – “consummation” is much more accurate. “Consummation” lets us know that this is the moment when God’s ultimate goal for mankind is finally reached.

Most Christians assume that the rapture is the only time anybody else besides Christ will ever get an immortal body. But let’s test this assumption Scripturally.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 tells us that the rapture of those who believe in this age is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic statement “death is swallowed up in victory”. At that moment death will be swallowed up in victory *for those who believe in this age*. For us, the rapture will be the fulfillment of the saying, “death is swallowed up in victory”.

Remember, Paul wrote those words to believers in this age. So those who have believed in this age will get their immortal bodies at the rapture, and “death will be swallowed up in victory” – for believers in this age.

The rapture cannot, however, be a *total* fulfillment of the “death is swallowed up in victory” prophecy, because how can death be “swallowed up in victory” (completely) if 90% of mankind is still dead? *This is why Paul clearly outlines three “vivifications” of human beings into immortal bodies earlier in verses 20-28.*

There are some people who argue that Paul is not actually referring to a third “vivification” in 1 Corinthians 15:24. You will have to decide this for yourself of course, but it seems not only obvious, but perfectly logical to me, both from the way Paul phrases it and from the rest of what the Bible says (for example see Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10, 1 Tim. 4:10, Rom. 11:32, Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24, etc.), that Paul is definitely referring to a third “vivification”. Go back a few paragraphs and read it again if you want. Paul phrases it “first this, then this, then this”. Simple. Why would the second “then this” be a totally different type of event than the first “then this”? *When you take into account the way Paul naturally flows from each vivification to the next, and the fact that he starts the passage by stating that just as “all” are dying, “all” will be “vivified”, “each” in order, and ends the passage with death abolished and God as “all in all”, it is obvious that Paul is definitely referring to a third vivification at the consummation of the ages in this passage.* If he wasn’t, and there were only two vivifications (Christ and Christians), then his opening and closing statements (verses 22 and 24-28) would make no sense whatsoever.

Not only that, but if Paul is not referring to a third “vivification” of the rest of mankind into immortal bodies at the consummation of the ages, many other plain Biblical statements become impossible, and there is no explanation for how they occur! Think about it: *How can God become “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28), “reconcile all to Himself” (Col. 1:20), be “the Savior of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10), and “show mercy to all” (Rom. 11:32) if most of mankind stays dead? (Death is the wages of sin – it’s what we’re all “saved” from!)*

How can God be the Savior of all men (1 Tim. 4:10) (from death, the wages of sin), if He leaves most of them dead? How can He reconcile all beings to Himself (Col. 1:20) if most of them are dead? How can He give creation the same freedom from corruption that His children will get (Rom. 8:20-21), if He leaves most of His most precious creations dead? If believers in this age are the “firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18), then who are the rest of the fruits? How can “death be abolished” (1 Cor. 15:26) if most of mankind is still dead?

If I say to you, “I’m going to abolish slavery”, have I succeeded if billions of people are still stuck in the state of slavery? Absolutely not. If I say to you, “slavery is swallowed up in victory”, is that statement true if millions are still slaves? Absolutely not. If God says, “Death has been abolished” and “death has been swallowed up in victory”, has He succeeded if billions of people are still stuck in the state of death? You see my point.

And since Romans 3:23-24 and 5:18 along with Colossians 1:16-20 plainly state that God has already accomplished the justification of all mankind and the reconciliation of all mankind to Himself in principle through the cross, then for the vast majority of mankind to end up burning and screaming, or permanently dead, would require God to “take this justification back” and “take this reconciliation back” and “take back the cross” (my terms) from the vast majority of mankind, thus reversing the work of the cross and failing to become all in all (failing to fulfill 1 Cor. 15:28), failing to be the Savior of all mankind (failing to live up to His identity as declared in 1 Tim. 4:10), failing to reconcile all things to Himself (failing to live up to His stated intention in Col. 1:16-20), failing to sum all things up in Christ and bring all things into unity in Christ (failing to fulfill His stated intention in Eph. 1:10), etc. etc. etc. This is unthinkable. There is nowhere in Scripture that states that God will “take back” or reverse the work of the cross or the justification of all mankind that it accomplished (Rom. 3:23-24, 5:18, 11:32).

The bottom line is, you start running into all sorts of Biblical contradictions and logical problems if you try to say that Paul is not referring to a third vivification in 1 Corinthians 15:24. On the other hand, if you simply assume Paul is speaking in a normal way – “first this, after that this, and then this” – to refer to three vivifications, **all the logical problems go away and his description of the three vivifications fits 100% perfectly with the rest of the Bible’s plain statements about God’s plan for humanity.** Simple. Again, this is not rocket science my friends. (Although I know sometimes it may feel like that when you’re trying to undo years of pagan-originated-and-mistranslation-based lies).

Some people might try to quote John 3:16 to claim that only a few will get saved. But we must remember to translated John 3:16 correctly and keep reading to verse 17. Jesus spoke John 3:16 about those who “believe” – present tense, in this age – not perishing (not being dead during the millennium and New Jerusalem age) but rather getting conian life (life in the millennium and New Jerusalem age). Then He immediately followed that statement with a plain statement of God’s intention to save the whole world eventually. John 3:16-17 is a parallel passage to 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 in a sense. John 3:16 talks about Christians who will be permanently saved from death at the rapture, and verse 17 talks about the eventual salvation of all, just like Paul outlined it in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28. And note that the correct translation in verse 18 is not “condemned”, it is “judged”, thus making it clear that Christ was talking about people receiving *judgment* as a result of not believing in Him in this age, not condemnation. So we see that John 3:16-18 matches up perfectly with everything else I’m teaching you in this chapter.)

You should also be aware that some English Bible versions create confusion regarding 1 Corinthians 15:22 by adding a few words to it that are not in the Greek. First let’s examine the clear meaning of this verse when it is translated accurately without any creative additions. The Greek says in the accurate Concordant Version), *“For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified.”* The two phrases about all people dying through (“in”) Adam (due to Adam’s sin) and later all people being vivified through

(“in”) Christ (due to Christ’s work on the cross) are phrased the exact same way and shown to be parallel by the unifying phrase, “thus also”. *Just as all are dying because of Adam, so all will be vivified because of Christ.* The meaning is clear, and the rest of the passage through verse 28 goes on to explain in detail exactly how all will eventually be vivified (resurrected into immortal bodies).

But some English Bible versions are translated by translators who cannot fathom that the Bible would say such a thing. So they creatively add a few words to verse 22 to change its meaning! This is very, very naughty of them! They creatively add the words “those who are” in the middle of the phrase “thus also, in Christ”, changing it to “thus also, those who are in Christ”. Naughty, naughty! Deceptive, deceptive! Confusing, confusing! These translators cannot comprehend that God will eventually vivify “all” human beings (the same “all” human beings that die due to Adam’s sin) as the verse plainly states. So they change it to “all who are in Christ” by creatively adding the words “who are in”. This makes it seem like the verse is talking only about Christians (those who are presently in Christ, right now, in this age). By creatively adding these words to the verse, these translators render the entire passage self-contradictory and incomprehensible. How can God eventually be “all in all” if most people end up being burned continually to a crisp? How can death be abolished if most people remain dead permanently? The only way death can be abolished *and* God can end up “all in all” is if “all will be vivified” eventually, just as verse 22 states when there are no creative additions to it. The passage makes perfect sense when there are no creative additions to verse 22. The creatively added words artificially inserted by naughty translators of some English Bible versions to match their belief in eternal punishment, make the passage self-contradictory and nonsensical.

Dear readers, it is high time for Christians to stop ignoring (or worse, creatively “adjusting” through mistranslation) these passages and plain statements of Scripture like 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, 1 Timothy 4:10, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16-20, Romans 3:23-24, 5:18, & 11:32, James 1:18, Isaiah 45:23, etc. It’s time to stop pretending they don’t exist by never preaching about them, never thinking about them, and skimming over them when you get to them in your Bible reading. They are the most important statements in the Bible! If you ignore them it is impossible to understand God! If you don’t understand a person’s future plans, you don’t understand that person. And these statements of Scripture reveal God’s future plans for humanity in plain language.

So, according to 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 and Revelation 20, here's what will happen to those who do not believe in this (current, 3rd) age, after they are judged by God at the white throne (at the end of the 4th age, the millennium). They'll die for the second time, and their bodies will be thrown in an area of fire on earth called “the lake (or pond) of fire” in Scripture. (Or perhaps they will be thrown in while still alive and experience a few moments of pain before they die.) They will remain dead during the “New Jerusalem” Age, the 5th age (see Revelation 21-22 and my explanation of the five ages in the next chapter of this book). In essence, they’ll miss out on the party that God throws in the 5th age (the New Jerusalem age) for those He chose (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) during this (3rd) age, as a reward for

“going against the grain” of the sin and evil that rules the world in the current (3rd) age.

Then, at “the consummation” of God's plan (1 Cor. 15:24-28), at the end of the 5th (New Jerusalem) age, they (the rest of mankind who is not at the party, but is dead) will be resurrected again, but this time into *immortal* bodies. That's why Paul refers to this event as a “vivification” in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.

As Paul outlines in that passage, the resurrection of the remainder (the majority) of mankind (everyone besides Christians) at the consummation of God's plan (at the end of the 5th or New Jerusalem age) will be the third time human beings are raised from the dead and given immortal bodies – the first two being Jesus Himself and believers (those who are chosen to believe in this current age) at the rapture.

All this brings up an extremely important question: “*What happens at the white throne that makes God think He can safely give all the people He judged there an immortal body later on without them just messing everything up again?*” If “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), then God *must* get rid of sin before He can permanently get rid of death! **Biblically and logically something must happen at the white throne that will fix mankind's tendency toward sin.**

If God is ever going to be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28) as the Bible plainly states He will be, **the white throne judgment must be corrective.** This is consistent with how the Bible uses the word “judgment”. Remember, Isaiah 26:9 says, “When Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” This verse is not only generally true, it could also very well be a prophecy about the white throne judgment. (There is no evidence that the white throne judgment will occur anywhere but on earth in Jerusalem; we know it will be Jesus doing the judging there because it is His job to carry out the judgment duties as King of earth before He later hands the kingdom of earth over to God the Father as described in 1 Cor. 15:24-28.) Surely it's not hard to believe that God, our Creator, is smart enough to judge, educate, and train His creations in such a way that we “get it” and are corrected. *Why would He have brought us into existence in the first place if He didn't know beforehand that He could eventually get us all to live happily together with Him and each other?*

Because we currently live in an evil age ruled by Satan and His handpicked human leaders (2 Cor. 4:4, Matt. 4:5-6) where there is so much evil influence everywhere, it may be hard for us to imagine everyone actually learning to live wisely as God desires. But you have to remember that when the majority of mankind is standing before the throne to be judged, it will be a very different atmosphere. There are several different factors that will combine to make it much easier for the average person, and even currently evil people, to change their mind and ways.

For one thing, as I'll explain in the next chapter about God's educational plan for the ages (where each age is a stage in His educational plan for mankind), the people who are judged at the white throne will be able to look back at all of human history and learn

lessons from it, personally explained by Jesus Himself! Jesus will talk to, instruct, correct, and judge each person individually; imagine getting your own personal “wise living instruction” session from Jesus Himself!

It's also important to note that the negative, tempting, and deceptive influence of Satan will have been removed permanently by then. And as if that weren't enough, you would think that *simply standing before the throne in Jerusalem and beholding the risen Christ, having just been raised from the dead yourself (!)* would be enough to make the vast majority of these prior unbelievers (if not all of them) bow down and say, “Sorry Lord, I get it now!”

In fact, this is exactly what the Bible says will happen! Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 14:11 say that at some point in the future “every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord”.

I once heard someone claim that Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 14:11 “mean nothing” because “even demons believe”. The person who made this claim was completely ignorant of the Old Testament prophecy (Is. 45:23) these two New Testament verses quote, which reveals exactly what “confessing Jesus as Lord” means. Right now demons believe (they know there is one God, the God of the Bible – James 2:19), but they *do not confess Him as Lord or swear allegiance to Him*. The two New Testament Scriptures I referenced above say that eventually every tongue will “*confess* Jesus is/as Lord”. Isaiah 45:23 tells us exactly what the apostle Paul meant by the phrase “confess Jesus is/as Lord”, because when Paul quoted Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10 and Romans 14:11 he used the phrase “confess Jesus is Lord” or “confess Jesus as Lord” to translate the phrase “swear allegiance to” God or “swear by” God in Isaiah 45:23. This tells us that **“confessing Jesus is/as Lord” means “swearing allegiance to” Him or “swearing by” Him or “swearing an oath to” Him.**

Thus it is absolutely clear that in the future when every tongue “confesses Jesus is/as Lord”, it will not be a grudging “I must admit You are Lord but I still hate Your guts” type of thing. Every tongue will “swear allegiance to” or “swear an oath to” or “swear by” God. If I “swear by” a certain brand name, that means I trust it and recommend it; there is no confusion about what it means to “swear allegiance to” or “swear an oath to” someone. So the claim that in the future when every tongue “confesses Jesus is/as Lord” it will be the same thing as demons do now (believing but not confessing Christ as their Lord or swearing allegiance to Him), is utterly false as proven by the Old Testament prophecy (Is. 45:23) the apostle Paul quoted/repeated when he said that everyone in the future will confess Jesus as Lord.

So Biblically this future “confessing/bowing event” on the part of all mankind cannot be a grudging “I admit, You’re Lord, but I still hate You” type of deal on the part of anyone. Everyone is going to confess Jesus as Lord and swear allegiance to God, and everyone is going to do it sincerely from the heart. The Bible makes this even clearer by repeatedly pointing out that everyone will not just “confess”, they will also bow their knees in worship.

Of course, people who believe in hell may not want to have to admit that everyone will eventually swear allegiance to Christ, because it is impossible to explain why Jesus would then supposedly turn around and throw these billions of people who have just sworn allegiance to Him and bowed their knees in worship to Him, into eternal torture-fire or annihilate them (cause them to cease to exist). But I digress...

So we see that *at some point in the future everyone will believe and confess Jesus is Lord, swear allegiance to Him, and bow down in worship and service to Him.* Now think about it...According to Romans 8:9-10, which says "If you believe in your heart God raised Christ from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, you will be saved", *at the point that every knee bows and every tongue confesses, every one of these people "gets saved"!*

When will this amazing event occur? The most logical time – in fact, the only logical time I can think of – for the majority of mankind to believe/confess/bow in fulfillment of Philippians 2:10-11/Romans 14:11/Isaiah 45:22-24, is *at the white throne judgment.* When else would it occur? Again, this is not rocket science. Those of you who know your Bible well, think about it – when else could such an event occur?

Imagine being an unbeliever in this age...you die (the equivalent of going to sleep, you become unconscious), and when you wake up...there is Jesus Christ on His throne! This will occur on earth of course (as proven by the fact that such a person will not be "vivified" but merely resurrected into a physical body, and will later die physical death in the physical lake of fire), so such a person will suddenly find himself or herself in front of Jesus' earthly throne in Jerusalem. What a major shock! Jesus is alive, standing right in front of you! And *you* are alive too! The last thing you remember was dying! Imagine this was you, suddenly standing before Jesus' throne, alive, and He's alive...and all these other formerly dead people are alive. Wow. Immediately you're going to realize you lived your (first) earthly life under a cloud of deception concerning God, Jesus, etc.!

Then imagine...you get to listen to the conversations Jesus has with billions of other people (yes, it might take awhile)! After listening to Him correct a couple thousand people, perhaps assigning some of them to tasks or situations that will teach them lessons they need to learn, do you think you'll be in a "listening mood" by the time it's your turn? Absolutely – your session might go pretty quickly!

I realize I'm expounding on Revelation 20:11-15 along with other Scriptures; I don't mean to add to what Scripture says, but I don't believe I'm doing that. I'm just using common sense. It may take many years for Christ to have a personal conversation with a few billion people. Many of those conversations might be pretty short – "Yeah, I get it Lord, sorry, I saw the other 444 million judgment conversations You've already had with others...so, any personal tips?" God will judge each person individually, but the basic change of heart and willingness to acknowledge Christ's Lordship and bow the knee to Him in worship, may only take a few seconds after everyone is raised from the dead to find himself or herself before His glorious throne! So even though obviously some people will obviously

need more work than others, many of the conversations may not have to be very long.

Still, it will surely take years. What will be going on during that time – what will everybody who's not having their personal session with the King of the earth at that moment, be doing with their time? Well, life may simply continue, on earth, until finally when everyone's judgment session is done, everyone (except those who believed in this current age, Christians who will long before have gotten immortal bodies at the rapture) is killed and their bodies burned up in the fire. (It makes sense to burn dead bodies; they stink pretty badly if you just let them lay around!) (Everyone will surely understand that a party for those who were chosen to believe in the 3rd, most difficult age, and had to put up with persecution and going against the grain, is about to begin – the New Jerusalem Age.)

Another possibility is that each individual person who is judged at the white throne judgment will be killed and their body thrown into the lake of fire immediately after their judgment session. We don't know. But if that is the way Jesus chooses to do it, it would certainly convey a sense of the seriousness of the matter of how we live our lives! It is very important that God convey to each and every human the extreme importance of living the way He designed us to live, and the serious consequences of failing to do so. To do this He doesn't have to go way overboard into irrational and unjust eternal torture, He just has to make a serious point that “operating incorrectly means you have to be put out of commission because you will cause pain to yourself and others” (my paraphrase of Romans 6:23, “the wages of sin is death”).

Some of you may be wondering, “If all these people learn their lessons, confess Jesus as Lord, and bow down in worship at the white throne judgment, why do they need to die again for a while?” Let me take this chance to point out something profound. The vast majority of believers in this current (3rd) age (except those who are alive when the rapture occurs) will experience death one more time *even after they become believers*. Most Christians will believe in Christ, then die before Jesus comes back, and then get an immortal body at the rapture.

Similarly, unbelievers in this age also will experience death one more time *even after they become believers* at the white throne.

Here's my point: For some reason God sees fit to let humans experience death (being unconscious, missing out on life experience, like a child missing out on something fun they were looking forward to) *once more even after coming to the knowledge of the truth*. The only reason I can think that He would do it this way, is to teach us all a vivid lesson about the serious consequences of “sin” (“missing the mark”, operating differently than He designed us to operate). The equivalent would be a parent telling a child, “Don't do that; and if you do, you will not be allowed to go to your friend's birthday party on Saturday”, and when they child disobeys, they get a spanking, a talking-to, or whatever correction is needed, but the parent *still* does not allow the child to go to the party that weekend, *as an additional lesson* so that they *seriousness* of the consequences of disobedience *sinks in deeper*.

You see, the only people who will *never* experience death are Christians in this current age who will still be alive and holding on to their faith when the rapture occurs. This group of people will just have lived through the most difficult worldwide persecution of Christians the world will ever see. (See my chapter about the rapture in my book on the end times for Biblical information on the relative timing of the rapture – where it’s revealed in the Book of Revelation as confirmed by several other plain statements in Scripture – that you probably haven’t heard before.)

The Christians who live through the worldwide persecution at the end of this current age, by God's grace, will have gone through a testing far greater than most – therefore God sees fit to allow them never to experience the “wages of sin” – death. It’s as though God allows them to “skip a grade” in their education because they passed a super-difficult test. (This does not make them better than past martyrs who *did* die, it just means they passed a difficult test *and* they happened to live at the end of the age. Past martyrs might have been allowed to “skip a grade” too if they had lived at the end of the age.)

There will be some Christians who, because they have studied Scriptural prophecy and sought God extensively (thus demonstrating a certain level of spiritual maturity), will know what to do and where to go at the right time during the end times, to “escape all these things” (Luke 21:36). These will have the “power” to escape these things – power in the form of knowledge and preparation. They will know most of the major events that will happen at the end of this age, beforehand, so they won’t be tricked by the crazy and deceptive events that will fool most of mankind and, were it possible, even some of the elect (Matt. 24:24). (For details on how to escape the crazy and difficult events that will occur at the end of this age, see my book on the end times.) These mature Christians will live to see the rapture and will never experience death. God can allow them to miss out on the “death lesson” because He has done a special work in them during this age.

There will be other Christians who don’t have as much maturity and knowledge about the end times, or perhaps live in places where Bibles and Bible teaching is not abundant, or perhaps came to the Lord right before the crazy end times stuff begins to happen. Many of these will fall away (2 Thess. 2:1-3). Those who don’t, and hold on to their faith through all the deception, confusion, and persecution at the end of this age, will have demonstrated great faith and courage *despite having varying levels of understanding about everything that is going on*. Some of these will be martyred, and others will live through to the rapture. Those who live through to the rapture will never experience death, and that is ok because God has done a special work in them in this age to give them enough faith to hang on through the worst persecution and greatest deceptions the world has ever seen.

So death is ultimately a *lesson and a temporary punishment*. It’s not *only* a punishment. And of course it is not an end-state either. (If it was, we’d have to rip verses like 1 Cor. 15:22-28, 1 Tim. 4:10, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:16-20, James 1:18, Rom. 3:23-24, 5:18, 11:32, Is. 45:23, etc. out of the Bible.) Death is simply a lesson and a punishment at the same time –

just like a wise father might dole out to a disobedient child. A wise father does not “ground” His child and make them miss out on fun things *forever*; He just does so *for a period of time, as a lesson that will stick with the kid long afterward*. Kids, like people, don’t like missing out on life. Death is a “grounding”, a “missing out” – a logical punishment/lesson for operating incorrectly.

If your car operates incorrectly, it’s dangerous. It could seriously hurt somebody if it does the wrong thing at the wrong time. So you put it out of commission for a while, at the shop. Not to sit forever, but to be fixed. God does a similar thing with sinning humans. We’ve all operated incorrectly (Rom. 3:23), and still show a tendency toward doing so. The logical wages of sin (operating incorrectly, hurting others and yourself) is being put out of commission – death. Being put out of commission for a while – experiencing death, missing out on life – for a human being, becomes a profound lesson when the human wakes up.

It’s not that Christians in this age are better than anyone else. God simply chooses some people by His grace. Some of us will never experience death, because we’ll live through the end times to the rapture. And we Christians (at least those of us who don’t fall away during the traumatic events of the end of this age, or don’t live to see those events) will only have to experience the death lesson once, not twice, because we have been given the faith/grace to believe earlier, and thus acknowledge our need for God’s help earlier while also, in most cases, learning God’s ways sooner (see Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9, Rom. 11:5-6).

Is “Annihilationism” The Truth?

Some people, although they realize that hell is a mistranslation, still argue that when most of mankind is killed and thrown into the lake of fire, that’s it – they’ll never rise again, but will cease to exist. This idea is called “annihilationism”; annihilationists believe that those who don’t believe in this age will cease to exist when they are killed and thrown into the lake of fire – they’ll die, and never rise again. They often point to Scriptures that say God will “destroy sinners”, etc.

There are two problems with this belief. One is that it artificially adds the meaning of permanence to the word and concept of “destruction”. The word/concept “destruction” is unclear in and of itself and does not carry the meaning of permanence unless clearly stated. One cannot just assume that something that is “destroyed” will never recover or rise or have any activity after its destruction. To give an example in everyday language and usage, there have been many cities throughout history that were “destroyed”, but were later rebuilt. Or if I walk up to you and say, “I’m going to destroy you”, your first question would be “What *exactly* do you mean by that?” To give a Scriptural example, Scripture states that Sodom and Gomorrah were “destroyed” (Gen. 13:10) but also states that they will have a better time of it at the white throne judgment than the people who

heard Jesus preach and rejected Him (Matt. 10:15). And the Bible actually says that Jesus was “destroyed”! Acts 13:28 says that the Pharisees asked Pilate to “destroy” Jesus – you won’t see the word “destroy” in most English Bible versions (you’ll usually see “executed” or “slain” or something like that) but if you read the NASB they put a liner note about this word which says, “Lit. (literally) *destroyed*”. Hmm...When Jesus was “destroyed” by being killed on the cross, did He permanently cease to exist? Obviously not. On the cross His body was killed and ceased to operate at which point His spirit returned to God (unconsciously), and He became unconscious (as I explained in Chapter 4). But shortly afterward, His spirit was rejoined with His physical body (which God supernaturally resurrected and made immortal/incorruptible), and He became conscious again, a “living soul” (see Gen. 2:7). Even though He was “destroyed”, He did not permanently cease to exist. In order for a person to permanently cease to exist at death, God would have to permanently discard or destroy the spirit of each human being that returns (unconsciously) to Him at death (Ecc. 12:7) – and there is no evidence whatsoever that God does that or will ever do that to any human being’s spirit.

Obviously, both in common everyday usage and Scriptural usage, the word and concept of “destruction” cannot be assumed to refer to permanent destruction and ceasing to exist, unless it is clearly stated in the immediate context that the destruction is permanent and/or is extremely specific about exactly what is being destroyed, and for how long. For annihilationists to take a Biblical statement about the destruction of sinners or the like, and stretch it on their whim to mean “permanent destruction, as in death from which they will never arise, in which God permanently discards or destroys the human being’s spirit” is to creatively add a meaning to the word and concept of destruction that it does not contain in and of itself. The destruction of sinners could just as easily refer to God causing them to die in this age, or lose their wealth, be deprived of success – any number of things. This is because the term and concept of “destruction” is inherently unclear in and of itself.

So whenever you see an annihilationist pointing to a Scripture statement about the “destruction” of sinners, etc., upon careful examination you will notice that there is no proof that it means “permanently, as in death from which they will never arise”, and that the annihilationist is inventing that concept and creatively/artificially superimposing it upon the word “destruction”.

The second problem with the “annihilationist” belief is that it directly contradicts many plain Scriptures like 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16-20, Romans 3:23-24, 5:18, 11:32, James 1:18, Is. 45:23, etc. If God were to annihilate most of His creations, how could He be “the Savior of all men”? How could He ever be “all in all”? How could He “reconcile all to Himself”? How could He “sum up all things” in Himself? How can “all things” be created “for Him” if most of those things cease to exist?

The Bible repeatedly refers to “all” people eventually being saved and reconciled to God. Scriptures like the ones I referred to in the last paragraph make this abundantly clear.

“All” is all. All are included in “all”. The definition of “all” is not “all except for most” or “all except for the ones I choose to get rid of”. The Bible states in 1 Timothy 4:10 that God’s very identity is that He is “the Savior of all men”. If there are 10 apples on the table and I say “I’m the eater of *all* those apples” and then throw 8 of them in the garbage before I eat the remaining two, I’m either playing clever word games or just a liar. God is neither.

And again, why would God create billions of humans knowing beforehand that most of them would live difficult lives for 70 years, be woken up to be told how bad they were, and be put back to sleep forever? What would be the point? Or why would God go to all the trouble of causing Isaiah 45:23 to be fulfilled so that every tongue swears allegiance to Him, and then immediately turn around and cause all these people who just swore allegiance to Him to cease to exist? Why would He do such a thing? It would be absurd!

Folks, if you let your brain operate in “common sense mode” for a few minutes you will see that *if God had any ultimate plan for humanity other than what I teach directly from the Bible in this book, it would be absurd. Annihilationism is almost as absurd as eternal punishment, eternal torture, hell, etc.* Although it is not quite so horrific, it is still horribly tragic. The annihilationist viewpoint says that billions of precious people were brought into existence by God only to live a few decades of being oppressed and exploited by the powerful, a few years of difficult life trying to scrape by (remember most people throughout history and even most people alive today have had nothing close to our relatively comfortable modern Western lifestyles), and never heard the gospel, only to hear Jesus say at the white throne judgment, “Sorry, you will now cease to exist. Yes, I know you just bowed your knee in worship to Me, and I know you just swore allegiance to Me – after all, I foretold this in Isaiah 45:23 – but I don’t really care. You are useless, worthless, and have no value. I will now cause you to cease to exist. Yes, I know the only thing you ever really got to experience was a few years of struggle in the ‘Satan ruled’ age, but I don’t really care. Yes, I know you want to ask Me why I even brought you into existence in the first place. The answer is, there is no reason. Your life was meaningless. Tough beans. Goodbye, you will now cease to exist.”

My friends, *God’s true ultimate plan for humanity as revealed in the Bible, as I’m explaining to you in the book, shows us that Christianity and the God of the Bible is the only God-based belief system that is not absurd. What I teach you in this book sets Christianity apart from all other religions, sets it apart from all the pagan religions out there that teach that their god or gods have a great plan for a few and tragedy planned for most.* In other words, Christianity that embraces and understands what I teach in this book, is the only God-based belief system where God’s ultimate plan for humanity is wonderful rather than absurd, horrible, meaningless, and tragic.

Fortunately the Bible does not teach annihilationism. The Word of God is ultra-clear and matches up with itself simply, easily, and perfectly if you’re willing to believe the most wonderful truth ever discovered – *God is the Savior of all mankind (1 Tim. 4:10).*

Sadly, some people seem to have trouble grasping this simply because they don’t *want*

to believe that God will save everybody. Why don't they want to? Sometimes it's simply because it's not what they've believed their whole life up to now. They fight 1 Timothy 4:10 (and all the other plain statements of Scripture I've quoted) tooth and nail, and go to all sorts of ridiculous lengths (leaps of logic, insisting Scriptures don't mean what they plainly state, creatively adding words to verses to change the meaning, etc.) to try to "prove" that those who are lucky enough (in truth, chosen by God – see Eph. 1:4 & 2:8-9) to hear the gospel and believe it in this age, somehow deserve a better ending than everybody else. Do these people who insist on believing in "a happy ending for me and a horrible ending for most other people" realize what they're holding on to so tightly? They're essentially saying, "I *want* to end up partying while everybody else is dead or burning." Why would anyone cling so tightly to such a selfish mindset? We should all be overjoyed beyond words that there is no such thing as eternal punishment and that God will eventually be "all in all"!

Such people are also essentially making the ridiculous argument that Jesus would go to all that trouble to die for the "justification of all men" (Rom. 5:18, 3:23-24, 11:32), and then *take it back for most of them*. In most cases it would be totally and grossly unfair for Him to take it back. Imagine Jesus saying at the white throne, "You Chinese guy, I know you never heard the gospel or even My Name in your lifetime, but I'm still gonna take back what I did for you because you didn't believe! Never mind that My Word says 'How can they believe if they don't hear and how can they hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:14) – I guess you just weren't lucky enough to have a preacher of the gospel come by your town! Tough luck for you! I'm *taking back* what I did on the cross in your case! It doesn't apply to you! But this American guy who grew up in a Christian home, yeah, he gets to keep what I purchased for him on the cross! You, Chinese guy, are gonna burn forever (or cease to exist) because you happened to be unlucky enough never to hear the gospel...but the American guy who grew up in church gets to party with Me forever!"

Obviously Jesus would never say such a thing because it makes no sense. But if you simply read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, Ephesians 1:10 etc. and realize that at the consummation of the ages God will give the rest of mankind immortal bodies, God makes perfect sense. The doctrines of annihilationism and eternal punishment both blatantly contradict many plain statements of Scripture and make God out to be a nonsensical monster. They also require believing that *Christ's work on the cross will be undone, taken back, or reversed for the vast majority of humanity*. Thankfully, Scripture says no such thing.

Thankfully, when you read the accurately translated Bible and simply believe what it plainly states in the verses I've quoted repeatedly in this chapter, God is shown to be a wise and loving Father, not a nonsensical monster. What Jesus did on the cross justified everyone (Rom. 5:18, 3:23-24, 11:32, Col. 1:16-20) – made it "just-as-if-I'd" (they'd) never sinned. God will never take back what His Son has done for mankind. This is why our commission is to be ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:20) – because God has already provided the means of reconciliation, and He will never take it back. Our message is not "Be reconciled to God now, or you'll burn forever!" It is "Be reconciled to God, because everyone's going to be eventually anyway – so why wait?"

Can you imagine coming to God because He said, “I love you so much that I gave my only Son for you. And if you don’t believe it, you will be sentenced to eternal torture.” Huh? Ladies, imagine a guy telling you, “I love you so much that I’m willing to lay down my life for you. And if you don’t believe it, I will torture you continuously for years and years.” Huh? That’s some absurd type of “love”! This pagan hell and eternal punishment nonsense is just that: nonsense. Utter absurdity.

Friends, God has made an unconditional offer of reconciliation to the world. Whoever doesn’t get it now, will get it later. (Again, see Isaiah 45:23, James 1:18, Rom. 8:20-21, etc.) We won’t reach the majority in this current age, but through our preaching we’ll reach many, and this is very important to God. Those we reach, whose hearts God opens to our message, will be part of His future leadership team during the 4th age (Rev. 20:6), and through them God will teach lessons to both the rest of humanity and spirit beings (Eph. 3:10). We don’t preach to save people from hell, we preach to help reconcile people (as many people as God allows us to reach in this age) to God as soon as possible, to serve the Lord the best we can, to serve His sovereign purposes, to help and bless people, and to help build God’s future leadership team. Doesn’t that just give you so much more peace?

You see, according to 1 Timothy 4:10, John 12:32, Colossians 1:16-20, Romans 3:23-24, and Romans 5:18 *everybody who ever lived and ever will live, has already been justified and saved by God through what Christ did on the cross*. God is not taking back Christ’s work on the cross for humanity. He doesn’t hold out His hand and say, “Here humanity, here’s the greatest gift ever”, and then pull His hand back and say, “Haha, just kidding, sorry, most of you can’t have it!”

What Christ did for humanity is a done deal. This is why Jesus, the instant before He died on the cross, said, “It is finished.” It’s done. Mankind has been saved by Christ, not through anything we did ourselves. Christ’s death provided “justification of life to all men” (Rom. 5:18).

If you have trouble believing what I just said, ask yourself why the apostle Paul did not include a warning about “eternal” or “hell-fire” consequences when he outlined the message of reconciliation we are to bring to the world. Also notice there is not single warning about “eternal punishment”, “hell” or any such thing in all of Paul's writings. Nor are there any in Jesus' words; remember, He only spoke of Gehenna, a physical valley in Jerusalem where there will be physical fire in the next age on earth to burn the corpses of the evil people He kills (Is. 66:23-24, Mk. 9:47-48). Nor is there any talk about hell or eternal punishment anywhere in the Old Testament.

The Seemingly Unsolvable Predestination Dilemma – Solved Instantly and Easily! (And, All Religious Pride Removed From Believers –

Instantly and Easily!)

The simple fact God is the Savior of all mankind (1 Tim. 4:10) solves another one of the seemingly unanswerable problems of the Bible, the predestination dilemma, and does so with astonishing simplicity. Christians only cling to the “we decide whether to get saved or not, it’s our decision alone” myth (which directly contradicts Ephesians 1:4 & 2:8-9, Romans 14:11, and Romans 10:14) because they can’t stomach the thought that God would choose beforehand who’s going to hell and who’s not. So they throw out the “God choosing beforehand” idea altogether. Instead, they should throw out the unbiblical “hell” idea and keep the “God choosing beforehand” (certain people to “get it” in *this* age, earlier than everyone else) idea.

Also, the fact that God saves everybody from themselves, all by Himself, with no help at all from us, should remove all pride from those of us who have been chosen to “get it” in this age (Eph. 1:4), just as it will remove all pride from those who believe later at the white throne. Just like everyone else, believers in this age have no reason to boast in our own goodness. God chose us (Eph. 1:4) and gave us our faith (Eph. 2:8-9)! God, in order to have a leadership team for the next age and to help teach a lesson to the rest of His creations, chooses a few to believe in Christ, to “get it” in this age.

As Christians, our salvation in this age is not primarily our choice, it is primarily *His* choice. Read Ephesians 1:4 and 2:8-9 several times if you have to, to let this sink in. This will remove all thought that you are better than someone else because you’re saved and someone else isn’t.

The Apostle Paul states it perfectly in 1 Timothy 4:10 – God “is the Savior of all men, *especially* of those who believe.” Here Paul makes a distinction between those to whom God gives faith in this age, and everyone else who will believe and confess later at the white throne judgment. God is the Savior of them all, just at different times – and salvation for those who are given faith in this age definitely has a special aspect to it.

Paul goes out of his way to point out that believers in this age have a *special* salvation. How so? We will get saved from death and receive an immortal body *earlier* than everybody else (at the rapture toward the very end of this current age instead of at the consummation of God’s plan after the New Jerusalem age), and we will get to experience some fun and interesting things the rest of mankind doesn’t, like reigning with Christ for 1,000 years during the millennium (Rev. 20:4) while most people who have ever lived will remain dead, judging angels (1 Cor. 6:3), and living (while everyone else is dead for the second time) during the “New Jerusalem Age” (Rev. 21-22).

But keep in mind that our “special” salvation is not because we are anything great, but rather the opposite! 1 Corinthians 1:26-30 says that it’s mostly the *weak and foolish* that God chooses in this age, in order to show the rest of His creatures that it’s *His* power at

work in us (Phil. 2:13). Remember that next time you start to think more highly of yourself than you ought.

Isn't it wonderful how the truth automatically removes religious pride? Religious pride is when a person thinks (consciously or subconsciously), "I'm better than so-and-so because I know more about God than they do and have made better spiritual choices than they have." Wrong. Do not pass "GO". Do not collect \$200. (Sorry for the Monopoly reference!) No soup for you. (Sorry for the Seinfeld reference!) We're saved by God's grace and choosing (Eph. 1:4)...and He probably chose *you* because you were exceptionally *weak* and *foolish* (1 Cor. 1:26-30) and needed a lot of help! I know that's why He chose me!

Believers in this age will get an immortal body *earlier* than the rest of humanity. That (and some of the perks that go with it as an example to the rest of creation) is our "special" salvation.

Summary

"Getting saved" does not mean getting saved from hell, it means getting saved from *death*. "The wages of sin is *death*", not hell (Rom. 6:23). So when a person is "saved", they are saved from death. They are saved from the rightful wages of their own sin. We Christians receive our (future) salvation from death by faith, now in this age. Everyone else will receive their (future) salvation from death by sight (they will see the risen Christ standing right in front of them), at the white throne judgment. At the point you get an immortal body, you've been permanently saved from death. Christians (and Godly people before the time of Christ like Abraham, etc.) will get our immortal bodies at the rapture; everyone else will get theirs at the consummation of God's plan (after the New Jerusalem age), just as Paul describes clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28. At the consummation of God's plan, death will be abolished and everyone who has ever lived will be in an immortal body (1 Cor. 15:22-28). Those who are chosen by God and given faith in this (current, 3rd) age will get our immortal bodies *sooner* than it will happen for everybody else – that's our "special" salvation.

In summary,

a) The sin problem has been removed *in principle* for all mankind by Christ's work on the cross (Rom 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18, 2 Cor. 5:18-19, Col. 1:16-20). God has provided salvation for all; it's just that most people will not access theirs in this age. To use an analogy, everyone has money in the bank, but most people are not accessing theirs yet.

b) The sin problem will be removed *in practice* from Christians who are chosen and given faith in this (3rd) age, first of all through His work in them during their first earthly life; second, through the first death lesson (for most except those who live to see the

rapture); third, through a supernatural work He will do in them when He gives them immortal bodies at the rapture, and fourth, through any correction at the dais of Christ.

c) The sin problem will be removed *in practice* from the rest of humanity at the white throne judgment and later at the consummation of God's plan, through lessons they've learned during their first lifetime and lessons they learn through the testimony of history (as pointed out to them by Christ at the white throne judgment) and through the first and second death lessons.

What I just described, combined with the fact that God will get rid of the negative influence of Satan once and for all just before the white throne judgment (Rev. 20:10), and the fact that the immortal bodies we'll receive in our "vivifications" (1 Cor. 15:20-28) are described as "incorruptible" (which means God designs them not to have the weakness and tendency toward temptation and sin that our mortal bodies have – see 1 Cor. 15:52-54 and compare it to Romans 11:32, which I will explain later), will permanently remove the sin problem from all mankind. *Then and only then can God abolish the last enemy, death, so that He can be "all in all"*. It's laid out right there in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. (Also compare James 1:18 to 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; you will see how 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 explains the concept and practical fulfillment of Christ and Christians being a firstfruits of the eventual salvation of all mankind, as confirmed by Colossians 1:16-20, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Timothy 4:10, Isaiah 45:23, etc.)

So we see that God's end-goal is to judge every person – for most of mankind it will occur at the white throne – so that they can be corrected, educated, and trained to the point where sin is no longer a problem. With the added help that God will permanently remove the negative influence of Satan and give us less weakness-prone immortal bodies, *the removal of the sin problem means death can be removed* (because "the wages of sin is death" – Rom. 6:23). The removal/abolishment of sin and death means *all* can and will be given and trusted with an immortal body at the consummation of the ages.

In other words, the third vivification described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, when the majority of mankind will be given immortal bodies, is the same moment when death is abolished. This occurs "so that God may be all in all".

After God

- 1, removes Satan's negative influence,
- 2, does a corrective work in mankind (at the white throne for most),
- 3, teaches (virtually all of) us a lesson through (temporarily missing out on life through) death, and
- 4, gives supernatural grace to mankind by putting us (some sooner than others) in incorruptible immortal bodies,

the sin problem will have been taken care of – and all the world's problems

will have been solved. The deepest desires of humanity will be fulfilled – we will all live together in love, unity, and prosperity without hurting each other. God will be “all in all”.

Some may ask an excellent question: “Why didn’t God just give us immortal bodies in the first place and avoid all these sin problems?” The answer is, He did give Adam and Eve immortal bodies at first; they were not “incorruptible” as our eventual immortal bodies will be (1 Cor. 15:52-54), but they were immortal in the sense that they were not susceptible to death until Adam and Eve sinned. There was a good reason God gave Adam and Eve immortal bodies (bodies that were not susceptible to death) but not incorruptible bodies (bodies that are not susceptible to sin). God knew that as soon as He decided to create mankind not as robots, but in His image, as beings with a high level of intelligence and a significant amount of decision-making capacity, that mankind would want to try things that were not the way He originally designed them to operate, just like a father knows his kids are going to disobey him at some point and “try things their own way”. The difference is, God has many billions of adults to teach, not just two or three young kids! But God is certainly able to teach all of us what we need to learn – it just takes time. That’s why He designed a plan for the ages, where each age is a stage in His educational plan for all humanity.

Now that we’ve seen God’s end goal outlined in Scripture, let’s take a look at the five ages (Greek “eons”) referred to in Scripture, and God’s purpose for each. You’ll see how God has carefully planned the five ages of human history to be lessons mankind can look upon at the white throne (looking back at the first four ages and forward to the fifth), which will help them learn the importance of operating the way God has designed us to operate. Then in Chapter 8 I’ll explain *why* God is doing things the way He’s doing them, including why He’s allowing pain and suffering during this age. You will see that *God has a good, simple, logical reason for everything He has done, is doing, and will do with His master plan of the ages. You will see that it is all in order to educate, teach and train all of humanity to live the way He designed them to live – in love and prosperity without hurting each other.*

Chapter 7

The 5 Ages of Human History: God's Educational Plan For Mankind

The accurately translated Bible reveals God's master plan for humanity: to educate all His creatures – to teach us to operate the way He designed us to operate – in five stages. Each “age”/“eon” revealed in the Word of God is a stage in the education of humanity.

In this chapter I'm going to explain the five ages of human history God has had planned since before He created the world. Particularly in the case of the ages before this current age, some people may disagree with the exact number of ages or exactly when they began and ended, but regardless of one's views on that issue, that doesn't change the fact that the Bible talks repeatedly about God's plan for several specific ages.

This chapter is also going to answer one of the most difficult questions of life for anyone who believes in God: *Why does God allow so much suffering?* Many Christians cannot figure out why God would allow so much evil in this age, or why He would allow Satan so much leeway when “the stakes are so high”. They are confused because they think this age is a battle between God and Satan. It is not.

Have you ever asked yourself, if God is really in a “battle for souls” with Satan during this age, a) why is He losing so badly, and b) why does He let Satan run rampant to deceive, kill, and destroy right now when supposedly everybody is deciding between heaven and hell...and then tie him up in the next age when it's too late? I'll say it once, I'll say it a million times, *many of the things many well-meaning Christians believe make no sense whatsoever, but everything the accurately translated Bible reveals about God makes perfect sense.*

As you will learn in this chapter and the next, this age and all its suffering are just a set up, part of a lesson God must teach all mankind *through experience*. You say, “Why does it have to be so hard?” Well, did you ever try teaching a kid everything he or she needs to know, just with verbal instruction? It doesn't always work, because people think they know better, and often only learn wisdom through *experience*.

You will learn in this chapter that God is allowing Satan to rule this age in which we live to (2 Cor. 4:4) *for a very good reason*. You will learn that God has a *logical reason* for everything He does and allows – and His reasons can be easily understood by anyone who gets the leftover paganism out of the way and simply studies what the accurately translated

Bible teaches.

The 5 Ages of Human History

As I mentioned, there are several ages of history outlined in the Bible. (It seems we can divide the history of earth into five ages, but the exact number and timing of them, particularly when it comes to the ages before this current age, does not matter much to the main point of this book.) The Bible also talks about “before the ages”, and “the consummation of the ages” (when God achieves the goal He has had for the five ages of human history). And of course, after “the consummation of the ages” (after the difficult stuff is over and the goal of God being “all in all” has been reached), life will continue! Actually, it could be said that at the consummation life – as it was always meant to be – will have just begun!

So, including the “before” and “after” of the five ages, there are seven specific periods of time mentioned in Scripture that together encompass God's plan for the world and human existence. Let's look at each one of these periods of time, noting the Bible verses where each is revealed. As I explain the story of the ages, I encourage you to constantly think about *why* God would direct the ages in such a manner. I'll explain more detail about the third age than any other because it is the age we are currently living through, and it is the most difficult age. Once I'm done giving you a brief “story of the ages”, we'll look at the logical purpose for each of the five ages – we'll see *why* God is doing things this way in order to get us to the consummation of the ages, after which all humanity will live in immortal bodies and God will be “all in all”.

An important note: When you read the verses I quote in this chapter, I suggest you use an accurately translated English version like the Concordant Bible, which you can read online (New Testament only) for free by going to http://www.concordant.org/version/CLNT_Intro.htm. Otherwise you'll read some of the verses and say, “Huh?” because many English Bibles do not translate these verses accurately, especially the ones that contain the vitally important word “age” (Greek “eon”).

The 7 Periods of Time That Encompass God's Plan For the World (Before the Ages, The 5 Ages, and After the Consummation of the Ages)

Before the Ages:

“...But we are speaking God's wisdom in a secret, wisdom which has been concealed, which God designates before – before the cons...” - 1 Corinthians 2:7

“Who saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian.” - 2 Timothy 1:9

“...In expectation of life eonian, which God, Who does not lie, promises before times eonian...” - Titus 1:2-3

Before the ages, God existed, and so did Christ, before the universe and the earth were created.

“...Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons!” - Romans 11:36

“All came into being through it (the Word), and apart from it not even one thing came into being which has come into being.” - John 1:3

In Colossians Paul outlines the overall plan of God beautifully and eloquently, starting with the fact that God and Christ existed before the world or any other creature, and ending with God reconciling all creatures to Himself through Christ.

“...Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, For in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him. And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens.” - Colossians 1:15-20

Age 1: God creates the universe & forms the earth; the earth is disrupted by the rebellion of Satan and fallen angels, and then restored by God

The story of humanity had to start with God preparing the earth for human habitation. The Bible tells us that Christ made (prepared) the ages.

“...In the last of these days speaks to us in a Son, Whom He appoints enjoyer of the allotment of all, through Whom He also makes the eons.” - Hebrews 1:2

In the first age, the universe was created and the earth was formed with the express purpose that it be inhabited.

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), 'I am the LORD, and there is none else.'” - Isaiah 45:18 (NASB)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." - Genesis 1:1

Then the earth was disrupted.

"Enjoy the allotment of the kingdom made ready for you from the disruption of the world." - Matthew 25:34 (Concordant Version; most versions translate it "foundation" rather than "disruption", and I am not an expert on why Concordant chose to translate it "disruption", but we have further evidence of a disruption in Genesis 1:2...)

"The earth became a chaos and vacant." - Genesis 1:2 (Concordant Version: "the earth came to be a chaos and vacant")

It seems that this disruption of the earth was caused by Satan and some of his fellow spirit-beings who rebelled against God's authority.

"...From the beginning is the Adversary sinning. For this was the Son of God manifested, that He should be annulling the acts of the Adversary." - 1 John 3:8

In Matthew 25:34 (quoted above), Jesus stated that believers in this (the 3rd) age (in which we now live) would be chosen by God (Eph. 1:4) to have a kingdom over the earth during the 4th and 5th ages (still to come, which I'll explain in a moment). Jesus said that this decision to choose Christians to rule the world in the 4th and 5th ages, was made by God "from the disruption of the world".

Why did God make that decision at that particular time, at the disruption of the world, when Satan and his angels rebelled? Ephesians 3:8-11 tells us: It's because we (believers chosen by God in this age) are to be an example to these fallen spirit beings; we are the method by which God has chosen to show them His wisdom! In addition, we are actually going to judge these spirit beings! Later on I will explain in more detail what the Bible says about the effect these lessons and our judgment will have upon fallen spirit beings.

"To me, less than the least of all saints, was granted this grace: to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia (the church), the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord." - Ephesians 3:8-11

"...Are you not aware that the saints shall judge the world? ...Are you not aware that we shall be judging messengers (angels), not to mention life's affairs?" - 1 Corinthians 6:1-3

Now on with the story. After the disruption of the earth caused by the rebellion of Satan and the fallen angels (and God's decision to use believers later on to show His

wisdom to these fallen spirit beings), the earth was restored again so that human beings made in God's image could inhabit it. If you read Genesis 1:3-25 you will see a basic explanation of the process God used to restore the earth to an inhabitable state.

Then the second age began.

Age 2: Adam & Eve To the Flood

At the beginning of the second age, Adam and Eve were made in God's image. You can read about this in Genesis 1:26-27.

People began to multiply on the earth. After a while, some fallen angels left the "abode" (dwelling place) that had been assigned to them by God after the disruption, came to earth in physical form, and began to mate with human women. Their offspring were giant hybrids who filled the earth with evil and through continued multiplication polluted the DNA of mankind to the point where God had to bring a massive flood, leaving only Noah and his purely-human bloodline to "start over" repopulating the earth. You can read about this in Genesis 6:2-9:19, and you can read my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com for more details on this fascinating period of human history.

Age 3: Noah's Flood to The End of This Age

We are living through this age now. As you read the summary of this age, notice how many times mankind fails.

Abram was called by God and given promises (Gen. 12:1-3), then his descendants (Israelites) were given the Old covenant (Ex. 19:3-6). **They failed** to obey God fully. Jesus was born and ministered to Israelites (Matt. 15:24), offering them a place in the future earthly kingdom of God within their lifetimes if they meet certain conditions (Matt. 24:34, Lk. 21:32 accurately translated showing conditionality in verb tense – also see Chapter 9). Israel failed to accept Christ as their Messiah and crucified Him – **another drastic human failure**.

Jesus was raised from the dead, after which the offer of "kingdom come (within that generation if they met the conditions)" was once again made to Israel through the twelve apostles; if Israel accepted Christ as Messiah, the twelve apostles could have then gone on to make disciples of the rest of the world (Acts 1:6-8). However, Israel rejected Christ as Messiah again – **yet one more drastic human failure**. The twelve apostles stayed in Jerusalem, preaching all they knew to preach, since there was no point in going anywhere else to try to make the other nations obey Jesus' commands if Israel itself didn't accept Christ as Messiah. Obviously Christ did not return to rule the earth within their lifetimes.

They eventually realized this would be the case, but were not sure of the reason for the delay until...

Christ revealed to Paul His grand purpose of the ages for all mankind (Eph. 3:2-12). God revealed to Paul that Christ's death on the cross justified all mankind in His sight (Rom 5:18), that through the cross God is the Savior of all mankind (1 Tim. 4:10) without the help of anything any person can ever do (Eph. 2:8-9), and that God's plan is to reconcile all His creatures to Himself (Col. 1:20) and become "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Paul preached this wherever he went and also shared it with the original apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 1:11-2:16), who had never had such an idea cross their minds before (Acts 1:6-7); all the twelve apostles knew about before then was the "gospel of the (supposedly-soon-coming earthly) kingdom" of God where Israel would reign over the earth with Christ; until Paul came around they didn't know that in God's grand plan "the kingdom come" is scheduled to occur in the millennium – the 4th age.

Since Paul first preached the message Christ revealed to him, Paul's gospel (although a weakened, watered-down, and confused version of it) has been preached in many places throughout the world in this age. Some people who are chosen by God accept it (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9), but most people reject it. This is because as we shall see, **God's first goal for this age** is not to teach everyone everything, it **is to allow humanity to fail repeatedly and to try a multitude of stupid ideas that contradict His design and see their terrible consequences. (God's second goal for this age is to choose and train His primary future kingdom leadership team, Christians.)**

During the 3rd age God is allowing Satan to run the world through his handpicked human leaders (2 Cor. 4:4, Luke 4:5-6). Towards the very end of this age, God will allow Satan and his handpicked elite leadership class to finally achieve their beloved end-goal – a one-world government led by a primary public figure, the antichrist (see the book of Revelation and other Bible prophecies such as those contained in the book of Daniel). The antichrist will institute a mark on the hand or forehead (probably a barcode) without which a person will not be able to participate in the economy (Rev. 13:16-17). This is all part of the great tribulation of which Christ prophesied (Matt. 24:26-32).

During this time multitudes of people who called themselves Christians will fall away from the faith (2 Thess. 2:3) due to great confusion when unprecedented natural disasters, wars, persecution, and false signs and wonders occur; they won't understand why they haven't been raptured yet as their beloved best-selling end-time books erroneously told them would happen before anything really bad happens on earth in direct contradiction to Jesus' plain words in Matthew 24:29. See my book *End Times Explained* for more information on the relative timing of the rapture (including where it is found in the book of Revelation) and other events that will occur at the end of this age.

The bottom line is, at the end of this age the great majority of mankind will cooperate with the antichrist despite the fact that they are required to worship him. **This**

will constitute another massive human failure.

After the great tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31) God's primary leadership team for the millennium – Christians whom He has chosen by His grace and trained in this age (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) – will be caught up in the rapture (1Thess. 4:16-18, Matt. 24:29-32). Then the wrath of God will be poured out on earth for a short time (see Rev. 16 and my Easy-To-Understand Revelation Timeline in *End Times Explained*), after which a huge army will gather to fight Christ physically (Rev. 19:19). **Another massive human failure.**

Christ will return to earth, defeat His enemies easily, bind up Satan, and begin reigning over the earth with Israelites and raptured believers as His leadership team (Rev. 19:20-20:6, Ez. 36). This begins the 4th age.

By the end of the 3rd age, God's two main goals for this age will be accomplished: 1) to let humanity try a bunch of things that don't work and fail miserably, and 2) to choose and train His primary leadership/servanthood team for the next age.

Age 4: The Millennium (The 1,000-Year Reign of Christ On Earth)

The 4th age will start when the “end times” end – at the end of the current age we now live in (Rev. 20:1-6).

Throughout the 4th age, a fire will burn in Jerusalem in the Valley of Gehinnom that will burn the corpses of evil people who are given capital punishment for their evil deeds, as an example for all mankind to see (Is. 66:23-24, Mk. 9:48). Jesus will rule the earth for 1,000 years, and will benevolently but firmly make and enforce the rules during this time (Rev. 19:15 - “He will shepherd them with a rod of iron”). Israel and raptured Christians will be His leadership team; the promises God made through the prophets to Israel that they would someday rule the earth with Him will finally be fulfilled (see Rev. 20:1-6 and numerous Bible prophecies about Israel ruling the earth with Christ in the future).

It is important to note that, just like Christians (people who are given the grace to believe in the 3rd age), Israel will not be qualified on their own to rule with Christ during the 4th age. Rather it will be a supernatural work of God in their hearts that qualifies and enables them to rule with Him (Ezek. 36:21-38, Jer. 31:31-34).

It is also important to note that during the 4th age, all nations will be required to come up to Jerusalem for the same three primary feasts Israel used to have to observe (outlined in the Old Testament law) (Zech. 14:1-19). Essentially, during the 4th age the people who are alive at that time will be given the same chance Israel was given by the law in the Old Testament – to obey rules.

At the end of this 1,000 year time period, Satan will be released one more time to

deceive the world and bring them up to fight Jesus with guns again (Rev. 20:7-9). (You'd think people would remember how well this worked the first time, and be discouraged!) In a few moments I'll explain why God will allow this type of opposition one last time. But for now let's just make note of the fact that this will constitute **another massive human failure, the worst of all considering they had 1,000 years of perfect rulership to learn under and yet still failed when tempted.**

Notice that the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th ages (the three where human beings have been on earth so far in our story) have been filled with and have ended with **massive, epic failure by humanity. This is very important, and has been planned by God for a very good reason that I will explain in the next chapter.**

At the end of the 4th age, after Jesus defeats Satan one last time, all the dead people throughout history (obviously excluding those Christians and Godly people throughout history who were raptured toward the end of the 3rd age) will be raised into mortal bodies (not immortal ones like the ones those who were raptured received), and will be judged individually by Christ at the white throne. God will correct these people with the help of being able to show them the disastrous results of humanity's experimentation with methods of operating that are not God's design throughout history.

At this point "every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord" (Phil. 2:10, Rom. 14:11).

These people in mortal bodies who have just been judged and corrected by God, although now technically "saved" (from death) according to Romans 10:9-10, must experience death one more time as a lesson – just like most Christians in the 3rd age experienced death once even *after* they believed. Thus, the majority of mankind who have just been judged at the white throne and have bowed the knee in worship to Christ for the first time, will die when (or possibly just before) their physical bodies are thrown into the physical lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). *(See the Note after the Suggested Reading at the very end of this book for more details about what may happen to some of these people after the White Throne judgment, before they die again.)*

And so begins the 5th age.

Age 5: The New Jerusalem Age

The Bible calls the 5th age the "eon of the eons" or "age of the ages" as in "King of kings", denoting the greatest of a group.

"...To Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons!" - Ephesians 3:21

The 5th age will begin with a new heaven and earth more suitable for being inhabited by immortal-bodied humans (2nd Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1, Is. 11:6). Those who were chosen by God's grace to be given faith and some knowledge of His ways during the 3rd age (Christians who were raptured at the end of the 3rd age and served/led humanity with Christ for 1,000 years during the 4th age), will now party with God and Christ on the new earth for an age (Rev. 21-22).

Though it is only by God's sovereign choice (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) that they have the privilege of partaking in this "5th Age party" (my term), the party will serve as an eternal lesson to the rest of mankind of the benefits of doing things God's way even when it is difficult. (I would imagine the rest of mankind would be told about this party before they die their 2nd death, and will obviously find out about it after they are resurrected into immortal bodies at the end of it.) The party will also serve as a reward for Christians who, as a result of being chosen by God, fought against the grain of society during the 3rd age, resisted evil to a greater extent and were persecuted because of it, and in some cases suffered martyrdom.

It will be kind of like a father who says to one of his children, "I chose you and asked you to do a tougher job during this lesson-learning time than the other children; this does not make you better than them, but you did have to do some extra things the others didn't have to do, so I'm going to take you out for ice cream one day, just you and me."

Most of humanity will be dead during the 5th age (they will be unconscious, Ecc. 9:5). But at the end of it God will make His ultimate goal – the reconciliation of all creatures to Himself – a reality (Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10, 1 Cor. 15:20-28). This will be the consummation of God's plan...

The Consummation /After the Ages

At the consummation of the ages, God's goal for the five ages will be reached – He will finally be "all in all".

"At the conclusion of the eons, for the repudiation of sin through His sacrifice, is He manifest." - Hebrews 9:26

"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 vivified. Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power. For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy is being abolished: death. For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him. Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him

Who subjects all to Him, that God may be *All in all*. - 1 Corinthians 15:21-28

As Paul describes, most of humanity, who will have been dead throughout the 5th age, will be “vivified” (Greek for being resurrected and given an immortal body) at the consummation of the ages, and at that moment, the final enemy, death, will be eliminated once and for all. Because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), the sin problem will have to be taken care of before God can eliminate death. At the consummation of the ages, there will be no more sin problem in mankind, because

a) everyone will have learned their lessons at the white throne judgment and through death-lesson(s),

b) the negative influence of Satan will have been removed,

c) everyone will now be in incorruptible immortal bodies, and

d) God will have done a supernatural work in everyone – not only will each person have a less-sin-prone immortal body, but He will give each person a heart for His design and a resistance to sin that humans do not have in the 3rd age. (God is easily capable of doing this, see Ezekiel 36:21-38 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 for example; and keep reading to discover the logical reason why He did *not* give humanity this supernaturally-increased heart for His ways and resistance to sin *any earlier*.)

These four factors will make it possible for God to eliminate death – abolishing it so that no one ever experiences that state again – once and for all (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Col. 1:20, 2 Tim. 4:10).

At this point God will have reconciled all things in heaven and on earth to Himself (Col. 1:20), and He will have administered the ages according to His good pleasure and kind intention (Eph. 1:10).

At the consummation of the ages God will for the first time be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). He will have reached His goal. He will have brought humanity through its “rebellious teenager” “I’m smarter than God and can figure out my own way of doing things” phase. After the consummation of the ages, life can *really* begin for humanity!

I challenge you to look at the story of the ages above, and try to get into God’s head. Try to think of *why* He is doing things the way He’s doing them.

You see, until you know *why* someone does what they do, you don’t truly know that person. Most Christians subsist on the “what” level of knowing God, never daring to ask “why” because the “what” itself (eternal punishment) is so horrific! Because they’re reading mistranslated Bibles and have inherited a few pagan doctrines, they have the “what God will do” part of God’s grand plan completely wrong (eternal punishment); so naturally they’re

scared of asking “why”, because it just doesn't make any sense for a loving God to create billions of precious humans knowing beforehand that most of them would end up burning and screaming forever.

Many Christians are scared to ask God “Why hell?” because they sense that something about the “what” they’ve been taught isn’t quite right. At the same time, they're scared to open a can of worms that might expose a weakness in their belief system, because God makes so much sense to them in every other way, and many believers have had powerful personal and even supernatural experiences with God. Others may be scared to think about the concept of eternal punishment in rational terms, or ask questions like, “Who would want to serve a God that creates billions of people knowing beforehand most of them would end up being tortured forever?” simply because they are afraid of being wrong. No one likes to find out they've believed a lie, so they would rather blindly cling to what they believe than test it, examine it, and think about it rationally in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Because of these factors, many Christians rationalize that God just doesn’t want us to know “why”. They just don’t “go there” in their thoughts, conversation, or preaching. Others embrace the eternal punishment doctrine and dare to talk about it a lot, but totally avoid the “why” part of it, because it makes no sense to any thinking person. (Some do try to come up with arguments as to why God would create people knowing beforehand they'd end up in hell, such as “God doesn't send you to hell, you send yourself”, etc., but these arguments hold no water – God created all of the universe and life, He set up the rules; there is no logical explanation why a benevolent God would set up the rules in such a way as the false doctrine of eternal punishment teaches.)

In short, the false pagan-inherited doctrine of eternal punishment makes God into a confusing monster and His plan into a nonsensical mess with no logical reasoning behind it.

But now that you realize hell is a mistranslation and God is the Savior of all (1 Tim. 4:10), you have a chance to look over God’s plan for the ages and **understand His logical reasoning for doing everything He’s doing. You have a chance to truly understand God.**

So here, in the next chapter of this book, let’s do that. Let's understand what God is thinking. Let’s examine *why* He's doing (and allowing) everything He's doing (and allowing), as revealed in the accurately translated Bible.

Chapter 8

WHY God Planned the 5 Ages The Way He Did

As I stated at the end of the last chapter, God has a logical reason for everything He is doing and allowing throughout the five ages of human history. **I cannot emphasize enough that God has a good reason for everything He does and allows in human history.** He is allowing Satan and his handpicked rulers to run the world in this age *for a reason*. He is allowing a certain amount of pain, suffering, and early death in this age *for a reason*. He is allowing humanity to try all sorts of stupid things that don't work in this age *for a reason*.

Once you are reading an accurately translated Bible, you can finally begin to understand God's logical reasoning for what He does and allows as the ages unfold. What a relief to know that God's reasoning makes sense to the thinking human!

Who would want to serve a God who holds His intelligent creations to one standard of morality and logic – a standard He built into us – but operates by a completely different standard Himself, which He is unwilling to explain to us? I would not want to serve such a God! Thankfully, the God revealed in the accurately translated Bible is *logical*, His plan demonstrates that He holds Himself to the same moral and logical standard He holds us to, and (as you'll see in this chapter), nothing He does or allows isn't something any loving, wise parent couldn't understand.

So now that we can see the outline of the five ages of human history revealed in the accurately translated Bible, we can finally answer the big “Why” questions about life and God's plan.

Let's start with what is probably the biggest “why” question in the minds of both believers and nonbelievers in this age: “Why does God allow so much suffering?”

Most people cannot fathom the “why” of suffering because they think this lifetime and this age is all there is. If that was my perspective, I wouldn't understand “why suffering” either! Christians have some comfort in the fact that they believe their suffering will end someday, but what do we think about the suffering of others who are not saved in this age? Thankfully, the accurately translated Bible teaches that their suffering will someday end too! When we gain this perspective, we can suddenly see that God has an *educational*

reason for allowing so much suffering and early death in the existence of so many billions of people throughout history in this age.

I should remind you that Christians have the wisdom of God's Word, the power of prayer and faith, and a down payment of the future coming Kingdom of God on earth – the Holy Spirit – to help us out in this age. There are many promises in God's Word that apply to the Godly in this age – promises that He will help us in various ways, now. See Psalm 91 for just one example. The combination of ways in which God helps those who live with His wisdom and call out to Him in faith, often enables the wise believer in this age to rise above many of the problems that might plague a non-believer. But in the grand scheme of things this is but a tiny Band-Aid on the all the world's problems. And that's OK with God during this age, for reasons you are about to discover.

A large part of human suffering in this age is due to our own sin (stupidity, failure to operate the way God designed us to). But the Bible tells us clearly that it's not only humans doing damage to each other – God is also allowing Satan (whose job description is to steal, kill, and destroy – see John 10:10) to run the world in this age. But why is He allowing this? Why is God allowing so much suffering in this age – and seemingly, even encouraging it by allowing Satan to operate so freely?

Romans 11:32 is our answer. It says,

“God has shut up all in disobedience (some translations say stubbornness) that He may show mercy to all.”

This verse is completely ignored by many Christians because they cannot possibly understand it. It is incomprehensible to them because they are caught up in false beliefs like “eternal punishment”, “we ourselves choose whether to get saved or not”, etc. But once you get rid of the hell lie and realize God is the Savior of all (which He does all on His own without any help from us), you can suddenly begin to comprehend this amazing verse of Scripture.

So let's think about Romans 11:32 for a moment. *Why would God temporarily trap humanity into “stubbornness” - stupidity, operating differently than He designed them to? And why is it so important to God that He show mercy to all of us without allowing any of us to “fix ourselves”?*

The Bible itself tells us the answer, and it is profound but simple: “so that no man may boast”. 1 Corinthians 1:25, 29-31 says,

“...The foolishness of God is wiser than men...so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus...so that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord’.”

God is going to a lot of trouble **to teach each and every human being that they are not smarter than He is**. You see, as long as a person can boast, they think they're

smart. If you can fix yourself, you think you're smart. If you succeed on your own, you think you're smart. *It's only when you become a total failure and reach out for mercy and help, that you realize you are not as smart or capable as you thought.*

What God is doing with humanity is simple. He's just being a wise father who allows His kids to get into a mess of trouble through their own stupidity, and even allows a "bad kid" (Satan) to encourage them in their stupidity and to enhance the difficulty of the situations they get themselves into for a while – *all to show them that He is smarter than they are. To humble them. To teach them that the instructions given to them by their Creator are wise instructions after all, and ought to be followed carefully rather than despised or thought of as "optional".*

You see, as soon as God created mankind He had a problem – He knew, "These intelligent beings are going to want to try many different ways of operating other than the way I've designed them to operate." So He basically said, "Let's get this lesson out of the way". So He *"locked up all in disobedience that He may show mercy to all"* (Rom. 11:32) thus trapping the human race in frustration.

Now, as soon as a member of the human race says, "I'm not smart on my own, I don't want to live by my own rules, I want to live by God's design", in essence declaring Jesus is Lord, that person has applied what Jesus did on the cross (pay the price for all the sin of the human race) to their own life, and they qualify to "be saved" (Rom. 10:8-9) from death at the next resurrection to immortal bodies God has scheduled on His timeline. *Only people who recognize that God is smarter than they are, and that His design is best, are "saved" from death and receive an immortal body at the next opportunity.*

As we've discussed, some, by God's grace and choosing, will come to this realization in this age (Eph. 1:4), and most will come to this realization later at the white throne judgment after the 4th age.

Do you see how trapping the human race in disobedience/stubbornness/frustration and making "the rules" (my phrase) such that you can only exit that frustration (by getting an immortal body) by recognizing God is smarter than you are, accomplishes God's purpose perfectly? God the father uses the process outlined in Romans 11:32 and 1 Corinthians 25-31 to remove all pride from His kids – so once the lesson has been learned, *it never has to be learned again, and the kids habitually rely on what Dad says from then on.*

Human history is being wisely manipulated by God so that by the time the five ages are over with, "sin" (stupidity, operating contrary to the Designer's design) is no longer appealing to anyone! The whole thing's a set up! Don't get mad because the set up requires some temporary pain and suffering for the world, *because it's actually saving us a lot of pain and suffering in the long run, in the grand scheme of things.* When God had kids He knew the same thing every parent knows when they have kids – there are going to be many rebellious moments and eventually the kid is going to have to learn through *painful experience (falling flat on his face when rebelling against Dad's wisdom)* that "Dad knows best".

The thing is, God is raising billions of kids, not just a few like you and I! So it takes some *time* to let these billions of people have many different experiences and try many different experiments with ways of living apart from God's optimal design, in order for all humanity to be able to look back on it all later (at the white throne) and finally realize, “Oh, yeah, I guess God's design is best after all. Who would'a thunk?!?”

This difficult age in which we live is going to make great TV when we look back on it. Not for entertainment, but for learning lessons. This whole age is basically just one big “mankind repeatedly falling flat on its face as it insists it is smarter than God and tries a whole bunch of things that are different than God’s design”. At the white throne judgment God is going to be able to play a “videotape” (if you know what I mean) of all of human history, and everyone will be able to see all the different things that were tried by humanity and encouraged by Satan.

For example, we’ll see how all leadership and political systems (including “democracy”) either started as or degenerated into “exploitation of the masses by the rich and powerful” systems *because of corruption, which is a fancy word for selfishness and sin – human willingness to operate differently than God designed us to operate, making selfish choices instead of loving ones.*

We’ll see how our Satan-encouraged “experiments” with lifestyles, habits, ways of speaking, ill-advised ways of trying to fulfill God-given desires (like sexuality), etc. all ended in pain. All hearts will be laid bare, no one will be able to hide or mask their feelings anymore, and what worked (what brought true peace, satisfaction, joy, etc.) and what didn’t work will be obvious to all. What brought blessing and true happiness will be clearly contrasted with what brought misery or a “second-best” level of satisfaction. The wisdom of God’s operating instructions will be exceedingly obvious to everyone. The light and understanding that will be obvious to everyone at the white throne after watching God’s “videotape” of human history played out before their eyes, will be a stark contrast to circumstances in this age, when there is much darkness, lack of understanding, and lack of wisdom.

Why God Doesn’t “Prove” Himself To Everyone In This Age

I have just answered for you the age-old question “If God exists, why doesn’t He just write His name in the sky?” (Some would say, “Just look at creation!” of course, but obviously that has not been enough to convince many billions of people.) God has not written His name in the sky on purpose. He is letting darkness and ignorance and stupidity and sin and exploitation and selfishness reign in this age for a reason – *so we see the consequences of it. So that at the white throne when we watch the “videotape”, we see the results of it in living color so vividly that we never go back to it again, the same way burning your hand on a stove burner is enough to make you extremely careful around stove burners from then on.*

God has not written His name in the sky in this age, so He can take care of the sin/rebellion/pride/“We’re-smarter-than-God-and-can-succeed-by-doing-things-our-own-way-that-we-come-up-with-ourselves” problem *by letting it run its course and letting its natural consequences become more and more obvious*. This is the same way a wise parent of a 21-year-old handles their child's stupid choices at that age.

This is why God is going to allow the antichrist to reign for a short time at the end of this age, as the ultimate eternal reminder to all humanity of the ugly results of “man ruling himself apart from God”. After the antichrist debacle/disappointment (he will promise a wonderful life, world peace, and prosperity to everyone and it will really just be Orwellian feudalism,) no one will ever be able to say to God, “But you never *really* let us succeed at our *ultimate* idea of doing it *our* way apart from You!” or “If you really let us try it our own way and succeed at our ideal apart from You, everyone would see that we’re smarter than You!” The end of this age will be ample proof to anyone with half a brain that humanity doing things its own way is much less to be preferred than humanity doing things God's way.

Of course, humanity will temporarily forget this at the end of the millennium when Satan is released to deceive the world again for the last time. So let's move past this (3rd) age, and think about why God will do things the way He's going to do them in the 4th age – the millennium. Jesus is going to tie up Satan during the next age and provide the world with perfect leadership for 1,000 years – only to release Satan again (Rev. 20:2, 7-10) at the end of it. At which point all or most of humanity will rebel against Him *again!*

Huh? Why? Think about it. Think about *why* God would do and allow this. Again, you don't truly understand God until you know *why* He does things!

The ultimate example of mankind's self-failure apart from God will be when, after 1,000 years of perfect, wonderful, benevolent, non-corrupt, beneficial, unimaginable-prosperity-bringing, peaceful leadership by Christ (and His immortal-bodied raptured leadership team), He releases Satan again, and what does humanity do? Do they say, “No Satan, we're going to obey our perfectly wise, honest, benevolent, and just ruler so as to continue to enjoy the prosperity and peace we've enjoyed for 1,000 years”? Nope. They allow themselves to be deceived by Satan again to the point where *they come up to Jerusalem to fight Jesus with guns – again*. (See Rev. 20:9.) It didn't work last time (see Rev. 19:19-21), so why would they think it would work the next time?

The whole thing – the whole “allowing Satan to run rampant in the 3rd age and again at the end of the 4th age”, etc. – is designed not only to point out the ugly results of operating differently than God designed us to operate, but **even more importantly, to make it ultra-clear that no man can ever boast in God's sight**. Every single person who has ever lived, when watching or remembering the “videotape” of the 3rd age and the end of the 4th age, will wholeheartedly say, “*Yeah, if I had been living then, I probably would have been just as stupid. If not, it would have only been by God's grace. God's way works, because He designed and*

created us to operate that way. I don't want to do anything, ever again, that would cause the types of problems caused by sin!"

You see, after billions of people are given 1,000 years of wonderful leadership and circumstances to learn and get it right during the 4th age, and then promptly fail the minute Satan is released again, no one who has ever lived, regardless of *when* they lived or what *circumstances* they lived under, will be able to honestly claim to God, "Well, I wouldn't have done that. I would have gotten it right all by myself." Yeah, right. You're telling me you're better than a few billion other people who lived under perfect leadership in the 4th age – that you're uniquely smart and capable and wonderful compared to them? Right. C'mon. No one will dare say to God, "If You would've given me better circumstances to live in, I would've gotten it right." Because billions of people *will* be given perfect circumstances to live in during the 4th age, and as soon as they get the chance and/or the slightest encouragement, they will screw up again!

*Do you see how the videotape of human history God is preparing is designed to remove all pride, boasting, and "I think I'm great and smart" attitude from humanity? By locking all humanity up in stubbornness/disobedience/failure, and making it so that everyone eventually admits they need God's mercy (Rom. 11:32), God is *removing from humanity all temptation to boast – to think we're smarter than Him!* (1 Cor. 1:30-31)*

And when we no longer tempted to think we're smarter than Him, (combined with the fact that Satan's negative influence will be permanently removed, and we will all be in incorruptible immortal bodies), *we'll naturally and habitually live the way God designed us to live without being tempted to try things another way – we'll have already learned, "That's a stupid idea"!*

I want to give you something else to think about, and hopefully it will help you to learn to ponder *why* God would do this or that. Remember, you don't know God until you know *why* He does what He does. Think about this next subject for a few seconds, and see if you come up with the same answer I did. The question is, "Why would God make sexuality, reproduction, and marriage a part of this age and the next, but then remove it when we get our immortal bodies?" (Matt. 22:23-30)

Also ask yourself, "Why would God make such a big deal out of sexual sin in this (and the next) age, only to discard sexual functions in humans altogether in the last age and beyond the consummation?" Think for a minute...God always has a *good reason* for what He does...

As far as we know, sexuality and reproduction will not be a part of the future of humanity after the next age. It's possible that might change after the consummation, since we know very little about life after that (except that God will be "all in all" and all will be reconciled to Him – 1 Cor. 15:28, Col. 1:20). However, I doubt God would reintroduce sexuality and reproduction, because then He'd have a whole new set of billions of humans who would have to be taught the same lessons He just taught the last set! But it's possible I

suppose.

Would you like to hear my thoughts on it? I figure God created sexuality and reproduction as a part of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th ages, for a couple reasons:

One, it's a good way of getting billions of human beings into the world over time, each one unique.

Two, giving billions of married couples the chance to raise children over thousands of years of time (as opposed to just bringing billions of humans into existence all at once), gives every living human the experience of being raised by parents (and/or other "more developed/smarter" adults) who have to try to teach and guide them despite the fact that they have free will. Also, every human being will have (or be familiar with others who have) the experience of being a parent themselves. Later on, at the white throne, this experience will help each person understand God's almost identical challenge in trying to raise billions of humans. Imagine if God had just created billions of people at one time, like He did Adam and Eve – humanity would have no experience of parenthood! And therefore it would almost impossible for us to understand God's challenge in getting us to live wisely! But the experience of (or familiarity with) the challenges of parenthood make God's plan easy to understand. That's why I always say, "God is not doing or allowing anything that any wise parent couldn't understand."

Third, romantic love is a picture of God's relationship to His bride, a "mystery" to which Paul refers (in Eph. 5:32) and which I don't claim to completely understand but which God obviously felt was important to illustrate to mankind through the institution of marriage in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th ages.

Fourth, romantic love is a fun thing to look forward to, strive for, and experience (it's best in it's God-designed context of marriage of course) in this age, regardless of one's social standing, which helps offset the other troubles of this age somewhat, bringing a measure of pleasure amidst the pain if you understand what I mean.

Fifth, the institution of marriage (the natural outworking of romantic love) creates a family unit, which is the ideal way of raising children in a world ruled by Satan because it creates a support mechanism. Of course Satan has been allowed to sabotage many marriages and families, which causes great pain, but this just serves to highlight the importance of doing things the way God designed them to be done. Which brings up the sixth reason I can think of why God would ordain sexuality and reproduction, family life etc. and then remove it later (although I'm sure in the 5th age and beyond the consummation we'll still have close relationships with our families, spouses, and kids).

The sixth reason I can think of why God would ordain sexuality and marriage in this age and the next, is that the pain and problems caused by sexual sin in these two ages (especially this 3rd age) will be an excellent illustration for God to point to later on, of *the*

importance of doing the right thing even when there is strong desire involved.

The strongest desires in mankind – for wealth (which is just a way to get pleasure), sex (which is a strong pleasure), and power (which is just a vehicle to get wealth and sex) – seem to cause most of the problems on this earth because they are the easiest entry point for selfishness. It is easiest for people to make selfish decisions that benefit themselves (even if only temporarily) while hurting others, in these three areas. When these desires overpower the deepest desire of humans, to *love and be loved*, sin – a breaking of God's design for human operation – is born.

You see, God must have a strong “section” of His “human history videotape” to demonstrate to humanity at the white throne that when He says something is good, it will bring joy, peace, and true happiness, and when He says something is bad, it will not bring those things. At the white throne, the negative consequences of sexual sin (which are ignored by Satan's media in this age, but are nonetheless real) will be an excellent illustration of the fact that we should listen to our Designer. The *true (not media-manipulated)* happiness of those who lived by God's design with their sexuality, etc., will be compared with the *true (not media-manipulated)* happiness of those who did not. The truth will come to light.

When everyone is in an immortal body and there is no sexuality, reproduction, or family life as we know it today (although as I said I'm sure we'll have great close relationships with those who used to be part of our lives in this way), there will obviously be no sexual temptation. But humans will surely still have desires. And because we've all watched “the videotape” of human history and seen how many bad problems the mishandling of a strong desire (sexuality) can cause, we'll remember our lesson – and handle any type of strong desires we're faced with from then on, much better.

Some of you Christians may be thinking, “I understand some of these basic 'what is good vs. what is bad' lessons already...why can't God just teach everybody faster?” OK, you probably understand some of these lessons (even if you may struggle to live them perfectly in your mortal body) *because you are a Christian*. But just go out there and read an article or a blog or watch a TV show made by totally ungodly people who think the Bible is a bunch of bunk and all “God's rules of behavior” are silly and stifling. *Those people are why it takes a while*. And we Christians must always remember, we're not one of those people *only by the grace of God*. The famous phrase “If not for the grace of God, there go I” is Scriptural – see Ephesians 1:4-5.

As strange as it may sound (especially to a Christian who has been falsely indoctrinated with the “life is a battle between good and evil which God does not have control over” mindset), *God also needs many of these evil people on His videotape lesson*. Why? *So He can show the results of their lives – with all “game faces”, pretenses, and “pretending to be happy” stripped away – to all mankind later*. Why do you think God is allowing so many people to do so many evil things in this age, without stepping in and stopping it all? *So that a great variety of people who lived in a great variety of circumstances have a great variety of human activity to see on the*

videotape at the white throne and say, "OK, this was an example of going against God's way – and it didn't work very well at all! But over here is an example of doing it God's way – and it worked out quite well!"

I'm not saying it is God's perfect or ultimate will for people to sin, but rather that He's obviously passively allowing many people to be totally ungodly in this age. He's allowing it, and even trapping humanity as a whole in its own stubbornness for a while (Rom. 11:32), and even allowing Satan to encourage this stubbornness for a time (2 Cor. 4:4), *for a reason. He needs it for His videotape.* He needs human history in the 3rd age to be one big, exhaustively detailed, "These are the consequences of every type of rebellion against My design you could ever imagine, and they are ugly!" lesson.

This "ultimate example of stupidity" is the same reason God will allow this age to end with an evil bang (the antichrist, mark of the beast, etc.). It will be the ultimate example of man ruling himself apart from God, and no one will ever be able to deny the disastrous results of it. No one will ever be able to say to God, "Hey God, you never let us *really* try it our own way apart from You, You never let us fully succeed at it to see how it would work." All such stupidity will be silenced forever when mankind views the "videotape" of human history which includes many personal examples and one worldwide example of "ultimate anti-God's-design living".

Another thing we need to realize is that God is getting the necessary lessons of this age out of the way as quickly as possible. Remember, He's got billions of people to teach, most of whom have only lived a short 70 years in a great variety of circumstances, so He's got to create a "videotape" of human history that includes many different "scenes" so as to be as convincing as it needs to be, so that no matter who sees it, they'll have no doubt that doing things apart from God's design is just plain stupid. For this reason, God is allowing Satan to rule and strongly affect things in this age (2 Cor. 4:4), to hand-pick the world's leaders (Luke 4:5-6), to encourage humanity to try as many stupid and/or inadequate ideas as fast as possible, and to enhance the negative consequences of these bad ideas.

But God is going to end this difficult period as soon as the "videotape" has enough "scenes". He's doing three things that drastically accelerate the creation of this "trying a bunch of stupid ideas" videotape:

1) As I mentioned, He's allowing Satan to rule this age (2 Cor. 4:4).

2) He's not only allowing Satan to handpick the world's leaders (Luke 4:5-6), but He's also allowing many of the world's leaders to be the literal seed of Satan and fallen angels and/or demons – beings that are not fully human, who have a much greater propensity for evil than the average human. (For more details, see my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* on www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com and the many Scriptures I quote there.) Exaggerated evil at the top of the human power-pyramid, and hybrid beings with a greater than average propensity for evil being allowed to purposefully propagate evil on

earth, greatly accelerates the rate at which stupid ideas are attempted and carried out in human society at large.

3) He's going to bring a heavenly body from space (probably a dwarf star) near earth near the end of this age to speed up the whole thing, create one last super-convincing "scene" from this age, and get this age over with. The natural disasters caused by this "star Wormwood" (Rev. 6:12-17, 8:6-12) will cause such chaos and desperation on earth that it will enable the Satanic elite to finally reach their beloved goal of forming a one-world government led by a "philosopher king", the antichrist. If it were not for the natural disasters brought on by Wormwood, humanity would probably fight the elite one-world government goal for a long time, but at the same time would not be able to remove the elite's exploitation from their backs either (because the problem is selfishness/sin which God is purposefully not allowing us to save ourselves from, lest we boast and start thinking we're smarter than Him). So Wormwood showing up will save humanity many (hundreds/thousands of?) years of struggle and pain. (See my book *End Times Explained* for more details on star Wormwood and the relative timing of major end time events.)

God doesn't enjoy watching humanity suffer, even if it's only temporary suffering, any more than a good Dad enjoys watching his kids suffer through a temporarily painful lesson. And just like any good, wise, loving Dad, as soon as He knows the kids have learned the lesson, He'll alleviate the pain of the situation. But it's admittedly hard for us, as we live our daily lives, to remember that God's grand plan spans many thousands of years, and to be patient as it unfolds. In the same way that sitting alone in a room for a half hour seems like a long time to a small child, or being grounded for a weekend seems like a long time to a teenager, so this age seems like a long time to us. Our lifetimes seem long to us, but they are really a snap of the fingers compared to the endless life in incorruptible immortal bodies we'll experience with God as "all in all", that we'll all get to enjoy after the consummation of the ages.

After a few million years of living in perfect harmony and love and prosperity with each other, is anyone going to care that he/she went through some pain for a measly 70-80 years, millions of years in the past? Is anyone going to care that their "first difficult life in the most evil age was cut short when they died in an earthquake" or that "they were hurt or sick in their first difficult life in the most evil age" or that "they were in a wheelchair in their first difficult life in the most evil age" or that "they were poor in their first difficult life in the most evil age"? Nope. No one's going to care, any more than I care that I missed my friend's birthday party when I was five. Not that God doesn't care greatly about the pain we go through now (and comfort us and help us overcome it and all that good stuff, especially for those who know Him in this age). It's just that in the grand scheme of things it really is just a blip on the radar screen of immortality.

It just so happens that what we're living through right now, the 3rd age, is the most difficult age, when God is allowing humanity to try all sorts of stupidity and (with the encouragement of Satan) to create all sorts of problems they can't solve on their own. So

when Dad steps in and saves the day at the opportune moment (twice – once at the end of this age, and once at the end of the millennium, see Rev. 20) and has a long heart-to-heart talk with each kid (the white throne judgment), the kids will finally learn “Dad knows best. We’re not smarter than Him.” Then we can all get on with our lives and enjoy Dad and each other. Won’t that be nice!

God’s plan is going to work. It’s going to work really, really well. So well, in fact, that the sin problem will be permanently removed, which will make the permanent removal of the death state for all mankind possible, which will in turn enable God to be “all in all”. (See 1 Cor. 15:20-28).

I have one more fascinating question to answer before I end this chapter:

What will happen to Satan, fallen angels, demons, and hybrid creatures?

Have you ever heard a little kid in Sunday school ask, “Is the devil gonna get saved?” It brings a smile to my face to think about it, because little kids can’t see any reason why a nice big strong God couldn’t or wouldn’t want to eventually be friends with everybody! They don’t have any “advanced” religious teaching to contradict their built-in common-sense logical concept of what God should be like!

For this last Biblical fact I’m going to point out, *you are going to have to keep your “big picture, grand scheme of things” glasses on.* If you focus on all the little (in the grand scheme of things) problems in this world or in your life in this age, you are going to get mad at me (or actually at the Bible, because I’m just going to quote it). But if you keep the big picture – God’s grand design for the ages – in your mind, this last Biblical piece of the puzzle shouldn’t bother you too much. Again, all I ask is that you “test everything” I say “and hold on to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

God Doesn’t ONLY Want To Reconcile Human Beings To Himself!

Colossians 1:19-20 says, “*For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him (Christ), and through Him (Christ) to reconcile all things to Himself...whether things on earth or things in heaven.*”

Romans 11:36 says, “*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.*”

1 Corinthians 15:28 says, “*When all things are subjected to Him (Christ), then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.*”

Philippians 2:10-11 says, “*At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Ephesians 3:10 says, "*So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." (See also Eph. 6:12 to understand that these "rulers and authorities" are spirit beings.)*

Can it be? Is God saying that even demons, fallen angels, and hybrid beings (see my article *The Weirdest Truth In the Bible* at www.BreakthroughBibleInsights.com for more info on them) will be reconciled to Him eventually? Well, I invite you to read the Biblical statements I just quoted above, and decide for yourself. Also remember that Revelation 20:10 does *not* say Satan and the false prophet and the antichrist will be in the lake of fire "forever and ever" – that is a very inaccurate translation; it says they'll be there "for the eons of the eons", which is a phrase like "the King of kings" which refers to the greatest of a group. In other words, this verse is saying they'll be in the lake of fire during the last two ages, the greatest period of the ages (the antichrist and the false prophet will be there for the 4th and 5th ages, and Satan will join them for the 5th age).

So what happens when "the ages of the ages" are finished, at the consummation of the ages? Well, the Bible tells us. "All things whether in heaven" (spirit beings – God is obviously not talking about the moon and planets) "or on earth" will be "reconciled to Him" (Col. 1:19-20). God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

2 Peter 2:4 gives us even more detail on what God will do with fallen angels. Translated accurately, it reads,

"For if God spares not sinning angels, but thrusting them into gloomy caverns tartarusing, gives them up to be kept for chastening judging..." (The Concordant Version)

To "chasten" means to "correct". It is the kind of "judgment" you give to your child – corrective judgment. And in the case of these particular fallen angels (for more details about them see the article I mentioned a few moments ago), God states plainly in this verse that their future judgment will be *corrective*. This makes sense, because in Colossians 1:19-20 God states plainly that all things in heaven and in earth will be reconciled to Him.

Think about it – why not? Why wouldn't God eventually reconcile all heavenly beings to Himself as well? Although they are not created in the image of God as humans are, He still created them. He still brought them into existence. Again, *why would a God who claims to "be" (the very essence of) love (see 1 Jn. 4:8) bring these creatures into existence knowing beforehand that the creature would end up separated from Him forever?*

That wouldn't make sense, would it? So of course the Bible doesn't teach it! The (accurately translated) Bible only teaches things that make sense!

(I need to make it clear that the reason God's true plan for His creatures and creation ultimately makes perfect sense to us, His creatures capable of intelligence and

understanding, is not because “we’re smart and in our pride we insist God must make sense to us” but rather because “He created us to know and understand Him and therefore His plan, nature and actions ultimately make sense and line up with the common sense, logic, and sense of justice He built in to us.”)

Some of you are thinking, “John, are you saying the devil is going to eventually be reconciled to God?”

Well, I invite you to read 1 Corinthians 15:28, Colossians 1:19-20, and Ephesians 3:10 a few times, and decide for yourself. I’m just quoting Scripture and inviting you to make up your own mind. Take these Biblical statements into account and interpret them accurately to the best of your ability. And I would also simply remind you that if God does choose to reconcile Satan to Himself in the future, that doesn’t change the fact that right now Satan is our enemy, and we are to treat him as such, giving him, fallen angels, demons, and their influence no entrance into our lives in any way shape or form.

Regardless of what the ultimate destiny of Satan is, there is no doubt about the fact that the popular conception of a big battle between God and Satan, with God trying His hardest but losing (many more people remain unreconciled to God than are reconciled to Him in this age, let’s be honest), *is a complete myth with no basis in the Bible*. Yes, Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy, while Christ came that we might have abundant life (John 10:10); and of course Satan’s methods of operation on earth *in this age* (and at the end of the next) are totally opposed to God’s. But that doesn’t mean *God is surprised by this*. He’s **allowing** Satan to do what he’s doing in this age **for a reason**. It is all part of His plan for the ages – what Ephesians 1:9-10 calls His “kind intention” and His “administration of the fullness of the times, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on earth”. *God is administrating – planning and guiding – human history. God is, and has always been in total control on a macro level.*

God is allowing Satan certain leeway during this age (and will do so again at the end of the next age, see Rev. 20:7). Why, you ask? Well, He’s allowing Satan to be an *accelerator* for His purposes in this age. As we’ve seen, one of God’s main goals for this age is to let humanity try a great variety of things that are contrary to His design – so we can see how lousy they turn out! Satan’s influence *speeds up this experimentation*. God does not enjoy watching mankind suffer, and He wants to get through this necessary “experimentation apart from God to see how it turns out” phase as quickly as possible, just like a loving earthly father wants his 19-yr-old’s “rebellious and making my own big decisions, largely the opposite of what my father has counseled, and then finally seeing how stupid that is and realizing Dad was right” phase to end as quickly as possible.

My friends, God could quickly and easily prove to everyone exactly who He is at any moment. But if He did that during this age, it would interrupt and ruin His plan! It would be like a father never leaving his child’s side from the age of 18 to 28; there is no room for the child to learn by choosing and experimenting on his own, and seeing the results for

himself.

The existence and activity of Satan in this age (and at the end of the next) accomplishes two important purposes for God: *it accelerates the stupid rebellion of mankind against God thus allowing Him to get it (and the pain that accompanies it) over with more quickly, and it highlights the negative consequences of stupidity so as to enhance the eternal lesson that rebellion against God is stupid.*

Then, after Satan's activity on earth during this age helps God accomplish one of His purposes for this age (as an accelerator of a variety of stupid ways of doing things), Satan will be bound temporarily; God will prevent him from operating for 1,000 years. Tying up Satan at the beginning of the millennium will create a great atmosphere for mankind. Mankind will live under the perfect leadership of Christ for 1,000 years, without any supernatural negative influence! Yet at the end of it, when God releases Satan one more time, mankind will immediately fall for his lies again and try all sorts of stupid things that don't work and have horrible consequences, yet again!

After mankind falls for Satan's deceptions *again*, no one will ever be able to say to God, "Well, You never let us try to be smart under good conditions. We could've figured it out ourselves, fixed ourselves and done great if you would've just given us good circumstances." That lame excuse will be removed forever.

So we see that both periods of Satan's activity – throughout the 3rd age and at the end of the 4th – are necessary in God's plan, as is the period of rest from Satan's activity during the 4th age. If God were to skip the 4th age and Satan's release (along with man's fall) at the end of it, and just jump straight to the white throne judgment right after the 3rd age in which we now live, there would probably be many people at the white throne who would argue, "But hey, I was given horrible circumstances to live under! Satan was the god of the age when I was living. He and his demons and fallen angels and the world's leadership influenced me and everyone around me negatively in a very powerful way! *But if I had been given better circumstances to live under, I would've done well – I could've figured it out myself – I could've fixed myself, I could've done everything right, I wouldn't have failed.*" God can't allow this argument to stand. *He* knows that argument doesn't hold water, but *He must prove it to all mankind.* So He *must* introduce another segment of history – the millennium and the failure at the end of it – to do that.

When mankind at the white throne watches the "videotape" of the millennium and mankind's hard fall as soon as Satan is released again at the end of it, every single human being will understand that even if they personally had been given the "perfect circumstances" to live under, they *also* would have fallen away when Satan was released – just like those who lived during the millennium. No one is going to dare to argue that they are better or smarter than several billion humans who fell at the end of the millennium.

It is absolutely vital to God that humanity learns the lesson that **"every single**

person, no matter what conditions they were given to live under, is a failure apart from God and could never, no matter what the conditions, have figured out on their own how to be smarter than God". This is what Romans 11:32 means: "God has shut all up in stubbornness (or disobedience) so that He may show mercy to all." Why does God go to so much trouble to make everyone admit they're a failure and realize they need His mercy?

Because it is of utmost importance to God that He remove from humanity all *pride*. Pride says, "I'm smarter than God, I don't need Him, I can figure out ways of doing things on my own that will work better than God's way". Every single human being must be completely broken of this thought pattern! Every possible excuse must be removed! There must not be a single human being who could ever try to argue that they can figure out a better way to operate than their Designer's way. Pride says, "I know better than my designer." That is why it must be broken. *And when all pride ("I'm smarter than God and can figure things out on my own that will work better than His way") is removed, only then will sin will be removed!*

Sin is simply operating differently than we were designed to operate. Sin cannot be removed until every single person who has ever lived realizes with the utmost clarity that it is 100% *stupid* to operate in a way we were not designed to operate. Once all mankind has that realization (and once they all have incorruptible immortal bodies and the negative influence of Satan is removed once and for all), God can *then* abolish death, which is the natural consequence of sin (Rom. 6:23), because sin/pride will be no more.

So you see that although God surely does not enjoy watching people hurt for the few short years of their lives in this age due to their own stupidity run rampant combined with Satan's evil-accelerating activity, God must still allow it, because Satan's work is *necessary* for God's to reach His goals for this age and the next, in order to teach mankind the lessons He must teach them. God must teach every human being who has ever lived to rely exclusively on His design and way of operating. In other words, He must teach us to be humble and "holy" which means being set apart to God and His intelligently-designed way of doing things, etc., so we can all live "happily ever after" without sinning against Him and each other, after the consummation of the ages.

In order to teach mankind to rely on Him and that only His design is best, God had to have an *opponent* to encourage a great variety of things that were *contrary* to His way, so that mankind could get through this experimentation phase as quickly as possible and see the horrible consequences of their anti-God experimentation as vividly as possible.

Friends, Satan is an amoeba on a bacterium on a speck of dirt under God's fingernail. God created him. What competition could a creature be for his Creator? None. **There is no real competition between God and Satan.** What competition is a BMW for its designer? The designer can remove the key from the ignition at any moment. The creation is infinitely weaker than the creator.

Yeah, Satan is trying his best to oppose God right now, but God watches him like you watch an ant cross the sidewalk in front of you. Satan is infinitesimally weak compared to God. God is just allowing him to fulfill his role for the time being. As I said earlier, all the conflict, problems, etc. of the first three ages (and the end of the fourth) are *just a set-up* by God to teach His creatures the *lesson* that rebellion against His designed ways of operating is stupid – to let humanity, like a teenager, get sin, rebellion, and stupidity “out of their system” as fast as possible, once and for all. *Once this short-lived lesson is over, we’ll all party together in immortal incorruptible bodies.*

True to common sense (again!), the Bible makes it ultra-clear (by saying it plainly in multiple places in multiple ways) that God will reconcile all His creatures, regardless of form (physical, spirit, etc.) or “living space” (earth, heaven, etc.) to Himself. From the use of the word “all” in the Bible verses I’ve quoted in this chapter, it seems clear and unavoidable that the ones (whether spirit beings or human beings) who play “evil” parts during the first four ages are going to be reconciled to God too. It would make perfect sense for a loving God to do that, wouldn’t it? Again, I invite you to read the pertinent Scriptures which I’ve quoted in this chapter, and decide for yourself.

Friends, God is allowing Satan a certain amount of leeway for a certain amount of time, for a purpose. Let me give you an illustration to help you understand. The famous traveling entertainment basketball team, the Globetrotters, have to play against somebody. The other team is necessary to provide some sort of conflict, *so the greatness of the skill of the Globetrotters can be showcased.* The Globetrotters have to have somebody to play against that’s not as good as them, so it is obvious to all the onlookers how amazingly good the Globetrotters are! But everybody knows who’s going to win – there’s really no contest. At the end of the game everybody says, “Wow, the Globetrotters are awesome!”

Everybody understands that the opposing team is there *for a purpose.* When the game is over, the players on the other team don’t get any applause or praise but they do get a paycheck. They were part of the spectacle. Although they played against the Globetrotters, they actually played a part in glorifying the Globetrotters’ wonderful skill! It’s the same with God and Satan (and the fallen angels, evil people in this age, etc., who temporarily serve Satan’s purposes). Satan and those who cooperate with him for a while are *necessary* for the purposes of helping God teach mankind a lesson. A few wise people in this age realize that the game is rigged, that it’s really no contest. At the end of the game everybody’s going to say, “Wow, God is awesome and wise, it makes sense to live life the way He designed it to be lived!”

And when the game is over and the lesson has been learned, everybody’s going to shake hands, everybody’s going to be friends, everybody’s going to be reconciled to God after being judged and corrected (Col. 1:16-20, Rom. 11:36). All will recognize that certain creatures played certain roles during the ages to make God look good – for the purposes of God’s lessons being learned by all His creatures. It’s going to be generally recognized by all that everybody played their part under God’s sovereign plan, and everybody’s going to go

out to dinner after the game. God will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

Most Christians seem to think “the battle between good and evil” is an NBA Finals game, with two closely matched rivals fighting their hardest to win. (Indeed, that's what it *seems* like in this age because God is *allowing* Satan to win in this age to highlight the horrible consequences of humanity operating contrary to God's design.) **But those who understand what the accurately translated Bible teaches realize that the five ages of human history are just a Globetrotters game – a set up, with one team vastly more powerful than the other.**

Does this mean we should stop telling people about what Christ has done for them? Of course not! It just means we finally realize the greatness of the message we can preach! God through Christ has reconciled all to Himself (Rom. 5:18) and we are the *ambassadors* (messengers) of that reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20)! Not everybody will listen to our message in this age, and that's fine – that's part of God's plan too! But we should still preach, because the Bible tells us to do it and because God will use our preaching for his purposes. You never know, the next person you preach to could end up standing by your side running something important in the millennium (and enjoying it immensely), because God chose them and used your preaching to reach them! *And you'll have reward for that!* (See 1 Cor. 3:14).

Nothing in this book or in the Bible tells us we should not preach, “Be reconciled to God”. That is the method God uses to bring those He chooses (Eph. 1:4) into the fold in this age. The Apostle Paul went to a tremendous amount of trouble, risking his life repeatedly to spread the message. That should lay to rest the excuse that “If God's going to save everyone eventually anyway, what's the use of preaching?” to bed once and for all.

Do we oppose Satan and evil in this age? Absolutely. Do we continue to preach, “Be reconciled to God”? Absolutely. The apostle Paul risked his life to preach the simple message, “Be reconciled to God, because He's already reconciled mankind to Himself through Christ” (my paraphrase of 2 Cor. 5:18-20, Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24, & Rom. 11:32) to whoever he could get in front of and to whoever would listen. Shouldn't we be just as dedicated to preaching it? But let's make sure we're preaching it *accurately*, as Paul preached it, *including* the parts about God eventually reconciling all to Himself and becoming all in all (Co. 1:20, 1 Cor. 15:28, 1 Tim. 4:10, etc.)

It's extremely important to preach the correct, accurate message, lest we have less reward for our preaching than we could have had. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 makes it clear that any work we do for God that can't stand up to the (figurative) fire but burns away like chaff (figuratively), will not receive a reward for that work.

Notice that it is the *quality* of the work (the accuracy of the teaching) that God judges, not just the *quantity*. Going around and trying to scare everybody into obeying God with the threat of “hell” is not helping, it's hurting. It does more harm than good because

it's not accurate. It does not portray a correct, accurate picture of the one true God. Thinking people realize that it makes no sense, and they reject it with good reason. Why would anyone even want to serve a God who brings children into this world knowing beforehand that most of them will end up in torturous agony for all eternity? We Christians can claim our God "is love" (1 Jn. 4:8) all we want, but no one in their right mind will believe us if we are also claiming that our God will throw most of His children in "hell".

Just because a person preaches about "hell" out of ignorance (which is the case the vast majority of the time, obviously) is not an excuse. That person's preaching on the subject of hell, because it is not correct (and in fact on the subject of "hell" is the exact opposite of the truth), will not earn them a reward (1 Cor. 3:12-15). What you preach accurately, you will be rewarded for, to be sure. But *how can God reward you (or me, or anybody) for preaching things that are not true?*

This is why it's important that we not only preach, but preach *accurately*.

I'm so much happier and more peaceful now that I am able to boldly preach "God is the Savior of all" as 1st Timothy 4:10 puts it so simply and beautifully. Even while working hard outwardly to spread the gospel, it is wonderful to relax inwardly in the peace and joy of knowing that those who don't yet understand how wonderful God is, will eventually "get it". It's so much more peaceful and...sane...than the mental and emotional burden I used to labor under, the idea that if we don't reach everybody now in this age, there will be hell to pay for those who don't hear.

Knowing the simple truth that "God has reconciled all things to Himself" (Col. 1:20) and eventually the whole creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:20-21) frees us to *love* others instead of trying to force them into conforming to our belief system by telling them something nonsensical like, "Your Creator is going to torture you forever if you don't shape up fast enough." We are free to explain to people *why* God's way is smart, instead of just yelling "Do it – or burn!!!!"

You see, the knowledge that God has saved us all in spite of ourselves, frees us to obey God *because it produces optimal results*, rather than just out of fear.

Realizing God Saves All Frees Us To Obey Him Out of Wisdom, Not Just Fear

The fear/respect of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7), but what is the end, or the full fruit, of wisdom? *Doing things the way God has instructed us to do them because it's the way He designed us to operate.* Ecclesiastes 10:10 says, "If the axe is dull and you do not sharpen it's edge, you must exert more strength; but the advantage of wisdom is that it brings success." The world in this age is like a man trying to cut down a huge tree with a

dull blade. They experience massive frustration and tire themselves out without solving the world's problems because they are not using wisdom – they are not following the designer's design. This is what the Bible calls “corruption” – a departure from the designer's design.

Do you really think God is sitting in heaven making rules for the sake of making rules? Of course not. It's just that we, as creatures, have been *designed* by a *Designer*, and as such, we have been designed to operate a certain way.

God is working His plan of the ages to get all mankind to operate the way He designed us to, not just out of fear of punishment, but because we understand it's the best way to operate – because we realize it's the way we were designed to operate.

1 John 4:18 says, “*He who fears has not been perfected in love.*” God's design for how humans should operate can be summed up in one word: LOVE. This beautiful verse shows us that the ultimate wisdom is to operate in love. When fear of punishment is your primary motivation, it shows that you're still immature, like a child who only obeys his parents because he's scared of a spanking. A mature adult, on the other hand, acts wisely not because he's afraid of a spanking but because he understands certain things work well, and other things don't. A mature adult acts wisely primarily out of *understanding (wisdom)* and *love*; fear (of punishment) is only a secondary, or even nonexistent, motive. Maturity does bring some healthy fear – the knowledge that if you act in a different way than you've been designed to operate, you will bring pain to yourself and others. But that is a rational, wise fear based in understanding, not an irrational fear based on threats of eternal torture. It is the fear of an adult looking twice before crossing the road, not the fear of a child being told, “You will get a spanking (or eternal torture! gasp!) if you do not hold my hand when we're crossing the road.”

So there is a place for some fear in our walk with God and in the world's process of learning to do things God's way. But God wants to move the world as a whole through the process of reaching greater understanding. As a Christian, you are further along in this process than the ungodly in this age. Until God's plan for the ages reaches its consummation (1 Cor. 15:28), mankind will be moving through stages of immaturity, moving toward maturity. In this age, most of mankind is still very immature, and for the immature, fear is one of the best incentives to obey. Obviously in this age many people have no fear of God. They don't even have the beginning of wisdom, and their folly will be shown for what it is at the end of this age when the wrath of God is poured out for several days on those who miss the rapture (see my book *End Times Explained*), at beginning of the millennium when Jesus returns to rule the earth, and at the white throne judgment.

So in this age there is far more emphasis on fear as a motivator, than there will be after the consummation of the ages when mankind has “graduated” to maturity. A 40-year-old does not do the foolish things a 5-year-old, a 15-year-old, or an 18-year-old might do – not because he's afraid of a spanking or being grounded for a month, but because *he realizes it's smart. He understands – through experience – what will produce results, and what will produce bad*

results. This is how all mankind will be after the consummation of the ages – *mature.*

In this age when mankind are still children or immature teenagers who are still in the process of learning that “Dad knows best” (or have not yet learned it at all), fear has its place as a strong incentive to obey God. Paul said it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31) – and yes, many will experience God’s wrath for several days at the end of this age (see Rev. 16 and my book *End Times Explained*) and some will experience God’s wrath at the white throne judgment too (Rom. 2:5-11). Experiencing God’s wrath will be terrifying and very unpleasant for those who experience it, as Paul said.

But God’s wrath, like a loving Father’s temporary anger, is not permanent. “God’s wrath” and “hell”/“eternal fire” are not the same thing. There is no such thing as hell or eternal nebulous spirit-fire in the accurately translated Bible. It is clear in Scripture that all the instances of God’s wrath, “eonian punishment”, judgment, etc. have to do with and occur during the five ages before the consummation of God’s plan, and have nothing to do with eternity. *God didn’t bring people into existence to be mad at them forever.* Colossians 1:20, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, and Romans 11:32-36 (among others) tell us that the story of humanity ends well – just like the correction and punishment of a Father who brings up His children wisely enables His children to have a happy life.

When it’s all said and done God will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28), which can only mean that humanity will operate in perfect unity and harmony with Him, the way He designed us to operate, in love and wisdom. We will do the right things for the right reasons – not because we’re afraid of God’s wrath anymore so much as because we will realize it’s how we were designed and intended to live by our Creator.

Fear of wrath is a good reason to begin getting some wisdom and operating God’s way in this age (Rom. 2:5-11). But after everyone has stood before God’s throne, humanity has been taught its lesson, all negative influence (the previous work of Satan etc.) has been removed, and God is “all in all”, fear of wrath will kind of be a moot point. Yes, we’ll always remember the terrible consequences of sin during ages past – and that will forever remain an incentive and reminder for us. But we will be more like a bunch of adults who remember not to touch a hot stove burner because we all did it as kids and got burnt, or like adults who without too much effort, remember to brush our teeth and get dressed in the morning (which was a challenge for us and which we constantly had to be reminded to do when we were 4 years old).

After God is “all in all”, doing things God’s way primarily out of fear would be sort of like brushing your teeth mainly because you’re afraid of a spanking if you don’t. I don’t brush my teeth because I’m afraid of a spanking; I do it because I want fresh breath, because I realize the *need* for fresh breath. I don’t want to gross out everyone at work or gross out my wife and lose all favor with the opposite sex! Beyond that, I simply don’t want my wife or anybody else to have a negative experience when they get close to me! See what

I mean? It's not really fear, it's mainly just being smart, wise, and considerate of others – LOVE.

After God is all in all, we'll all do things the way God designed us to them, not primarily because of fear, but *because we realize – we have a deep heart understanding – that it is simply the best way to make ourselves and everybody else happy*. What else could God being “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28) and “all being reconciled to Him” (Col. 1:19-20) mean?

Think about it – if God is love (1 Jn. 4:8), and He will eventually be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28), then eventually LOVE will be ALL IN ALL. Love will be the primary motivator in all human beings!

This is why the Bible says, “He who fears has not been perfected in love” (1 Jn. 4:18). I never understood this verse until I understood that God would eventually be “all in all”. I was afraid of hell (not knowing the words “hell”/“forever” and the concept of eternal punishment are not in the Greek/Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible), and therefore I thought fear was the best incentive for myself and others to obey God.

Today I realize how ridiculous that thought is. Fear is a good incentive for immature children. “Do this, or get spanked. Do that, or be grounded. Do what I say, or lose your cell phone privileges for a week.” Once maturity comes, wise behavior needs to come from a higher, more informed incentive. This incentive and information is beginning to be implanted in Christians in this age, and will be completed in us when we stand before Christ's dais after being raptured into immortal bodies. The rest of mankind will have this higher information and incentive implanted in them at the white throne judgment, and they will have the ability to live it out when they are resurrected to immortal bodies at the consummation of the ages.

After the consummation of the ages, there will be no more pain and no more fear, because we will not hurt each other. People will act wisely, the way God designed them to live, because they *realize deep down inside it's the smart way to live*, and because they *love others*. All will be love. Love will be the ultimate and primary incentive. Hallelujah. God will have done His work well.

Now, don't be tempted to throw me the same line that Paul was opposed with when He taught this God-is-the-Savior-of-all-mankind-and-will-reconcile-all-to-Himself (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10, 1 Tim. 4:10, Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24) stuff: “Should we just go out and sin then, since grace will eventually cover everything?” (See Rom. 6:1.) Some people apparently thought that since God will eventually save everybody, “Why not just sin all you want – it'll be ok in the end anyway!” And worse, they accused Paul of thinking the same thing!

My response is the same as Paul's, “May it never be!” That would be like purposefully spitting on a person who lifted you out of a cardboard box on the street and

gave you a billion dollars. Plus you'd be missing out on great reward during the 4th and 5th ages! You don't earn your salvation – God saves us all on His own – but still our actions can earn reward (1 Cor. 1:3:8-15). God is so nice to us.

Not only that, but God wants to use what He accomplishes in you (assuming you are a believer in this age) to teach His other creatures something! Ephesians 3:10 outlines at least one of the methods God is going to use to reconcile even the heavenly creatures (spirit beings not perceivable by our extremely limited five earthly bodily senses) to Himself: *He's going to use Christians in this age as an example of God's wisdom.* How cool is that? These spirit beings (fallen rebellious angels for example) will be reconciled to God at least partly because of what they observe God accomplishing in and through us! Wow.

Conclusion

Amazingly, the deepest desire of the human race *is* going to come true! The world's problems *are* going to be fixed once and for all! There *is* going to be a happy ending to this drama called “life”. And that “ending” will actually be just the *beginning* – in the same way that a wise Father would consider the end of a tough period of teenage/young-adult lesson-learning to be the beginning of a joyful and wise life for His children.

I hope you can see that God makes sense. That's why I called one of my websites BreakthroughBibleInsights.com. Religion, with it's often well intentioned but ignorant “hell or some other tragic ending for all but the smart few” mindset, makes God into a mysterious nonsensical monster. But the accurately translated Bible reveals Him to be a perfectly rational, perfectly wise, perfectly loving Father to all mankind, who will – as you would expect any God worth serving to do – reconcile all His creatures to Himself so He can be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Col. 1:20).

Once He accomplishes this in a short several thousand year period (the five ages), all of us together can then enjoy Him and each other in perfect love, harmony, peace, and prosperity for gazillions of years.

Now I want to explain another vitally important concept to you: the difference between Jesus' gospel and Paul's gospel. It is impossible to truly understand the Bible and what God expects of you as a believer until you understand this concept. The information in the next chapter will free you once and for all from the “faith/works mix” and “condemnation ping-pong” (flipping back and forth between feeling relieved that you are forgiven and feeling afraid that your behavior isn't good enough as you flip back and forth between Paul's writings and Jesus' preaching to Israel) that plagues many modern Christians. What you'll learn is also vital for understanding the mindset of Israelites in Bible days, and how it was very different than the “Catholic version of the afterlife” mindset.

Chapter 9

Paul's Pause and What "The Kingdom of God" Really Is

My dad is the greatest father anyone could ever ask for, but he's not a great cook. I remember one time when I was kid, Mom was away for some reason and Dad was stuck cooking for us kids. He opened two cans of soup – a can of cream of mushroom, and a can of chicken noodle – and threw them together into a pot on the stove. When he served it up to us, we tasted it and instantly started making faces. "Dad, this tastes nasty!" "Dad, this is no good!"

Instead of listening to us, he replied with a smile, "Awww, gimme a break. Just eat it! It can't be that bad!"

After more bellyaching from us kids, Dad finally tasted the soup himself. As the spoon came down from his mouth, he said with a chuckle, "You kids don't have to eat this."

To this day we love to hear him tell the story, it makes our whole family laugh.

I tell you this story because in this chapter I'm going to tell you about two cans of preaching – Jesus' preaching to Israel, and Paul's preaching to the whole world years later – that taste great on their own but when you try to mix them together into one pot, they make a nasty-tasting, confusing doctrinal soup. Modern Christianity has been eating this soup for so long that they just put up with the taste and tell themselves "the New Testament just tastes like this, it must be normal, after all, it's the only New Testament doctrinal soup I've ever tasted".

But when I separate the two types of soup for you – when I explain the vital difference between Jesus' primary message to Israel and Paul's later message to the whole world – you will be astounded at how good each type of soup tastes on its own! You will appreciate and understand Jesus' teaching and Paul's teaching so much better, and a couple of key areas of confusion regarding the Bible's teachings that have plagued you in the back of your mind will be resolved once and for all.

What I'm going to teach you in this chapter will drastically change how you read the New Testament and how you look at the teachings of Jesus and Paul.

Because of this it may feel a little bit like I'm trying to upset the whole apple cart of Christianity – but I'm not. What I'm about to teach you doesn't change what the church actually does in any way; it's just going to help us understand that we're fulfilling our true God-given mission in this age much better than we thought we were.

What I'm about to teach you is going to resolve a number of little nagging problems with understanding God and the Bible that bother Christians in the back of their minds, on the edge of being consciously expressed as frustrations. This is what I mean by a “confusing doctrinal soup that Christianity thinks is the only kind of New Testament soup there is”. I guarantee that by the end of this chapter you will understand the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus, the teachings of the apostle Paul, the mission of the church in this age, the role of works in salvation (or lack thereof), and what God expects of you personally, far better than you ever have before.

This chapter would not be necessary if you were a disciple of Jesus living 2,000 years ago; everything I'm about to share with you would have been extremely obvious to you because you would have been living through it. Modern Christians are 2,000 years removed from the events that shaped the writing of the New Testament. Because of this, we assume the first Christians always knew everything we know today about God and His plan, when in reality the first disciples knew much less than we do until the apostle Paul came along. My main task in this chapter is to help you rediscover the unfolding experience of the first Israelite disciples back then through careful study of Scripture and a common sense look at the order of events as they unfolded. This will clear up several issues for you about which modern Christians are easily confused because of our lack of historical perspective.

The first disciples and Christians living 2,000 years ago would never have dreamed of casually throwing Jesus' preaching and Paul's preaching together into the same doctrinal soup the way modern Christians do, because they realized that Paul's preaching contained brand new elements Jesus had purposefully never told them about. To put it simply, Paul's preaching was a major game changer in terms of the primary thing believers were instructed to do in order to “get right with God” (my term). Modern Christians simply assume Jesus and His original twelve disciples were giving people the same primary instructions Paul gave later. This incorrect assumption causes massive confusion in the body of Christ, especially about the role of works in salvation.

So in this chapter I will carefully separate the Jesus soup from the Paul soup, allow you to taste (understand) each one by itself (probably for the first time in your life). I'm going to explain which soup is the one you are supposed to eat (which message's primary instructions apply to your own life today). As I do this the role of works in salvation will be clarified in your mind probably for the first time in your life, and you will also learn several

pieces of information that are vital for understanding the parable of Lazarus and the rich man and God's plan for humanity better than you ever have before.

The content of this chapter is worthy of a book all its own, but I wanted to take one chapter of this book on hell to briefly share this information because it will help you understand how different the "Catholic afterlife" is to the mindset of the Israelites and the first disciples 2,000 years ago. It will also make the points Jesus was making with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man much easier for you to understand. Because most modern Christians do not understand the content of this chapter, they tend to think the setting of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is the point of the parable, when really the setting was only a *fictional* vehicle to make a couple of points. That's what a parable is – a fictional story told to make one or more points. But with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, modern Christians do something they don't do with any other of Jesus' parables: they mistake the fictional story for a literal teaching (about the supposed "afterlife" a.k.a. conscious death), failing to remember that it is a fictional story, failing to realize that Jesus took the setting for the fictional story from the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition (not Scripture), and failing to realize that if it really was a literal teaching about conscious death it would contradict everything else in (accurately translated) Scripture about what happens at death.

So modern Christians tend to mistake the setting of the parable for the point of the parable, because the fictional setting of the story matches the Catholic version of the afterlife. (Middle ages pagan Catholic "afterlife" ideas closely match the very paganism Jesus was mocking and condemning the Pharisees for accepting by putting pagan Talmudian traditions above the Old Testament Scriptures.) And the other reason modern Christians mistake the setting of the parable for the point of the parable is because the points Jesus was making with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man are hard for modern Christians to understand unless they understand the content of this chapter so as to enter the mindset of Israelites in Bible days.

I'm going to approach this chapter by sharing 18 simple Scriptural facts with you that will fit together like a puzzle in your mind. When you see the complete picture the puzzle pieces form, you will have clarity about several Biblical issues that previously were about as clear as mud. Eighteen facts may seem like a lot to absorb, but they're all quite simple and I'm going to present them in a naturally unfolding order where each point builds on the previous point, so it will be easy for you to understand and get the big picture. The first few facts will take a bit longer to explain, and as we go along each subsequent fact will require less explanation because by the time we get to the later facts you will have plenty of background information to help you understand them.

All right, let's dive into our eighteen facts one by one. Please understand that for the sake of space I will only (relatively) briefly prove each point here rather than going into all the abundant Scriptural evidence for each fact I share.

Here we go.

Fact #1: “The kingdom of God” in the Bible does not refer to hanging out in heaven forever, but to the next two ages of life *on earth*. (Acts 1:6-7)

When many modern Christians hear the term “the kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of heaven” they think of going to heaven consciously immediately upon death and living there for eternity. However, that is not what the Bible is talking about when it uses these terms. Acts 1:6-7 shows us exactly what Jesus and His disciples meant when they used the term “the kingdom” (they used the terms “the kingdom”, “the kingdom of God”, and “the kingdom of heaven” interchangeably).

In Acts 1:6-7, Jesus’ disciples were excited because He had recently risen from the dead, and they asked Him a very revealing question, to which Jesus had a very revealing reply:

“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’” (Acts 1:6)

The revealing phrase here is “restoring the kingdom to Israel”. The disciples were not talking about going to heaven, they were asking Jesus when He would do the main thing every Israelite expected the Messiah to do: physically take over the world by force and rule over the earth from Jerusalem with Israel.

Jesus did not correct His disciples or say, “Listen guys, forget about ruling over the earth with Me – let’s think about going to heaven and hanging out far away from this wretched place.” No, He shared the same definition of “the kingdom” as they did! Look at His reply:

“He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.’” (Acts 1:7)

Jesus said, essentially, “The kingdom (rulership over the entire earth with the Messiah) will be given to Israel, but it’s not for you to know when it’s going to happen.” This reveals that His definition of “the kingdom” was exactly the same as His disciples’ definition of “the kingdom”: His future reign over the earth – what we modern Christians would call “the millennium” (and sometimes it can refer to the “New Jerusalem age” too).

Revelation 19:11-20:7 tells us that at some point in the future Jesus will return to forcibly take over rulership of the earth. This is exactly what the disciples were expecting, because they were familiar with the many Old Testament Scriptures that prophesied this event (such as Isaiah 14:1-2 and 66:7-24 to give just a couple of examples). They were just confused about *when* it would happen! Acts 1:6-7 reveals that Jesus’ disciples thought it might happen 2,000 years ago. By the end of this chapter you will understand why they

thought this. (Also keep in mind that the apostle John, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples who was part of the conversation recorded in Acts 1:6-7, did not write the book of Revelation until the end of his life; he obviously had no concept of the things he later wrote about in Revelation when he was talking to Jesus decades earlier in Acts 1:6-7.)

Young's Literal Translation does not even use the term "the kingdom of God", but rather "the reign of God". For example, Young's Literal Translation of Luke 17:20 says, "Having been questioned by the Pharisees, when the reign of God doth come..." Friends, the reign of God does not have to come in heaven. God already reigns in heaven, of that there is no dispute. The only question is when the reign of God will come *on earth*.

If you study all the uses of the terms "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" (or just "the kingdom") in the New Testament, it is obvious that Jesus, His disciples, and later the apostle Paul used these terms interchangeably. "The kingdom of heaven" does not refer to the location of the kingdom, but the *source* of the *authority* of the kingdom that will eventually come *to earth* when Jesus returns to take over the world by force and rule from Jerusalem (Rev. 19:1-20:7).

You should also realize that in Jesus' day "heaven" was a common euphemism for "God", partially because of the idea amongst some Israelites that God's name was too sacred to say out loud. This idea had been widespread among the Jews (and still survives among some to this day) despite the fact that it is unbiblical and ridiculous – the Bible itself uses the name of God countless times (including in many Psalms which were composed to be sung aloud and many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures which were supposed to be read aloud). But in any case, this idea took root among the Israelites back then and affected the culture to the point where "heaven" became a common euphemism for "God". When Jesus used the term "the kingdom of heaven" interchangeably with "the kingdom of God", He was not endorsing the idea that God's name should not be spoken aloud; He was simply using what had become a common way of speaking amongst the Israelites. So keep that in mind when you see the word or term "heaven" being used in the New Testament; remember that it may simply be another way of referring to God with a common expression of the time. (Of course this depends on the context and the way it is used; obviously the New Testament sometimes uses the word "heaven" to literally refer to heaven where God lives. Also keep in mind that in Bible days they also used the term "heaven" or "the heavens" to talk about the sky where the birds fly and/or space where the stars are, depending on the context.)

Scripture also uses the terms "the kingdom", "the kingdom of God", and "the kingdom of heaven" interchangeably with the terms "eonian life" (life having to do with an age or ages) and "the ages of the ages". This becomes exceedingly clear when you study all the uses of these phrases by Jesus, His twelve disciples, and the apostle Paul in the New Testament. (See Matthew 19:16, 23, 28-29 for just one example.) All these terms refer to life on earth during the greatest two ages of the ages God planned from before the beginning of

time in order to reach the consummation of His plan: *the millennium* (the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth referred to in Revelation 20:1-7) and *the New Jerusalem age* (Rev. 21-22).

When Jesus or Paul referred to “having eonian life” (e.g. John 3:16) or “having a part/portion/inheritance in the kingdom of God” (e.g. Gal. 5:21), they were not talking about hanging out in heaven forever, they were talking about the special privilege of experiencing life on earth for a specific period of time – the millennium and the New Jerusalem age, “the ages of the ages”, the best two ages of the ages of human history God planned from the beginning of time. Most of humanity who has ever lived will be dead and unconscious during these two ages (Rev. 20:1-7, 14). Since Jesus will be ruling over the earth during these two ages, they will be wonderful to take part in. Whereas this current age is ruled by Satan, making it unpleasant in many ways (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6 & Jn. 10:10), the next two ages will be characterized by a level of prosperity, peace, freedom from financial problems/oppression (and accompanying time freedom and freedom to enjoy life), joy, fun, etc. that is almost impossible for people alive in this age to even fathom. (Not to mention that raptured Christians will be in immortal bodies – that will add to the fun, I’m sure!)

Dear Christians, our future is on earth, not in heaven! God’s goal is to bring His authority (reign, kingdom) *to earth* – “Thy kingdom come...*on earth as it is* in heaven.” Even in the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 21-22) we will live and fellowship with God *on earth* – a new (or possibly this same, but renewed/resurfaced) earth, but still earth! The city of New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven to earth, and we will live *on earth* (Rev. 21:2-3). This is because God originally created humans to live on earth, and He is not going to abandon that plan. The unbalanced and incorrect obsession with heaven and “the afterlife” (a phrase not found anywhere in Scripture, which people use to refer to conscious death) so common amongst modern Christians is an inheritance from Catholicism/paganism. Yes, we will go to heaven at the rapture towards the very end of this age, but we’ll only be there a short time (several days, see my book *End Times Explained*) before we return with Christ to rule over the earth! Read Revelation 19:1-20:7!

When the apostle Paul exhorted his converts to set their minds on “things above” (Col. 3:2), he didn’t mean “think about escaping to heaven and never coming back”! Godly people in Bible days would never have taken it that way, because Paul was not teaching his converts the Catholic version of the afterlife! Paul’s converts would have understood that he meant, “Keep your mind on the things of God, not on the things that people in this ungodly age set as their priorities.” Paul was using the same common way of speaking used back then, essentially using “heaven” as a euphemism for God or the things of God; he’s not telling us to be obsessed with going to heaven, he’s telling us to keep our minds on the things of God rather than the typical priorities of an ungodly person in this age. Paul is using similar language to contrast “God’s priorities and plans” with “man’s priorities and plans” that Jesus used when He told Peter, “You don’t have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” after Peter told Him He couldn’t die (Mk. 8:31-33).

Also keep in mind that the places and reward God is preparing for us in heaven (Jn. 14:3, 1 Cor. 3:14) are in the New Jerusalem, which *will come down from heaven to earth* as described in Revelation 21:2. Our primary reward is, as Jesus said, “to be with Me (Him) where(ever) I am (He is)” (John 14:3, 17:24); and He is going to be *on earth* throughout the millennium and the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 21-22). (And probably after the consummation of God’s plan too, I see no reason why He would create humanity to live on earth and then take us away from here once He is “all in all” – see 1 Cor. 15:22-28).

And don’t be confused by Luke 17:20-21 where Jesus says (as it is translated in some English Bibles), “The kingdom of God is within you.” A better translation is, “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” Jesus said this to the Pharisees because they had just asked Him what signs to look for that the kingdom was coming. (The Pharisees were always testing Him with questions because they didn’t like Him and didn’t want to accept that He was the Messiah.) Jesus said, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, people won’t say ‘Look over there’ or ‘Look over there.’” You see, the Pharisees were trying to find out if Jesus was going to quote something out of the Old Testament Scriptures or give them some miraculous thing to look for. But Jesus told them, in essence, “Looking for external signs isn’t going to help you guys because your hearts are not right; if you had any spiritual discernment whatsoever you’d know that the kingdom is already in the midst of you because I’m the King, and I’m standing standing right here in front of you!” This is just like the time when Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eonian life (a good spot in the kingdom); these are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.” (John 5:39-40). So Jesus wasn’t saying, “The kingdom is only internal, not external” – He couldn’t have been saying that because the rest of the testimony of Scripture (e.g. Rev. 11:15-17, 19:15, 20:3-6) tells us that the kingdom will one day forcibly and physically come to earth.

It is certainly true that in this age we Christians are supposed to bring the kingdom (God’s authority) to earth to the greatest extent we can, for example we could look at Luke 19:13 where (through a parable) Jesus essentially says to us, “Do business – make the most of everything you have, multiply the authority and values of the kingdom as much as you can – until I come.” But we must remember that the kingdom is not going to come fully to earth until the next age (Lk. 4:5-6, 2 Cor. 4:4), and the definition of the kingdom is not “going to heaven forever” or “something that happens only on the inside of you”.

Another reason we know Jesus wasn’t saying “the kingdom is only internal, not external” in Luke 17:20-21 is that He immediately went on to explain to His disciples exactly what the outward sign of the kingdom coming would be: When He comes to rule the earth His coming will be like lightning that flashes across the sky for all to see (Lk. 17:24, similar to what He said in Matt. 24:29-32 concerning the rapture). Jesus refused to tell the Pharisees the outward signs of the kingdom coming to earth, and only shared that information with His disciples. He wanted the Pharisees to be forced to discern spiritually that He was the Messiah. This is consistent with His policy of giving more detailed

explanations of His teachings to His closest disciples while giving less information (or difficult-to-understand information) to those with hard hearts (the Pharisees) and the crowds who were just there for the free food and the miracles (e.g. Mt. 13:13)

Also don't be confused by Jesus' statement, "My kingdom is not of this world" in John 18:36. The Greek word translated "of" in some English Bibles is "ek", which means "out of" or "according to". The phrase "of this world", similar to the phrase "of heaven" in "the kingdom of heaven", is not talking about the location of the kingdom but the *source* of the kingdom. In other words, John 18:36 could be better translated, "My kingdom is not *from* this world", or possibly (but less likely) "My kingdom does not have the same values and priorities as (is not according to) the kingdoms of this world." Jesus confirms that we should most likely translate this Greek word "ek" as "out of" or "from" two sentences later when He says: "But now my kingdom is not from here." The fact that Jesus used the word "now" is extremely important as well; the rest of Scripture including many of Jesus' own words tell us that the kingdom of God will come to earth – eventually. Jesus was clarifying that His kingdom's source was not earth, and that it was not coming to earth *now*. Jesus was clarifying these things because Pilate had just asked Him if He was a King. Jesus' answer was truthful, but very coy, giving minimal information. (He knew Pilate would not understand more information even if He gave it.) Jesus essentially told Pilate, "You heard that I'm a King, the King of the Jews. I am a King. But my disciples did not fight physically with swords to keep me from being arrested because my kingdom's source is not here, and it is not coming here right now." Jesus knew that He would fulfill many Old Testament prophecies by being crucified, and as He stood before Pilate He knew that it was time for Him to die. He knew it was not time *yet* to bring His kingdom to earth. And He said this to Pilate with minimal detail because He knew Pilate would not understand more details anyway. (Even with the bare-minimum statements Jesus made, Pilate surely went away confused. At that point in time, not even Jesus' own disciples understood why He had to die, even after He tried to explain it to them! See Matt. 16:21-22.)

I took a moment to examine some of the Scriptures that modern Christians sometimes quote out of context in attempts to fit them into a "Catholic afterlife" out-of-balance obsession with going to heaven, so that you can understand them correctly in context. God's plan for mankind is *on earth*. We Christians are only going to be in heaven for a very short time after the rapture before we return to reign over the earth with Christ, and we will live here with Him during the next age as well (Rev. 19:11-20:6, Rev. 21-22). Let's get a Scriptural definition of "the kingdom of God" or "the reign of God" in our heads rather than relying on pagan Catholic-inherited notions about the supposed afterlife, escaping earth for heaven or hell for eternity, etc. The Scriptural definition of the kingdom/reign of God is the next two ages of life *on earth*.

So, Fact #1 is very simple: "the kingdom of God", "the kingdom of heaven", "the kingdom", "the eons of the eons", and "eonian life" are terms used interchangeably in Scripture, not to refer to hanging out in heaven forever, but to refer to the next two ages of life on earth (the millennium and the New Jerusalem age). (Also remember that "eonian

chastisement” and failing to inherit the kingdom means being dead during the millennium and New Jerusalem age, with no ability to enjoy the blessings of those ages. Remember, “The wages of sin is death” – Rom. 6:23. “Eonian chastisement” probably also refers to the white throne judgment that will occur between those two ages.

Our next fact is another important piece in the jigsaw puzzle – it may seem unrelated at first, but the pieces will soon start fitting together in your mind.

Fact #2: During His earthly ministry Jesus was sent to preach *only to Israel*.

Remember the Canaanite (non-Israelite) woman who came to Jesus requesting that He heal her son (Matt. 15:22-28)? Jesus’ initial reply to her indicated that His preaching and miracles during His earthly life were intended only for Israel:

“And lo, a woman, a Canaanitess, from those borders having come forth, did call to him, saying, 'Deal kindly with me, Sir -- Son of David; my daughter is miserably demonized.' And he did not answer her a word; and his disciples having come to him, were asking him, saying -- 'Let her away, because she crieth after us;' and he answering said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'”
(Matt. 15:22-28, Young’s Literal Translation)

This woman was a Canaanitess, in other words a Greek, a Gentile, a non-Israelite. And Jesus (at first, before He relented because of her great faith and persistence) flatly refused to minister to her – He refused to reply to her plea in any way or spend a single moment ministering to her. He refused to speak a single word to her! Why? How could Jesus be so uncaring and cruel? He wasn’t being uncaring and cruel (as evidenced by the fact that He relented due to the woman’s great faith and persistence). He just understood that His assignment was only to Israel.

Before I learned what I’m teaching you in this chapter, I could never figure out why Jesus only wanted to preach to (and do miracles for) Israel! Didn’t He love the rest of the world too? It made no sense to me. I was confused because I had been eating the confusing doctrinal soup that erroneously mixes Jesus’ preaching to Israel with Paul’s preaching decades later to the whole world. Now I realize that there was no point in Jesus preaching or ministering to anyone who was not an Israelite while He walked the earth, because His “preaching and miracles ministry assignment” from His Father at that time was to give *Israel, and Israel only, a specific message*. By the end of this chapter you will understand what I’m talking about perfectly, and you will discover exactly what message Jesus had been assigned to give to Israel – just stick with me.

For now just realize that we modern Christians get confused about several doctrines in the Bible because we make the mistake of assuming that every single instruction Jesus gave to Israel back then also applied to everyone else on earth at that time, and applies directly to us today! This is an *incorrect assumption* that causes *massive confusion* when trying to

understand the preaching and teaching of Jesus. Of course His teaching and preaching to Israel contained many timeless truths and principles that we can certainly learn from and apply to our lives today, but there were certain instructions, statements, and aspects of His preaching to Israel that *only applied to the nation of Israel back then*, and no longer apply to us today.

By the end of this chapter you will understand exactly which parts of His preaching no longer apply to us today. Our next Fact (Fact #3) will begin to explain it to you. I'm going to take a bit longer to explain Facts #3, #4, and #5 than Facts #6 through #18, because numbers 3, 4, and 5 are the main points you need to grasp to understand what I'm teaching you in this chapter.

Fact #3: Jesus' preaching to Israel *was still under the Old Testament law; it included the command to continue obeying the Old Testament Law of Moses. Therefore we should categorize Jesus' ministry to Israel in our minds as "Old Testament" rather than "New Testament"*.

You may have never heard that Jesus' preaching to Israel was still under the Law of Moses, even though it is clear with just a cursory reading of the Gospels. The idea is new to many Christians because Christianity has erroneously mixed Jesus' preaching with Paul's preaching into one big bowl of confusion for so long, erroneously treating them as identical. Paul's preaching removed the requirements for believers to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses (Gal. 5:1-6, Phil. 3:2, 9, etc.). But just think about it for a minute...How could Jesus remove the requirements for Israel to obey the Law of Moses during His earthly ministry, before He had even died to make the removal of those requirements possible? How could He have preached, "Believe that my death paid the price for your sins" when He hadn't even died yet?

In a moment I will prove to you that Jesus' preaching to Israel was still under the Law of Moses (still included the requirement to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses) by quoting Jesus' exact words where He commanded His disciples and the rest of the Israelites to continue obeying it. But first let me psychologically prepare you for seeing it in black and white with your own two eyes and having your entire understanding of Jesus' preaching go through an enlightening paradigm shift.

One of the reasons most Christians are completely unaware that Jesus' preaching was still under the Old Testament Law of Moses is because they think of Jesus' ministry as being "New Testament". It is natural for modern Christians to think this way because human beings arbitrarily decided to place the descriptions of Jesus' ministry (the Gospels as they are called, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) in an artificial, man-made division of Scripture called the "New Testament". (Remember, the chapter and verse divisions, where the New Testament starts, etc., were not inspired by God, these are just man's way of organizing the inspired writings of Scripture.)

This is why I often say that Christians would be relieved of so much confusion if the New Testament started halfway through the book of Acts or at the book of Romans with the exploits and writings of the apostle Paul, rather than at the beginning of the Gospels with Jesus' ministry and preaching to Israel. It would be less confusing if the New Testament started with the apostle Paul because Jesus' preaching to Israel was still under the Law of Moses and as such should fall into the "Old Testament" category in our minds. The "new covenant" (Gal. 4:22-26) or "New Testament" was *first explained to the world by Paul*. Jesus never explained it to Israel. (The closest Jesus got to explaining it to His disciples was when He held the first communion with them, held up the wine and talked about a "new covenant in My blood" in Matthew 26:28 right before His death. But Acts 1:6-7 tells us that His disciples did not really grasp the meaning of His death or the "new covenant in Christ's blood" that was made available to the whole world through Christ's death. And Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:26, Romans 16:25, and the first two chapters of Galatians tell us that no one including Jesus ever really fully explained the concept until Paul came along.)

But because we modern Christians think of Jesus' preaching as being in the New Testament and fail to remember that it still included the command to continue obeying the Law of Moses (and as such should really be in the Old Testament), we tend to lump Jesus' preaching together with Paul's preaching under one big "instructions that all apply to us today" umbrella, creating a confusing doctrinal soup.

This is the first mistake I am trying to "undo" in this chapter. I will explain more about the difference between Jesus' preaching and Paul's preaching as the chapter goes on, but for now simply absorb the following:

Jesus' preaching was under the Law of Moses, while Paul's preaching later on was the first extensive public declaration and explanation of the fact that the cross had replaced the Law of Moses with a better way.

While Jesus was walking the earth, He knew and understood everything Paul preached later (He knew He would die, He knew the true/ultimate purpose of His death in God's grand plan, etc.), but He mostly kept mum about these things and instead preached a limited message to Israel that God had assigned Him to preach at that time. When we get to Fact #5 I'll explain exactly what Jesus' limited primary message to Israel was, and it will become exceedingly obvious to you why those primary instructions were for only for Israel at that time in history. You will instantly see why they no longer apply to us today. You'll see why the primary instruction God gave the whole world through Paul later was very different than the primary instruction Jesus gave Israel during His earthly ministry.

To give you quick preview, the primary instruction of Jesus' preaching to Israel was repentance/baptism as a means of having your sins (merely) forgiven, while the primary instruction of Paul's preaching to the rest of the world later was to put your faith in what the cross accomplished as a means of becoming the righteousness of God in Christ (so that

your very identity becomes righteousness and Christlikeness instead of sin). As you can see, Jesus could not possibly have preached Paul's gospel before He died, because Paul's gospel was based on what the cross accomplished. So when I share Fact #5 you will learn exactly what Jesus' limited message to Israel was, and you will understand why Jesus preached *only* about being forgiven (an Old Testament concept) and *not* about what the cross accomplished. But for now just remember the obvious fact that during His earthly ministry to Israel Jesus could not preach about what the cross accomplished, because the cross had not even happened yet!

Unfortunately, modern Christians don't think about these things, so they think of "your sins being forgiven" and "being justified and becoming the righteousness of God in Christ" as being the exact same thing. There's that pesky Jesus-Paul-combo soup again! These concepts are similar (they both involve receiving mercy and grace), but they are not the same. Becoming the righteousness of God in Christ is a far greater concept than merely being forgiven. Being forgiven is like asking your dad for money every time you need it, while being justified and becoming the righteousness of God in Christ is like your dad establishing a bank account for you with unlimited money in it.

Remember, as I've explained in the rest of this book, the cross justified all mankind – making it as if mankind had never sinned – and God is not taking it back! See Romans 5:18 and Romans 3:23-24! God has given humanity a bank account with unlimited mercy and grace in it. Modern Christianity has a hard time accepting this concept because of a pagan/Catholic-inherited hell mindset that causes them to think God is going to take back and reverse what the cross accomplished for most of humanity who won't have faith in this age. The Bible says no such thing; nowhere does Scripture say that the justification of all mankind described clearly in Romans 3:23-24 and 5:18 will be undone. Modern Christians just have a hard time wrapping their heads around it because they don't understand that those who don't "get it" (receive this justification in an experiential way) now, will "get it" later at the white throne judgment and the consummation of the ages, as I've explained in this book.

So, if you read the Bible carefully you will see that the ministries of Jesus and His disciples recorded in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and even at the beginning of Acts (before Paul came along) contain the Old Testament concept of "repentance" (changing your behavior, doing good things instead of bad things, a focus on works – what the whole Law of Moses was all about) and "forgiveness of sins" (for example, read the Psalms and you'll see that David understood the concept of having his sins forgiven), but *not* the *far greater* concept of "Christ's death has justified us – made just as if we'd never sinned – and we have become – in our very identity – the righteousness of God in Christ". Paul preached this greater concept later; he was the first person to ever preach it in detail, because he was the first person Jesus ever explained it to! (See Gal. 1:11-12, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26, Rom. 16:25.)

Jesus always knew this greater concept and the full understanding of what the cross accomplished would come to light later after His death, but saved it so that Paul would be the first to learn and preach it. Also remember that John 3:16-17 was spoken to one man in private at night and was *not* part of Jesus' public preaching to Israel. Jesus made a few passing comments to Israel that hinted at the amazing stuff Paul preached in detail later, but never fully explained it to Israel like Paul did to the whole world many years later. During His earthly ministry Jesus purposefully kept Israel in the dark about certain parts of God's plan, saving the whole enchilada for Paul to learn and teach later. You'll learn more about all this...keep reading!

Now let me show you a couple of things Jesus said that make it extremely clear that His preaching to Israel was still under the Law of Moses and thus should be considered "Old Testament" in our minds.

In Luke 18 a rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked how he could obtain "eonian life":

"A ruler questioned Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eonian life?'" (Lk. 18:18)

What would you say if someone asked you how to get into the kingdom of God? If you're like me, you'd probably say something like, "You need to confess your sins to God and pray a prayer of salvation" or "Romans 10:9-10 says that you need to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord."

But remember, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus how to get into the kingdom of God, Romans 10:9-10 hadn't been written yet, and Jesus hadn't even died yet to make the "Romans 10:9-10 salvation prayer" possible! So let's see what Jesus told this man to do in order to "inherit eonian life" or get a good spot in the kingdom of God (the future reign of Christ on earth). Jesus replied:

"You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery', 'Do not murder', 'Do not steal', 'Do not bear false witness', 'honor your father and mother'..."

Amazingly, Jesus' instruction for getting into the kingdom of God was: "Do stuff." "Do the right things." "Obey commandments found in the (Old Testament) Scriptures." Jesus told the man, specifically, to obey the ten commandments, which the apostle Paul later made clear were part of the Old Testament law that has been fulfilled by Christ (Rom. 7:7 and broader context).

Hmmm...Why is the instruction Jesus gave this man so drastically different from the apostle Paul's message that "doing stuff is worth nothing when it comes to salvation, you can't earn it, it's not by works, only faith in Christ's work on the cross can save you" (my

paraphrase of Eph. 2:8-9). Why were Jesus' instructions for inheriting the kingdom of God and taking part in the next two ages of life on earth so different than the apostle Paul's?

Because Jesus' preaching to Israel was still under the Law of Moses! It was still what we modern Christians would think of as "Old Testament". It had to be, because He hadn't even died yet! I mean, what was He supposed to say to the rich young ruler, "Believe in My future death and resurrection which haven't even happened yet"?

Now let me show you the undeniable proof that Christ did not remove the requirements of the Law of Moses from Israel in His preaching to them during His time on earth, but instead *reinforced* those requirements. He commanded His disciples and the rest of the Israelites to obey the Law of Moses in Matthew 23:23.

"Then Jesus spoke to the (Israelite) crowds and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.'" (Matt. 23:23)

As part of His warning about the Pharisees' hypocrisy, Jesus plainly commanded the Israelite people and His disciples to obey the Law of Moses. The scribes and Pharisees were teachers of the Law of Moses, hence the phrase "they have seated themselves in the chair of Moses". And Jesus told the Israelites and His own disciples to obey the Law of Moses taught by the scribes and Pharisees!

Can you imagine a modern preacher or the apostle Paul saying anything remotely similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 23:23? (Not the hypocrisy warning part, the "obey the Law of Moses" part.) Can you imagine your pastor standing up in the pulpit and saying, "Obey the Law of Moses; do everything the teachers of the Law of Moses tell you to do..."? Of course not! No modern preacher would ever say such a thing! This is because modern preachers understand that Paul's gospel (which Paul started preaching many years after Jesus walked the earth) removed the requirements for Christians to obey the Law of Moses!

So you see, unlike Paul's preaching many years later, Jesus' preaching to Israel did not remove the requirement for them to obey the Law of Moses, but reinforced it!

Are you starting to see how mixing Jesus' preaching to Israel, which reinforced and commanded obedience to the Law of Moses, with Paul's preaching many years later, which removed the requirement to obey the Law of Moses and replaced it with faith in Christ's work on the cross, creates a confusing doctrinal soup? If light bulbs are starting to go on in your head, great – but keep reading, you ain't seen nothin' yet!

Check this out! Even *after* His resurrection, Jesus *still* did not explain to His disciples that the requirement for obeying the Law of Moses would one day be removed! After He rose from the dead, He explained some things to them from the Scriptures about the fact

that He had to die, etc. (Luke 24:44-49), but He still did not explain to them the whole picture of God's plan and the full purpose of His death. We know this because in Acts 1:6-7 the disciples were still only thinking about Israel ruling the earth with Jesus. At that point, just before Jesus went up into heaven, they still had no concept that Jesus had a great plan for the rest of the world too (not just Israel) and that the cross had laid the groundwork for the outworking of God's great plan for humanity. They had no idea the true magnitude of what the cross and resurrection had accomplished. They just thought it was more proof to try to convince Israel that Jesus was the Messiah.

Some time later when God poured the Holy Spirit on Gentiles (non-Israelites), the disciples were very surprised, and God had to give Peter a vision to let him know it was part of His plan to bless the Gentiles too (Acts 10:1-11:18). (And remember, when Paul was converted and began preaching as recorded in Acts 9, at that point he was still just preaching the same gospel he heard from the other disciples; he had not yet had the groundbreaking revelations we will discuss in the rest of this chapter.)

When you put Luke 24:44-49 and Matthew 28:20 together with Acts 1:4-8 you see that they are parallel passages, a description of the final instructions Jesus gave to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. Notice what Jesus told the disciples to preach, starting in Jerusalem (the center of Israel's power): *Repentance for forgiveness of sins and obedience to everything He had commanded them, which included obedience to the Law of Moses (Matt. 23:23)*. This is the same thing He and His disciples had been preaching to Israel before His death and resurrection.

Dear friends, "repentance/baptism (change of behavior, doing stuff, doing the right things instead of the wrong things, an outward show of intention, etc.) for forgiveness of sins" is an *Old Testament concept*, not what we would think of as a New Testament concept. In fact, it is the *exact opposite* of what Paul later preached in Ephesians 2:8-9: "Put your faith in what Christ accomplished on the cross, not in your own works" (my paraphrase). In Jesus' and His disciples' message to Israel, repentance (changing your ways) is what got you forgiveness. They preached "repentance *for* forgiveness of sins".

In contrast, in Paul's preaching much later on (which included, for the first time, full information about what the cross accomplished), *faith in what the cross accomplished* gives you something far greater than just forgiveness; it gives you *justification* and *makes you in your very identity the righteousness of God*. In Paul's gospel, repentance (changing your ways) is just a grateful response to what God has given you for free without you doing anything (Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18, Eph. 2:8-9). In Paul's fully informed preaching, there is no such thing as "repentance *for*" anything – what you do or don't do does not earn you a spot in the kingdom or accomplish your salvation from death (earlier than the rest of mankind at the rapture instead of at the consummation, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28).

But in Jesus' and His disciples' preaching before Paul had his revelations, repentance is what earned you a spot in the kingdom (if you were an Israelite, this works-based message

which still included obedience to the Law of Moses was not preached to anyone else). They preached repentance *for* forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:37-38). They also preached baptism *for* forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:44-49). Same idea. An outward show of changing your ways *got you something*. It was a *trigger* to get your sins forgiven and get you a spot in the coming kingdom of God on earth. But in Paul's later preaching, repentance and baptism are not a *trigger* to get you something, but a *response* to what God has given you and provided for you for free (Rom. 3:23, 10:9-10). In Paul's preaching, *faith is the trigger, not repentance*.

Modern Christianity, because of their failure to understand the distinction I'm teaching you in this chapter (between Jesus' limited under-the-Law-of-Moses message to Israel and Paul's later fully-informed message for the whole world), have made a habit of lumping the two messages together as if they are exactly the same, and one way they mentally blur and artificially glue the two together in their minds is by equating the repentance Jesus preached with the faith Paul preached. But only when we unglue these very different messages from each other will we truly understand either one. Jesus and His disciples before Paul's revelations preached *repentance as the trigger for forgiveness under the Old Testament Law of Moses*, while Paul preached *faith as the trigger for becoming the righteousness of God in Christ (with repentance as a grateful response and natural outworking of confessing Jesus as Lord), removing the requirement to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses as a means of getting "right with God" (my term)*.

These are two vastly different messages with two very different "this is the primary thing you need to do" instructions! By the end of this chapter you will understand exactly why Jesus and His disciples preached "Old Testament" instructions to Israel that later became outdated when Paul came along. You will realize that it was all part of God's plan, and you'll understand exactly why God did it this way (sending one message to Israel, which Israel failed to heed, which was then replaced by a new fully-informed message to the whole world).

For now simply remember that Jesus' and His disciples' message to Israel (even after Jesus' resurrection) before Paul came along still included the requirement to obey the Law of Moses. See Matthew 23:23 and 28:20. Nowhere in Scripture is there a record of Jesus telling His disciples that they no longer had to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses. Instead, we find a clear record of Him telling them to continue obeying it (Matt. 23:23)! And even after His resurrection He just told them to keep preaching the same thing He had preached all along: "Do stuff", "repentance – change of behavior – for forgiveness of sins", "teach others to obey everything I've commanded" (remember He commanded them to obey the Law of Moses!), etc. (Lk. 24:44-49, Matt. 28:20, Matt. 23:23). Jesus knew that the requirement to obey the Law of Moses would eventually be removed, but *while He was on earth and even in His parting instructions to the twelve disciples*, He never removed that requirement. He was saving the removal of that requirement, the full understanding of what the cross accomplished, etc., for Paul to understand and preach later.

This is confirmed by the fact that as described in Galatians 2:7-8, years after Jesus had ascended into heaven both the apostle Paul and Jesus' original disciples called the message the twelve disciples were preaching "the gospel *of the circumcision*", contrasting it with Paul's brand new "gospel *of the uncircumcision*". (If you see the word "to" instead of "of" in your Bible in this verse, it is a mistranslation, probably caused by the fact that the translators could not fathom the simple fact that the disciples were still preaching that the Law of Moses still had to be obeyed. The Greek word is "of", not "to".)

Circumcision was a requirement of the Law of Moses, and thus the disciples' still-under-the-Law-of-Moses message was dubbed "the gospel of the circumcision" – it was actually *defined by* the fact that it included the requirements of the Law of Moses! On the other hand, Paul's new message declared that you didn't have to obey the Law of Moses in order to be right with God, and thus it was dubbed "the gospel of the uncircumcision".

This is why it was very surprising to the Jewish Christians when God poured out the Holy Spirit on Gentiles too (Acts 10:1-11:18). It brought up the question in their minds, "OK, now what do we do? We obey the Law of Moses, but Gentiles don't. Are we supposed to teach them to obey the Law of Moses now?" Of course, Paul then got his revelations and "filled in the blanks" for them, letting them know that not only do Gentiles not have to obey the Law of Moses, but Israelites don't have to do it anymore either, because of what the cross accomplished. But even Paul had to continually fight off Jewish Christians who kept trying to put the requirement to obey the Law of Moses on top of Paul's gospel, because it was so hard for Israelites to conceive of the idea that the Law of Moses which they had treasured for so long was not the end goal, but just a teacher to lead us to the fullness and reality of Christ and His accomplishment on the cross.

So we must remember that to the first Israelite disciples and Christians, *the events recorded in Acts 10:1 through 11:18 were a total mind bender*. They were not expecting the Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit, and until Paul came along preaching new revelations, it had never crossed their minds that God would remove the requirement for Israelites to obey the Law of Moses! (The new covenant was prophesied in the Old Testament – see Jer. 31:31-33 and Hebrews 8:10, 10:16 for example – but Israelites in Bible days had little to no understanding of these prophecies until Paul came along and explained them.)

The book of Galatians is a letter from Paul telling the Galatian church the story of how he got a *brand new message directly from God* that he *did not learn from the original disciples* of Jesus, and how God prompted him to go share this brand new information with the original disciples. Paul was reminding the Galatians of this story so that they would resist going back to requiring obedience to the Law of Moses. Paul had taught the Galatian church his new gospel that removed the requirement to obey the Law of Moses (because his new gospel contained full information about what the cross accomplished), and he didn't want the Galatians going back to the old gospel that still included the requirements of the Law.

So that's Fact #3: Jesus' preaching and earthly ministry to Israel was under the Old Testament Law of Moses; He never removed the requirement to obey the Law of Moses while He was on earth, but actually commanded that it still be obeyed. Even after Jesus' death and resurrection, His disciples continued to preach the same "repentance for forgiveness of sins", "obey the commandments", "do stuff" message under the Old Testament Law of Moses up until (and even for a short while after, see Gal. 2:7-12) Paul came and talked to them about his new "you don't have to obey the Law of Moses anymore" gospel as recorded in Galatians chapters 1 and 2.

All right, let's keep moving, to Fact #4. Again, as you stick with me all these related facts are going to gel together and become a very clear picture in your mind. You can probably already begin to feel a fog of confusion that you barely realized was there when you read the New Testament, being lifted from your mind.

Fact #4: During Jesus' earthly ministry and afterward, up until the apostle Paul came along, Israel and Jesus' disciples were looking for Rambo Messiah; they only understood the Old Testament prophecies that Israel would one day rule over the earth with the Messiah, and had no conception of what the cross had accomplished or God's grand plan for humanity.

When the Israelites living 2,000 years ago heard claims that Jesus was the Messiah, their first thought was, "OK, so when are you going to whip the Romans and rule over the earth with us?" If you read the Gospels (the Biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) you will notice that the Israelites and Jesus' own disciples continually said things that reveal they were waiting for Jesus to do this.

To put it simply, the Israelites were waiting for Rambo Messiah (my term). This was the great hope of every Israelite; they all knew the Old Testament prophecies about this event (such as Isaiah 11-12, 14:1-2, etc.). Even to this day most Jews do not accept that Jesus was the Messiah because the first time He came to earth He did not do the main thing they were expecting the Messiah to do!

This was why even Jesus' own disciples were utterly confused when Jesus began to try to prepare them for the fact that He was going to die. Remember how Peter even dared to rebuke Jesus, saying in essence, "You can't DIE! You're the Messiah!" (Matt. 16:21-23) Jesus had to rebuke Peter in return, saying, "You have man's – Israel's – selfish short-term goals in mind, not God's big long-term goals in mind." (That's my paraphrase; Jesus actually used the terms "the things of men" and "the things of God".) **Please catch the significance of this conversation! Peter – who had probably heard every word Jesus had preached for the greater part of two to three years – had no concept of God's grander purpose for Christ to die!** And notice that even though Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for the fact that He was going to have to die, He still didn't explain to them the grander purpose for His death.

Of course, John the Baptist had prophesied that Jesus was the Lamb that would take away the sin of the whole world (Jn. 1:29). But John's prophecy about this grander aspect of God's plan evidently did not sink in to the minds of the Israelites or the disciples; they certainly didn't realize that Jesus had to die to accomplish this goal. Even John the Baptist himself later doubted that Christ was the Messiah, probably because Jesus did not do the one thing all Israelites were expecting the Messiah to do, take over the world by force - see Luke 7:19-20. Jesus' reply to John's doubting was simply to point to His miracles. He did not even explain to John the Baptist the full meaning of John the Baptist's own prophecy about the Messiah taking away the sins of the world! (Remember, it was quite possible for Old Testament prophets - of whom John the Baptist was one - to prophesy things they did not fully understand. See Daniel 12:8-9 for example.)

So Acts 1:6-7 tells us that *even after* Christ's death and resurrection, Peter and the other disciples *still had no clue* about the true, grand purpose of Christ's death and resurrection. At the time they thought it was *just additional proof that Christ was the Messiah, a convincing sign* to convince Israelites that Jesus was Messiah so that the nation of Israel would accept Him and the prophesied Rambo Messiah plan could move forward with Israel on board, ready to serve as His leadership team as Jesus forcibly began to rule over the earth as prophesied in the Old Testament. They had no clue (see Acts 1:6-7) that it would be another couple thousand years before what we now call the millennium rule of Christ would occur; they thought it would occur within their lifetimes. In the next fact I share (Fact #5) I will explain why they thought this.

Unfortunately, modern Christians tend to lump Peter's preaching at the beginning of Acts in the "New Testament" category, as if it is the same thing as Paul's preaching later. But it's not. It's still the same "baptism/repentance for forgiveness of sins under-the-Law of Moses" message Jesus and the disciples were preaching before His death and resurrection. At the beginning of Acts Peter is excited by the fact that the resurrection was proof of Jesus' Messiahship and that the Holy Spirit had come to empower them to prove that Jesus was alive. If you read Peter's sermons recorded in Acts 2:13-40 and 3:12-26 you will see that he does not mention anything about what the cross accomplished, justification, becoming the righteousness of God in Christ, or any of the amazing stuff that was revealed by Paul's preaching later.

Don't be confused by certain things Peter said in these sermons that sound to a modern Christian like they are similar to what Paul preached. You have to put yourself in Peter's shoes, and his audience's shoes (in their mindset, which is revealed by Acts 1:6-7) in order to properly understand these phrases.

For example, Peter said in Acts 2:39, "For the promise (of the Holy Spirit) is for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself". This sounds to the modern Christian as if Peter is saying, "Anyone worldwide will be able to receive the Holy Spirit". Yet later on (Acts 10), God had to give Peter a special vision to let him know that it

was OK for non-Israelites to receive the Holy Spirit! What gives? Was Peter schizophrenic? Of course not. When he said, “The promise (of the Holy Spirit) is for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” in Acts 2:39, he obviously meant “all *Israelites* who are far off, as many *Israelites* as the Lord our God will call to Himself”. Remember, his audience in Acts 2 was *all Israelites*, and the prophecy he quoted earlier in that sermon (from Joel) was about *Israel* (“the Holy Spirit will be poured out on *your* sons and daughters”), and *only Israel*, at least in their minds at that time. Peter was trying to get *Israel* to listen to the message and believe Jesus was the Messiah so that Jesus could return and have His leadership team (in their minds, this was *only Israel*) ready and waiting to help Him rule the earth.

And don’t be confused by Acts 4:12, where Peter says, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which *we* must be saved.” The “*we*” here is *Israelites*. Peter was not talking about “being saved from hell” (as modern Christians think) or about salvation from death being made available to the whole world, a concept only brought to light later by Paul; Peter was talking about *Israel* being saved from the rulership of the Romans. This is confirmed by his statement in Acts 2:36, “Let all *the house of Israel* know that God has made Him (Jesus) both Lord and Christ”. The word “Christ” means “Messiah”. Same word. Peter was trying to convince his Israelite audience that Jesus was the Messiah who would save them from Roman rule (the primary purpose of the Messiah in their minds).

By the end of this chapter you will be able to read through Peter’s sermons in Acts 2:13-40, 3:12-26, and 10:34-48, and understand them perfectly. You will understand *why* he was still preaching the same basic message that Jesus and the disciples were preaching before the cross (“repentance/baptism for forgiveness of sins, believe that Jesus is the Messiah, keep obeying the Old Testament Law of Moses, and if we Israelites do this collectively Jesus the Messiah will save us from Roman rule”), and you will understand *why* Jesus did not give the twelve disciples a brand-new message about what the cross accomplished, but saved that message for Paul to preach later.

The key to understanding Peter’s sermons at the beginning of Acts, Stephen’s defense in Acts 7, and Peter’s Acts 10 sermon (after he realized that non-Israelites could receive the Holy Spirit too), is Peter’s statements in Acts 2:32, 36, Acts 2:37-38, 40, Acts 3:18-19, 23, 26, and Acts 10:39, 42-43, 47-48. These statements make it clear that the disciples at this time were still merely trying to:

1) be witnesses of Christ’s resurrection in order to prove to Israel that Jesus was the Messiah (so that Jesus would return to be Rambo Messiah ASAP), and

2) preach repentance/baptism for forgiveness of sins as well as obedience to the Law of Moses (so that Jesus would return to be Rambo Messiah ASAP).

By the end of this chapter you will fully understand why they were trying so hard to get Israel to listen to them *before* going to the rest of the world, and why they were still so *Israel-centered* in their thinking. The bottom line is that in their mindset, getting Israel to believe that Jesus was the Messiah was the key to “the restoration of all things” and “times of refreshing coming from the presence (return) of the Lord” (terms Peter used in Acts 3:19-21), by which they meant the return of the Messiah to rule over the earth by force, or what we would call the millennium. In their minds, if Israel believed that Jesus was their Messiah, repented and were baptized, changing their ways with an outward sign and having their sins forgiven as a result, then the Messiah would have a good leadership team ready and He could return to forcibly rule over the earth with Israel. They didn’t understand that God had more to His grand plan than this. Nor did they understand that repentance *for* forgiveness of sins (works) under the Law of Moses would never be good enough, and that Israel would need far more than just attempts to be better on their own in order to be qualified to rule with Christ. They would only find that out later when Paul came to explain to them why Israel wouldn’t listen to them. (I’ll explain it later in this chapter.)

The term “gospel of the circumcision” used in Galatians 2:7 tells us that even many years later (long after Peter’s Acts 2, 3, and 10 sermons) the disciples were still preaching the same limited “Old Testament, under the Law of Moses” message that they were preaching with Jesus before Jesus’ death and resurrection! Until Paul came along as recorded in Galatians 1-2 and explained it to them, the original twelve disciples were completely clueless about what the cross accomplished for all mankind.

I know this is hard for a modern Christian to grasp, but as I said at the beginning of this chapter, *if you were a contemporary of Jesus’ first disciples, you would not need anyone to explain any of this to you, because you would have been living through it.* If you or I were to walk up to one of Jesus’ disciples shortly after His resurrection and start talking about justification by faith, becoming the righteousness of God in Christ, “not by works but by faith” etc. etc., they would look at you like you were speaking another language. *No one understood those things until God gave Paul revelation about them (Gal. 1:11-12, Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26).*

In Acts 2 God gave the disciples the Holy Spirit to empower them to preach and demonstrate God’s power as proof of Jesus’ Messiahship and Lordship. Then in Acts 10 God showed Peter that non-Israelites could receive the Holy Spirit too. This was a major surprise to Peter! He was thinking that Israel would be the only leadership team Jesus would have or need when He returned to rule the earth, and thus only Israelites would receive the Holy Spirit to empower them to lead. Peter knew the rest of the nations would be made to obey God’s rules when Jesus returned and that they could be forgiven of their sins if they repented (Matt. 28:18-19, Lk. 24:44-49), but he thought only Israelites would ever get the Holy Spirit as empowering proof of Jesus’ Messiahship and empowering for preaching and leading. When he saw God pour the Holy Spirit out on non-Israelites, he said, “Oh well, it looks like these guys might as well get baptized (their formula for receiving forgiveness of sins, see Acts 2:38) too.”

The key to understand is that *despite “the great commission” Jesus gave His disciples, it did not even cross Peter’s mind to go to non-Israelites to try to give them the same experience they had with God, until God essentially forced him to do so.* By the end of this chapter you will understand *why* Peter and the other disciples did not go to the rest of the world yet, and were still totally focused on getting Israel to listen to their message first.

Modern Christians read Acts 10 and think, “Duh, Peter! Are you stupid! *Of course* God wants non-Israelites to receive the Holy Spirit too!” This is because we modern Christians *now have the benefit of reading Paul’s preaching, which came later and fully explains God’s purpose for the whole world.* But in Acts 10 (and even much later, see Galatians 1-2), Peter knew nothing of the cool stuff Paul preached later about what the cross accomplished for all mankind, which we modern Christians take for granted.

Peter had a conception that God would *use Israel* to bless the rest of the world, but his idea of how this would occur *was limited to Jesus ruling the world by force with Israel, thus bringing peace and prosperity to the world through their benevolent rule* (what we would now call the millennium). Peter had no idea that there was any plan beyond this, beyond what we would now call the millennium. He had no idea that God wanted to bless the rest of the world not just by ruling forcefully (enforcing benevolent rules and laws rather than exploitative rule like we have in this age) with Israel for a while, but also – in a far, far, far greater way – through what the cross accomplished (justification for all mankind, which would eventually allow God to become “all in all”, see Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24, and 1 Cor. 15:22-28). Peter’s limited “millennium mindset” is proven by this statement he made to Israelites in his sermon to them recorded in Acts 3:25-26:

“It is you (Israelites!) who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed.’ For you first (Israelites first, then the rest of the world), God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless YOU by turning every one from your wicked ways.”

In this sermon shortly after Jesus’ resurrection, Peter said that the whole world will be blessed through Israel. But when you read the second sentence above, notice *how* he says the families of the earth will be blessed through Israel (Abraham’s seed). Peter did not explain about what the cross accomplished and how what Jesus did on the cross would bless the whole world. Nope. He was clueless about that. Instead, he explained to his Israelite audience something that is true, and will actually occur (in the millennium), but Peter thought it would happen *very soon after he was preaching it, not over 2,000 years later.* Peter explained to his Israelite audience how the rest of the earth will be blessed because Israel turns from its wicked ways (baptism/repentance for forgiveness of sins), thus (in his mind) qualifying Israel to rule the earth with Christ and reach the rest of the world to do the same: *“For you first (Israelites first, then the rest of the world), God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless YOU by turning every one from your wicked ways.”*

In Peter's mind, this is all under the Law of Moses! Jesus had never removed the requirement to obey the Law of Moses, but instead commanded the disciples to obey it and commanded them to tell everybody else to obey it too! Read Matthew 23:1, 23 and 28:20!

But to the modern Christian this sounds the same as what Paul preached later; the modern Christian erroneously lumps everything Jesus and Peter preached in with what Paul preached later, forming one confusing pot of soup that fails to distinguish between the *purpose* of repentance in Jesus' and Peter's message vs. Paul's message. The modern Christian reads Peter's words to Israel in Acts 3:25-26 and thinks, "Well, of course we're supposed to turn from our wicked ways." However, what Peter is talking about here is very different than what Paul talked about later. Under Paul's preaching, repentance is required, but it is not the primary action that produces the desired result; the primary action is *faith* in the resurrection so as to receive the free gift of justification accomplished for us at the cross. But in Acts 3 Peter is talking about repentance not as a response, but as the main *trigger*, the main action, that will *cause* blessing to come to the world. Peter in Acts 3 is saying that the world would be blessed *by* (because of) Israel turning from their wicked ways (works!), which would *qualify* them to rule the earth with Christ (HUH? Repentance *qualifying* you for anything? Only faith in the cross truly qualifies us! This is very different than Paul!). And in Peter's mind, once all Israel repented, the rest of the world would also turn from its wicked ways (either by being forced to obey Jesus' rules/laws, or by agreeing to be baptized for forgiveness of sins, see Matt. 28:18-20, Lk. 24:44-49.) Peter in Acts 3 is talking about *works under the Law of Moses*, while Paul later talked about *faith through grace*, which *replaced* works under the Law of Moses!

This is why Jesus' and Peter's works-based, still-under-the-Law-of-Moses message to Israel was *destined to fail* – *in God's grand plan it was destined to be rejected by Israel*. (I'll explain this to you more fully later in this chapter, for now just take a peek at Romans 11:7-10, 25.) Before Paul came along, Peter did not realize that man's works were destined to failure as a method for accomplishing anything good, and thus the entire "repentance for forgiveness of sins and trying to continue to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses" message Jesus and the twelve disciples preached to Israel was destined by God from the beginning *to fail* as a testimony to point to the need for what the cross accomplished (Rom. 11:7-10, 25-26, 32, Gal. 3:24). After the resurrection Jesus assigned Peter and the disciples the task of continuing to preach the same Old Testament message they had been preaching before His death...but did not tell them that this message was destined to fail! (Jesus knew that Paul would explain it to them later after it failed and Israel on the whole didn't listen or behave even with the resurrection as proof, see Galatians 1-2.)

So Acts 3:24-26 reveals that Peter's mindset at the time of that sermon was exactly the same as it was in Acts 1:6-7 when the disciples asked Jesus when "the kingdom would be restored to Israel". They had only one thing in mind: getting Israel to believe Jesus was the Messiah (with the resurrection as added proof and the Holy Spirit as added help) so that Israel would repent/obey-the-Law-of-Moses-better, showing it with baptism as an outward sign, in order to prepare the nation of Israel to be Jesus' leadership team when He

returned to earth to rule by force. Unfortunately most modern Christians fail to realize that Peter's preaching even after Jesus' resurrection in the beginning of Acts was *still under the Law of Moses*, was only designed to prepare Israel to rule the earth with Rambo Messiah, and *contained no information about what the cross accomplished for all of mankind*.

If you find this hard to believe, do one simple thing: Try to find a record in Scripture of someone saying "It's no longer necessary for Israel to obey the Law of Moses", *before* Paul came along. *You won't find it. Paul was the first person to preach that.*

Again, by the end of this chapter you will fully understand all this. For now simply realize that if you read all the way through the Gospels (the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the beginning of the book of Acts, you will not find a single time when Jesus gave a detailed explanation to Israel or even to His own disciples about the grand purpose of the cross and God's grand plan for mankind. He only made a few passing comments about these things, hints that "there's a grander plan here" (e.g. John 12:32), which no one, not even His own disciples, understood. Before His death Jesus gave a few warnings to His disciples that He would have to die (e.g. John 20:28), but the disciples didn't understand why He would have to die (Matt. 16:21-22) and even after His resurrection they just thought His death and resurrection was proof that He was Messiah; they didn't realize all that the cross had accomplished (Acts 1:6-7, 2:32, 36).

This was why an Israelite leader named Nicodemus was so confused that he took the time to seek out Jesus and ask Him what He was all about (John 3). Nic at Nite could not figure out how this man Jesus, who did so many miracles that it was exceedingly obvious God was with Him, could be the Messiah *when He had not yet done the one thing they were all expecting the Messiah to do – take over rulership of the world by force*. Jesus tried to explain it to Nic. He tried to tell Nic that Israel ("you" – plural in the Greek) "must be born again", or have a supernatural change of heart (far greater concept than repentance/baptism for forgiveness of sins, because it depended on God's supernatural working rather than man's effort), in order to be ready/qualified to rule with Him. Jesus essentially said, "I can't just take over the world, Nic! Israel must have right hearts to rule the world with Me! When I rule the earth I can't have a leadership team that's just as sinful as the rest of the world! And Israel is never going to be good enough just by doing their best to obey rules and the Law of Moses! They are going to need a supernatural work of God in their hearts (being "born again") that goes far beyond just trying harder (repentance)!"

Today we know that Israel will be given this supernatural change of heart (as prophesied in Isaiah 66:8, Jer. 31:31-33, etc.) at the beginning of the millennium, and Israel will rule the earth during the millennium with Christ along with raptured Christians (Is. 14:1-2, Rev. 20:4-5). But Nic didn't know that. Jesus told Nic that he should already understand the concept that Israel needed a supernatural change of heart because it was prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures in Isaiah 66:8, but Nic, like the rest of Israel's leaders, was clueless in this regard. So even though Nic was asking questions, Jesus didn't –

couldn't – go into a whole lot of detail because Nic didn't understand even the most basic things He was saying.

Nic was simply not in the frame of mind to understand what Jesus was trying to tell him about God's grander plan, because Nic was an Israelite, and like all Israelites, he had a Rambo Messiah mindset, and he wanted it to happen ASAP. Hearing that God had a grand plan that would require waiting another 2,000+ years wasn't exactly what they wanted to hear. (This is very similar to modern Christians who want God to win *now*, and don't want to hear that God will allow Satan to rule over the earth for a little while longer – making things get worse and worse for a while longer – because He has a purpose for allowing it in His grand plan.) Because Nic took the time to seek Him out, Jesus was nice enough to try to give Nic the basics of what He was all about (He had come to put God's grand plan into motion) and to try to explain to Nic why He hadn't yet done the Rambo Messiah thing (Israel needed to be “born again” or given a supernatural change of heart in order to be qualified to reign with Him, not just try to be better at obeying the Law of Moses). But Jesus didn't give a whole lot of detail because Nic was not even close to being ready to understand it.

Jesus gave more information to Nic at Nite than to almost anyone else during His earthly ministry, because Nic asked Him a direct question (“What are you *really* all about? It's obvious God is with You but if You're the Messiah why haven't You done the Rambo Messiah thing yet?”) – a question that not even Jesus' disciples ever asked Him! Remember that Peter simply assumed Jesus' agenda was the same as his own, and rebuked Jesus when He said He was going to have to die. Also remember that after the resurrection Jesus explained to His disciples from the Old Testament Scriptures the prophecies about His death and resurrection, but still did not explain to them what the cross had truly accomplished beyond that it was a fulfillment of prophecy and that the resurrection was now additional proof that He was the Messiah.

John 20:29, Luke 24:25-27, 44-49 and Acts 3:18 tell us that after His resurrection Jesus only explained to the disciples the Old Testament prophecies about the fact that He would have to die and rise from the dead, and that “repentance for forgiveness of sins” –an Old Testament concept that operated before the cross, and did not need the cross to operate – was to be preached to Israel first, and then after Israel listened, worldwide (Acts 1:7-8). By the end of this chapter you will understand why Jesus told the disciples to keep preaching an “Old Testament gospel” to Israel and then (if Israel listened/obeyed it) to the rest of the world. The key to understand for now is that in these passages there is no record of Jesus explaining to His disciples what the cross accomplished (the justification of all mankind) as Paul explained later (Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10, Rom. 11:32, etc.).

And notice John 21:21-23 where Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection, “As the Father has sent Me” (to preach a message of repentance for forgiveness of sins that included the Law of Moses) “I also send you.” Jesus *told them to keep preaching the same primary*

message He had preached, which included obedience to the Law of Moses! Then He reiterated it by saying, “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” It was all about forgiveness of sins, an Old Testament concept that did not require the cross to work. And notice how Jesus even told them that if they did not forgive a person’s sins, that person’s sins would be “retained”! This is *the exact opposite* of Paul’s preaching in Romans 3:23-24 and Romans 5:18, etc., which declare that the cross accomplished the justification of all mankind, not counting mankind’s sins against them because the cross had paid the price for all mankind’s sin.

In other words, at the cross God said, “I’m not going to retain *anyone’s* sins because all sin has now been paid for”...but He didn’t reveal to mankind that this is what happened at the cross until Paul came along! Before Paul came along, God wanted the works-based “repentance/baptism for forgiveness of sins” message that still included obedience to the Law of Moses to be preached one more time to Israel – so Jesus instructed the disciples to do this (Acts 1:6-8, Matt. 28:18-20, Lk. 24:44-49). Although God instructed Jesus to command the disciples to start with Israel and then go to the rest of the world with this message, God and Jesus both knew (Acts 1:7) that Israel on the whole would not heed this message or behave well enough for this message to reach the rest of the world. God also knew that after Israel rejected this message a second time (through the disciples preaching after the resurrection) He would then assign Paul to preach about what the cross accomplished, effectively replacing the old “gospel of the (possibly soon-coming) kingdom (through obedience/repentance/works)” with Paul’s new, fully informed gospel. (See Rom. 11:7-10, 25 and the rest of this chapter.)

So after His resurrection Jesus’ disciples were instructed by Jesus to keep preaching the same Old Testament message (Jn. 20:21-23, Lk. 24:44-49, Matt. 28:18-20), and even His explanations of the Scriptural prophecies He had fulfilled were limited to what they needed to keep preaching this Old Testament message with the resurrection as added proof and the Holy Spirit as added help/power.

Before His death, Jesus told His disciples that He would later send them the Holy Spirit to help them *learn things over time that He could not explain to them at that time because they were not capable of understanding it or were not emotionally ready to handle it (could not “bear it”) right then* – see John 16:12-13.

But amazingly, even before Jesus died, a curious guy named Nicodemus asked Jesus a direct question that prompted Him to give Nic more detailed information concerning God’s grand plan than He gave anyone else during His earthly ministry: “You’re obviously from God, but You haven’t done the main thing we expect the Messiah to do, so *what is going on?*” (my paraphrase of John 3:2). Little did Nicodemus know that he was opening a can of worms that really was not supposed to be opened until Paul came along. But because of Nic’s hunger and willingness to ask a fairly perceptive question (“There’s more going on here than you’re letting on Jesus, what is it?”), Jesus was nice enough to give him at least the basics of an answer of the true/full/ultimate purpose of why He had come. “What was

going on” was that Jesus was ultimately following God’s grand plan, not Israel’s self-centered “we want to rule the earth with Messiah ASAP regardless of how ready we are to do so” agenda. So in John 3 Jesus gave Nic at Nite *three basic pieces of information* that Nic had a very hard time comprehending because of his Israelite Rambo-Messiah mindset:

1) *Israel’s hearts had to be supernaturally changed in order to rule with the Messiah.* Jesus told Nic he should already understand this one because it was prophesied in the Old Testament, of which Nic was a teacher (Is. 66:8, 20-24).

2) *Some people in this age will believe in Christ and will get eonian life (life in the next two ages, in the kingdom of God on earth).* Modern Christians take these words of Christ in John 3:16 for granted because we can read Paul’s in-depth explanation of this concept in the rest of the New Testament. We forget that John 3:16 was not something Jesus preached publicly to Israel; it was spoken in private, at night, to one man who didn’t really understand it. Nic would have taken the phrase “whoever believes in Him” to mean “whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah”, *not* “whoever believes in what Jesus accomplished on the cross”, because at the time of that conversation Jesus had not even died yet and Jesus had not explained what the cross would accomplish! Modern Christians, on the other hand, assume Jesus meant, “whoever believes in what the cross accomplished”, because we have the benefit of reading Paul’s explanations about what the cross accomplished in the rest of the New Testament. Nicodemus had no concept of what the cross would accomplish because like most Israelites he was clueless about the meaning of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the cross that today seem so obvious to modern Christians. So Nic would have partially understood John 3:16 (because he knew what “eonian life” was and understood that Jesus wanted Israel to believe He was the Messiah), but not fully like we modern Christians can understand it today because we have the added benefit of the apostle Paul’s in-depth explanations in the rest of the New Testament.

3) *Jesus’ ultimate purpose was the salvation of the whole world.* This would have been brand new information to Nic; it would have blown his mind. Modern Christians tend to stop reading at John 3:16 and fail to see that John 3:16 is only part of the story. Unfortunately, most modern Christians erroneously think Jesus will fail at the ultimate goal He stated in John 3:17 (as if God could ever fail). Verse 17 was Jesus’ plain declaration that His Father’s goal was to save everyone through Him. Because modern Christians have inherited a pagan belief in eternal punishment from Catholicism (reinforced by mistranslations of a few key words in their English Bibles), they tend to gloss over the many verses in Paul’s later writings that plainly declare that God will accomplish this ultimate goal (and has already done it in principle through the cross), and the verses where he explains in detail exactly how it will be accomplished (1 Cor. 15:20-28, James 1:18, Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10, 1 Tim. 4:10, Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 8:20-21, Rom. 11:32-36, Phil. 2:10-11).

Simply put, Jesus gave Nic at Nite a brief overview of God’s grand plan not just for Israel, but also for what we would now call Christians (those who have faith in this age), as well as God’s ultimate plan for humanity. To put it another way, Jesus gave Nic the Cliff’s

Notes version of 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, James 1:18, 1 Timothy 4:10, Romans 3:23-24, Romans 5:18, Colossians 1:20, etc (all the writings of Paul about God's grand plan for all mankind and the basic steps involved in it). If you read James 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, and Romans 8:20-21 next to John 3:16-17, they match up perfectly. But Jesus' explanation went right over Nic's head because most of it was outside the box of his typical Israelite "the Messiah's primary purpose is to be our Rambo deliverer and to rule over the world with us by force" thinking. This is why Jesus said in John 16:12-13 that His disciples "could not bear" the things He wanted to tell them; like Nicodemus, they simply were not in a mindset to be able to understand God's grand plan. Their hopes were completely set on seeing Rambo Messiah do His Rambo thing and seeing themselves and Israel rule the earth with Him ASAP.

This was not because they were stupid or any worse than we Christians today; it's just that God was choosing not to reveal His grand plan to them at that time. Jesus purposefully restricted Himself to preaching only a limited message to Israel (John 8:28), and only made a few passing comments about God's grander plan for humanity, because that was His Father's assignment for Him at that time. In John 12:32 (and a couple of other similar short/passing statements He made to Israel recorded in the Gospels) He gave a sneak preview of the fact that His death on the cross would accomplish the salvation of all mankind. But no one in His Israelite audience even remotely understood these statements at the time, although His disciples obviously remembered these statements (because of their seemingly mysterious nature these statements were probably easy to remember), and they were later written down in what was later became the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible. Jesus' disciples many years later came to understand these previously-mysterious statements He made, when Paul came along and explained to them what the cross had accomplished.

So that's Fact #4. Even after Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples still had no concept of God's grand purpose for the cross; they were still only looking for Rambo Messiah. Jesus didn't correct them or teach them about this in detail, even after His resurrection! Nor did He explain to them at that time anything about God's grand plan or the full purpose of the cross! As recorded in Acts 1:6-8, He just coyly replied to their question about when He would be Rambo Messiah, "It's not for you to know when the Rambo Messiah thing is going to happen. For now, go testify that I rose from the dead, be witnesses of My resurrection, and prove it with the supernatural power and help provided by the Holy Spirit. Keep preaching the same thing I've been preaching and you've been preaching all along – repentance for forgiveness of sins, obeying the Law of Moses, doing good things instead of bad things, etc. Go to Israel first (to try to prepare them to be My leadership team when I return by getting them to behave and obey the Law of Moses well enough), and then (if Israel listens) go to the rest of the world with the same rules/message."

Our next fact will reveal *why* Jesus did not correct the disciples in Acts chapter 1 or tell them anything about God's grand plan at that time, but instead told them to keep

preaching the same limited under-the-Law-of-Moses message and let them keep thinking for awhile that He might return as Rambo Messiah at any moment:

(Get ready, this is the master key to understanding this whole chapter and the preaching of Jesus...)

Fact # 5: Jesus' primary message to Israel was "the gospel (good news) of the kingdom": "I'll be Rambo Messiah NOW, in this generation (2,000 years ago), IF you (overall, as a nation) accept that I am the Messiah and behave well enough."

Jesus' main message to Israel was what is repeatedly referred to in the Gospels as "the gospel of the Kingdom", most frequently stated as "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near."

What most Christians don't realize is that the phrase "has drawn near" *not only* meant that Jesus was demonstrating Kingdom power through miracles, but *it also meant* "has drawn *chronologically* near" – in other words, "Repent, because the kingdom of God *may come fully to earth soon, in this generation, within your lifetimes.*"

The reason most Christians don't realize that the phrase "has drawn near" meant "may come fully to earth very soon, in this generation", is that several of Christ's other statements that make this fact exceedingly clear contain a Greek verb tense that is difficult to translate into English. This verb tense often gets translated in our English Bibles without its all-important *conditional* meaning, causing modern English-speaking Christians to completely miss the true meaning of Jesus' primary message to Israel at that time in history.

Most Christians are completely unaware that Jesus was offering Israel a chance to see the full Rambo-Messiah version of the kingdom come to earth *in that generation*, because of this difficult-to-translate Greek verb tense used in several statements Jesus made such as Matthew 24:34. People who try to "debunk" the Bible love Matthew 24:34. It's their favorite verse! Why? Because it's a statement made by Jesus that is obviously untrue – *if* you fail to translate it accurately. Let me quote you this verse from the New International Version.

"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

This statement seems to be an obvious falsehood spoken by Jesus! He said all sorts of (what we would now call) "end time" events and the rapture would occur, and the kingdom of God would come to earth *within the generation of those alive at that time!* And that certainly didn't happen! He (seemingly) repeated the same thing as recorded in other places in the Bible too, such as Luke 9:27, Mark 9:1, and Matthew 16:28. So that makes Jesus a liar, right? Wrong.

The Greek verb tense used in Matthew 24:34 and the other verses I just mentioned, is clumsy to translate into English. And if you don't translate the verb tense correctly, accurately, and thoroughly, the meaning of Jesus' statement changes from a *true and revealing* statement to a *false* statement. Jesus made a *true and revealing* statement, but clumsy and over-simplified translating turns it into a *false* statement in many English Bibles.

You see, most Bible translators want a lot of people to read (buy) their "Bible versions", so they usually err on the side of being easy to read rather than accurate, complete, and thorough. That's why if you read Matthew 24:34 or the other verses I mentioned above in most English Bibles, you will not understand what Jesus said at all, because in order to translate the Greek verb tense into English accurately, you have to be more wordy and less "streamlined and easy to read" than most Bible translators want their Bible versions to be. So let's look at Matthew 24:34 in The Concordant Version, a translation that focuses on extreme accuracy rather than erring on the side of "readability".

"Verily, I am saying to you that by no means may this generation be passing by till all these things should be occurring."

Let's also look at the other similar statements Jesus made, in The Concordant Version:

"Verily I am saying to you that there are some of those standing here who under no circumstances should be tasting death till they should be perceiving the Son of Mankind coming in His kingdom." – Matt. 16:28

"Now I am saying to you, truly there are some of those standing here who under no circumstances should be tasting death till they should be perceiving the kingdom of God." – Lk. 9:27

"Verily, I am saying to you that there are some of those standing here who under no circumstances should be tasting death till they should be perceiving the kingdom of God having come in power." – Mk. 9:1

Most modern English Bibles simply translate Matthew 24:34 as if Jesus is saying, "Surely this generation will not die until all these things take place". They mistranslate this and the other verses I mentioned using the word "will" instead of "should". But Jesus' statement is recorded in these verses using a Greek verb tense that is hinted at in the Concordant Version's use of the words "may" and "should".

The Greek verb tense used in the words that are translated "may" and "should", shows conditionality. In other words, the Greek makes it clear that Jesus was *not* saying it's a sure thing, He was saying "Surely I say to you that *if certain conditions are fulfilled*, these things will happen in this generation."

It's the same thing as me saying to my son, "Surely I say to you that *if you get an A on your test, then I will take you out for ice cream.*" It's only a sure thing *if a certain*

condition is fulfilled!

Don't be confused by the phrase "under no circumstances" as translated in The Concordant Version in a couple of Jesus' statements quoted above, such as in Mark 9:1: "*There are some of those standing here who under no circumstances should be tasting death till they should be perceiving the kingdom of God having come in power.*". In the Greek it's basically just "no not" – kind of a no with emphasis. Young's Literal does not translate it "under no circumstances", but simply leaves that phrase or extra word of emphasis out and says, "*There are certain of those standing here, who may not taste of death till they see the reign of God having come in power.*" (Mark 9:1) The Concordant Version is great because they are the most accurate English version I know of, and a huge reason for this is their insistence on always using the same English word or phrase without variation to translate a Greek word no matter where it appears, so that the English reader can tell that the word/phrase is the same. This eliminates the confusion caused when readability-focused Bible versions use several different English words in various places in Scripture to translate a single Greek word. But this great strength of The Concordant Version can every once in a while turn into a tiny bit of a weakness in the sense that it leaves absolutely no breathing room for any variation in degrees of emphasis for a couple of Greek words like "no not". "Under no circumstances" may accurately convey the "double no" emphasis of the Greek "no not" in other verses or statements in the New Testament about different subjects, but may be a bit overboard in, say, Mark 9:1. If the English translation does not match the Greek 100% perfectly (which is very often the case when translating from one language to another), it will *basically* work from verse to verse, but it may be *just a little bit off* in some verses. This is an inherent problem with translating from one language to another – the nuances of meaning that would have been naturally and effortlessly understood by native speakers are very difficult to translate into another language. That's why it's so helpful to have at least a couple of accuracy-focused versions to reference; I look at The Concordant Version first, which is in general the most accurate version I know of; and sometimes I reference Young's Literal Translation as well, which sometimes helps me round out my understanding, in a case like this.

In all the statements Jesus made that I quoted above, the key we must not miss is the verb tense used in the Greek that is translated in the Concordant and Young's Literal as "may" and/or "should". Jesus was not saying "it's a sure thing no matter what that these things will happen before this generation passes away"; instead He was saying it would be a sure thing *if* certain conditions were fulfilled! But *if* the conditions were *not* fulfilled, those events would *not* come in that generation. God was basically saying to the Israelites of that generation, "If you do your part, I will surely do My part."

So, what exactly were the conditions that had to be fulfilled in order for the end of this evil age to come and for Jesus to resurrect righteous men in the rapture and forcibly take over and rule the world with Israel *within that generation* (as described in Matthew 24:1-34)? Obviously, for Jesus to take over the world within that generation (within the lifetimes of those who heard Him say this), that generation of Israelites would have had to repent

(behave, obey the commandments of the Law well enough, etc.), believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and willingly serve Him. Otherwise, how could the Scriptural prophecies be fulfilled that Israel would rule the world with Christ? If Israel didn't even accept Jesus as the Messiah and obey Him, how could they rule with Him?

This was why Jesus and His disciples were constantly telling Israel to “repent for the kingdom of heaven is near” – “Change your behavior guys! Obey the commandments! Obey the Old Testament Law of Moses well! Stop slacking! Stop slipping! Change your attitude and actions! Do good things, not bad things! Believe Jesus is the Messiah! Believe the kingdom can come soon! Now's your chance to get it right! Now's your chance to reign with Messiah!”

You see, in the next age, the millennium (the 1,000-yr. reign of Christ on earth), Israel *will* reign over the earth with Christ. God will *supernaturally* (not by Israelites “being good” or “repenting” in their own power, but by God supernaturally giving them a new heart attitude) qualify Israel to rule with Him. This is prophesied in Ezekiel 26:16-38, where God says He will give Israel a new heart and a new spirit and they will live in the land of their forefathers, and in Isaiah 66:5-24, where God predicts how at the beginning of the millennium, Israel will be “born in a day” along with many more details about the transition between this age and the next. (Note that today only some Israelites live in the land of their forefathers, and they certainly have not been given a new heart or a new spirit; so we know these prophecies have not been fulfilled yet.)

This is why Jesus told Nicodemus, “You (plural, you Israelites) must be born again.” Ezekiel 26:16-38 and Isaiah 66:5-24 must be fulfilled; Israel must supernaturally be given a new heart attitude so they can reign benevolently and wisely with Christ. We now know that this prophecy was not fulfilled in Christ's generation, because they did not meet the requirements of “being good enough” (repenting, obeying the Law of Moses well enough), and God did not give them a supernatural heart attitude change at that time, so they were not qualified to reign with Christ at that time. Instead, these prophecies will be fulfilled and Israel (having failed to be “good enough” on their own as proven by their rejection of Christ and His disciples “be good enough” message both before and after Christ's death and resurrection) will be supernaturally qualified to reign with Christ *at the beginning of the millennium*.

But during His earthly ministry, Jesus was giving Israel *a chance* to see Him be Rambo Messiah and bring the kingdom of God to earth *within their lifetimes, in that generation, if* they met certain works/repentance-based conditions. Matthew 24:34, (and similar statements Jesus made using the same Greek verb tense, like Luke 9:27, Mark 9:1, and Matthew 10:23, 16:28) make this extremely clear.

Take a look at the first sentence of Revelation 20:4, which describes thrones being set up when Jesus begins to rule over the earth in the millennium, and compare it with verses such as Matthew 18:1, Matthew 20:20-27, Mark 9:34-35, Luke 9:46, and Acts 1:6

where Jesus' disciples ask Him about when they and Israel would get to rule over the earth with Him. Israel and the disciples thought that what we now call the millennium might occur in their lifetimes! They thought this not only because they believed Jesus was the Messiah and they *had always expected* the Messiah to usher in the earthly kingdom (this was the main thing the Messiah was supposed to do in their minds), but also because *Jesus' primary message to Israel – as we see in Matthew 24:35, Matthew 10:23, and Matthew 16:28 accurately translated – was that this event might occur in their lifetimes!* (If Israel met the conditions by believing He was the Messiah and behaving well enough, obeying the Law of Moses, etc.)

So, when we combine the oft-repeated phrase, “Repent, for the kingdom of God has drawn near” with several other statements Jesus made that make it very clear Israel was being offered a chance to see Rambo Messiah bring the kingdom of God to earth in their lifetimes if they met the conditions, we can finally understand the true, full meaning of the primary message (“the gospel of the kingdom”) Jesus preached to Israel 2,000 years ago. It could be paraphrased as follows:

“If you – plural, the nation of Israel – on the whole behave well enough (including obeying the Law of Moses well enough), and believe that I am the Messiah, the kingdom of God (what we modern Christians now call the millennium) will come to earth in this generation (2,000 years ago); and if you as an individual Israelite behave well enough and believe that I am the Messiah, you will earn yourself a good spot in the possibly-soon-coming-kingdom.”

Of course, Israel on the whole didn't meet the conditions necessary to see the kingdom come back then. This is because God didn't want them to meet the conditions, and He didn't want the kingdom to come back then (Rom. 11:7-10, 25, 32).

Before I move on to Fact #6 I want to quickly point out one more thing. When you see Jesus and His original disciples in the gospels or the book of Acts using the word “believe”, you must ask yourself whether they meant “believe that Jesus is the Messiah” or “believe in what Jesus accomplished on the cross”. *This is an important distinction that modern Christians fail to make, causing massive confusion.* Modern Christians, who have read Paul's detailed writings about what the cross accomplished and incorrectly assume the disciples and Israel knew all these same details, automatically assume the word “believe” means “believe in what the cross accomplished” any time they see it in the New Testament. This is an incorrect assumption. When the disciples used it before Paul got his revelations about what the cross accomplished, it merely meant, “Believe Jesus is the Messiah”. Jesus' audience including His disciples did not have nearly enough information at that time in history to believe in what the cross accomplished, because no one explained what it accomplished in detail until Paul got his revelations about it and began preaching it.

This is why I always say it would be so much less confusing if the New Testament didn't start until the preaching and exploits of the apostle Paul (partway through the book of Acts, or the book of Romans).

This brings us to Fact #6, which I will not spend much time explaining because I've already touched on it. From here on out the points will not require as much explanation (some of them will be simple reminders of points I've already touched on) because you now have enough background information to begin to put the puzzle pieces together in your mind more quickly.

Fact #6: During His earthly ministry Jesus never explained to Israel or even His own disciples the true/full purpose of the cross or God's ultimate plan for humanity; He only made a few passing comments about these things, which no one, not even His own disciples, understood.

I've already touched on this so I don't need to spend much time on it here. Always remember that John 3:16-17 was spoken in private, at night, to one man. It was not part of Jesus' public preaching to Israel. And comments like John 12:32 would not have been understood by Jesus' Israelite audience; it was not a full explanation of the hows, whys, and wherefores of the cross like Paul gave later, it was just a quick passing comment that Jesus knew His audience was not in a frame of mind to be able to understand.

The closest Jesus got to explaining to His disciples that things would not work out the way they hoped (He would not be Rambo Messiah on their desired timetable) was when He told them He was going to have to die (E.g. Mk. 8:31-33) and that there would come a time when they would "long to see one of the days of the Son of Man (Himself, Christ) and will not see it." It is obvious from the disciples' reactions to Jesus' warnings that things would not go as they planned (E.g. Mk. 8:31-33), Acts 1:6-7 and the rest of the testimony of the Gospels and the book of Acts, that His disciples did not understand these warnings or predictions at all, either before or immediately after His death and resurrection. This is not because they were dumb or stupid, but because they really had no concept whatsoever of God's grand plan. What we now understand about God's grand plan through the teaching of the apostle Paul (which came much later, many years after Jesus' resurrection) was simply not part of the disciples' or Israel's mindset.

Israel rejected Jesus because He did not do the one main thing they expected the Messiah to do; He did not meet *their* expectations, but He fulfilled His Father's instructions perfectly. He was on a different page than Israel, another level of understanding, and He knew it. He knew they were rejecting Him because He did not meet their expectations or match their preconceived ideas (they thought the Messiah was going to do the Rambo thing regardless of their spiritual level of maturity or ability to rule righteously with Him), and He often said things that He knew would be difficult for them to understand. Not only that, He spoke to the Israelite masses in parables *precisely so that they would not understand Him* (Matt. 13:13-15). Amazing. Of course, it was part of God's grand plan for Israel to reject Christ because they didn't understand Him (Rom. 11:7-10, 25, 32).

Jesus threw in a few comments that hinted at His grand purpose (e.g. John 12:32, John 3:17) so that His disciples could remember these comments and they could eventually be written down in what later became books of the Bible, and so that they could look back after Paul had explained God's grand plan to them and see that Jesus was operating according to God's grand plan all along. The Holy Spirit made sure the Scriptures include a few comments like this by Jesus to let us know that while He walked the earth He indeed understood God's grand plan as fully revealed by Paul later.

Unfortunately, modern Christians look at the few passing comments Jesus made that touch on God's grand plan, erroneously assume these passing comments were part of Jesus' main message, and erroneously assume every Israelite who heard those comments understood them perfectly like we do today (because we can read later Paul's writings which fully explain Christ's brief passing comments)...and the doctrinal soup just gets even more muddy.

Let's keep rolling. It's getting clearer and clearer...you're learning to separate the Jesus soup from the Paul soup...

Fact #7: Even after His death and resurrection, Jesus *still* did not explain the true/full purpose of the cross, saving that info for Paul to understand and preach fully later.

I've already explained how after His resurrection Jesus explained some things to the disciples from the Old Testament Scriptures, such as where His death on the cross and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament, etc. – but He still did not give them the whole picture of God's grand plan for all of humanity and what the cross truly accomplished. Instead He simply commanded them to continue preaching the same limited message - “If Israel believes I'm the Messiah, behaves and obeys the Law of Moses well enough, etc., the kingdom will come in this generation” – that God had given Him to preach to Israel at that time in history.

It's not that Jesus or His original disciples were inferior to Paul; Jesus did His job perfectly, the twelve disciples did their job extremely well, and Paul did his job extremely well too. It's just that Paul's message contained new, greater, fuller information about God's grand plan and what the cross had accomplished. Jesus saved His understanding about the grand purpose of the cross for Paul to explain in detail later on. This information was only released to and through Paul after, according to God's plan, Israel had failed at living up to the “behave well enough to earn it” message twice – once before Jesus died, and again after His resurrection through the disciples' preaching (see Rom. 11:7-10, 25, 32).

If you read the apostle Paul's writings in the New Testament you will see that he refers to his message as “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25), to differentiate it from the gospel of the circumcision (the old “gospel of the kingdom” that included obedience to the Law of

Moses, that Jesus' original disciples had been preaching). He goes to great pains over and over again in his writings to make it clear that he was preaching something brand new that had been "hidden from ages past" (Rom. 16:25, 1 Cor. 2:7, 1 Cor. 4:1, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26), something he did not learn from the original disciples but rather was revealed to him directly by God (Gal. 1:11-12, Eph. 3:3-4).

Paul was not being proud or egocentric by making these declarations over and over again; it was necessary – indeed, vitally important – for him to repeat "my gospel, my primary message, is *brand new and very different* than the old gospel of the kingdom preached by Jesus and the original disciples; *what I preach was hidden in ages past until God chose to reveal it to me*" over and over again like a broken record. He had to trumpet this fact because the greatest threat faced by the churches he started was from Israelite believers who kept coming in and trying to tell the Gentile (non-Israelite) Christians that they had to go back to the old gospel and obey the Law of Moses! Paul was trying to keep his *new* doctrinal soup separate from Jesus', Jesus' original disciples', and the Old Testament's *old* doctrinal soup!

You see, many Israelite believers (Israelites who believed that Jesus was the Messiah) had a hard time accepting Paul's new gospel because it essentially said, "All this Law of Moses stuff you Israelites have been doing for centuries is now revealed to be useless for being right with God". That was a tough pill to swallow for Israelites, which is why Paul said his gospel was a "stumbling block" to them (1 Cor. 1:23). So they kept trying to combine Paul's new gospel with the old, under-the-Law-of-Moses gospel preached by Jesus and the original disciples. Paul had to repeatedly remind the believers and churches he founded, "What I'm teaching *should not be combined with the old gospel of Jesus and the twelve disciples which included obedience to the Law of Moses!* My new message *replaced* that gospel and *removed* the requirement to obey the Law of Moses!"

Paul had to spend much of his life trying to keep cream of mushroom soup from being mixed with chicken noodle soup!

Modern Christians mix the two soups, not out of a desire to hold on to the Law of Moses of course, but simply because we have gotten in the habit of thinking of Jesus' and His original disciples' preaching as "New Testament" when really we should think of it as "Old Testament".

Let's keep bringing more and more clarity to this issue. Now let's look at how what we're learning affects our understanding of our mission from God in this age.

Fact #8: What we modern Christians call "the great commission" was not originally understood by Jesus' disciples exactly the way we understand it today; they thought of it as a command to *keep preaching the old gospel of the kingdom that included obedience to the Law of Moses* with His resurrection as additional proof that He was the Messiah.

In Fact #14 I will explain from Scripture exactly what the modern Christian's primary job (commission) is today as outlined by the apostle Paul. But for now simply understand that if you read Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, and Acts 1:3-8 with your newfound understanding of the fact that Jesus commanded His disciples to obey the Law of Moses during His earthly ministry and never told them to stop doing so (Matt. 23:1, 23), you will realize that what modern Christians have dubbed "the great commission" was understood by the twelve disciples at first as including the command to obey the Law of Moses.

The disciples would have originally understood Jesus' commission as, "Continue to preach the under-the-Law-of-Moses gospel of the possibly-soon-coming kingdom and continue to offer Israel an opportunity to rule with Christ in this generation". This made perfect sense to the disciples shortly after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. They had no problem preaching it because they were still in what we modern Christians would call an "Old Testament ignorant Israelite pure-Rambo-Messiah-focus mindset". They thought Jesus would come back to take over the world and rule at any moment; they thought they were just preparing the world for this event by getting Israel on board and then the rest of the nations on board with their soon-returning new ruler. Jesus had not told them when He would come back (Acts 1:7), but the disciples' mindset initially caused them to assume that, with Jesus' resurrection as additional proof that He was the Messiah, Israel would now listen, obey, shape-up, behave, and believe Jesus was the Messiah so they could then get the rest of the world on board in accepting this fact, so at some point in this process Jesus could come back and rule forcibly over the earth with Israel as His leadership team within their lifetimes (Matt. 24:34, Lk. 9:1, etc. accurately translated).

But after a while the disciples started to realize that things were not going smoothly according to (their desired timing and) plan. Not even Israel got on board! Some Israelites did, but most didn't. You see, Jesus had told them to go to Israel *first* before going to the rest of the nations (Acts 1:8). In the disciples' minds *there was no point trying to get the rest of the world to obey everything the Messiah commanded (including the Law of Moses) if the nation that was supposed to rule with the Messiah didn't even acknowledge His Messiahship or obey everything He commanded!*

Trying to go to the nations with the gospel of the possibly-soon-coming kingdom was pointless if not even Israel was listening and obeying! It would be like trying to gain power over the United States without controlling Washington, D.C. first. Modern preachers often give the disciples a hard time because they stayed in Jerusalem so long instead of going to the nations; when in fact, the disciples were showing great courage by staying in Jerusalem, faithfully doing the last thing Jesus had told them to do (trying to get Israel to accept Him as Messiah and obey commandments, etc. so that they could then go to the rest of the world), even as persecution ramped up against them in Israel.

What God knew, but didn't let Jesus tell the disciples (Acts 1:7), was that Israel and the rest of the world will not come under Jesus' full rulership until what we now call the millennium – over 2,000 years later. In the millennium Jesus will rule “with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15) – He will make the rules and we (raptured Christians along with Israel and the raptured original twelve apostles) will enforce them worldwide (Rev. 20:6, Matt. 19:28).

But the disciples did not understand the timing of when the kingdom was supposed to come – God purposefully did not let Jesus tell them the timing (Acts 1:7), probably because He knew that they would have a hard time preaching the same message they were preaching before Jesus' death if they knew that it would be rejected (again!) by Israel (John 16:12). I know I would not have been very good at preaching that message if I was in their shoes, if Jesus had told me beforehand, “Israel is going to reject you and Me and our message again even though we now have My resurrection as additional proof.” I would have been extremely discouraged and would have had no desire to preach it!

But because the disciples were in the dark about the timing of kingdom come, they kept preaching the “gospel of the possibly-soon-coming kingdom” message to Israel with gusto (Acts 2:14-40, 3:12-26, 7:2-53). Some Israelites wholeheartedly accepted their message, but most rejected it – just like before Jesus' death and resurrection. For the most part, the same Israelites that rejected Jesus as the Messiah despite His many signs and wonders still did not meet the conditions of the gospel of the kingdom despite the ultimate sign, His resurrection from the dead. (See Chapter 10 of this book to discover how Jesus predicted this in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.)

After a while the disciples knew there was something wrong with their perception of how things were supposed to go – but of course Jesus had told them “it's not for you to know” the timing of when He was to return and set up the kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:7). At this point the disciples still had a *missing link* in their understanding – a missing link that would not be filled in until *God revealed His overarching plan to Paul* who eventually explained it to them. (Paul tells the story of this in Galatians 1-2.)

What the twelve disciples did not know was:

Fact #9: In God's grand plan, the works-based, under-the-Law-of-Moses “gospel of the (possibly-soon-coming) kingdom” was destined to be rejected by Israel 2,000 years ago.

In Romans 11:7-10, 25 the apostle Paul tells us how God purposefully made sure that Israel rejected Christ and His “if you obey the Law of Moses and behave well enough you'll see the kingdom come now” works-based message. Why would God play these games with Israel, so to speak, giving them a message and then hardening their hearts to make sure they would reject it and its messenger? Well, He did it for the same reason He's playing games with all of humanity. Paul explains it later in the passage, in verse 32.

Romans 11:32 and 36 says, *“For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all...For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory to the ages.”*

This amazing statement in Romans 11:32 (with more clarification in verse 36) baffles most Christians because they don't realize that God must manipulate (or to use a softer word, guide) humanity into humility. Most Christians are in a mindset that “God is fighting as hard as He can against Satan in a battle for souls, and is losing badly for some reason I can't comprehend.” They don't realize that God is temporarily allowing all evil and human failure for a purpose: to manipulate humanity into humility! I don't use the word “manipulate” in a negative sense here. I could use the word “guide” or “lead” instead. I simply mean that God must somehow convince humanity that He is smarter than we are.

Because He created us as intelligent beings and not robots, God knew even before He created us that we were going to want to experience life apart from the way He designed it to be lived. He knew we were going to go through the adolescent, “How do I know my parents aren't keeping me from all the fun?” stage. That's why the Bible calls Jesus “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), because God knew before He even created us that we were going to sin (try out ways of living apart from His design) and that He would send His Son to die for us in order to fix it.

So God's dealings with Israel are an important part of the “videotape” God is creating throughout human history to show to humanity at the white throne judgment. His dealings with Israel through history will later help to convince all of humanity that they are not smarter than Him and to remove all excuses from mankind from that point on. Paul tells us that the Law of Moses was a “tutor to lead us to Christ” (Gal. 3:24) – a tool to teach us all that we need God to save us from ourselves because we have all failed to be good enough on our own. Thus, the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus and the disciples preached, which included obedience to the Law of Moses, was *also just a tutor to lead us to faith in what Christ accomplished on the cross.*

God repeatedly gave a segment of humanity (Israel) clear works-based instructions with clearly outlined and quickly enforced penalties for disobedience along with ever-increasing supernatural proof that God was behind it. He did this first with the Law of Moses and the accompanying signs and wonders, then with Jesus and His signs and wonders, then with the disciples and their signs and wonders plus the additional proof of Jesus' resurrection. God had to do this and allow Israel to fail all three times (the original giving of the Law of Moses, Jesus' ministry, and the disciples' ministry after the resurrection) in order to convince the rest of humanity at the white throne that the “God, if You had just given us clearer instructions and quicker feedback we could have done a good job on our own” excuse won't fly. The example of Israel's repeated failure throughout history despite witnessing amazing supernatural miracles, will later help convince all humanity that we all truly have failed and need Him to save us from ourselves. (This also

explains why God was much harsher with Israel and quicker to punish them during the Law of Moses period than He has ever been with any other group of people; He was proving that even quick supernatural punishment – immediate feedback and quick penalties for disobedience to God’s way of doing things – was not enough to enable people to be “good enough” on their own.)

For this reason Paul says his new gospel is about salvation worked by Christ Himself as a free gift to us without any help from us (Rom. 3:23-24), “not by works, *lest any man should boast*” (Eph. 2:8-9). God’s whole goal for humanity is to get us to the place where *we don’t boast* – *where all human pride is removed, where we humbly realize that our Creator is smarter than we are* and we would be smart to simply live life the way He designed it to be lived without getting all creative and trying to do it on our own without Him.

Christians are those chosen by God (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) in this age, and we are given a special grace to “get this” now rather than later at the white throne. A Christian hears, “God’s way is best” and thinks, “Duh. Of course.” That’s because God has given us the grace to understand this now (even if we struggle to live it perfectly before we receive our incorruptible bodies at the rapture).

Some might ask, “Why doesn’t God just give *everyone* the same grace He gives Christians, right now, to understand that His way is best?” The answer is, certain experiments with stupidity/evil/sin must be played out fully in order that no member of mankind will ever be tempted to ask “What if...?” again. For example, God must allow humanity to rule itself with a worldwide, enforced-on-penalty-of-death “we’re doing things on our own completely apart from God” unified governmental system so that humanity will never be able to say, “But God, You never *really* let us try it *our own* way, full out, to the max!” God will allow this completely Godless worldwide state of affairs to occur during the last days of this age when the antichrist takes over the entire world with a one-world government and uses the mark of the beast to enforce obedience and allegiance to their satanic, completely anti-God-of-the-Bible worldview, rules, and laws.

I’ve now given you so much background information that you are going to be able to quickly absorb and understand the last few facts I will present in this chapter. I’ve already touched on most of them briefly; I just want to flesh out a few of them more fully. Let’s roll through them.

Fact #10: The apostle Paul was the first person on earth to fully preach God’s true/full purpose for the cross and grand overarching plan for humanity.

Other than Jesus (who mostly kept mum about it except for a few passing comments and a brief explanation to Nic at Nite), Paul was the first person on earth to understand these things. God revealed this information directly to Paul, and Paul repeatedly states that this information was “hidden from ages past” and was a “mystery” before he

understood it and began to preach it (Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:2-12, Col. 1:26, Gal. 1:11-12, 1 Cor. 2:7, 4:1, etc).

Because modern Christians have been erroneously trained to mix Jesus' preaching to Israel into the same pot of doctrinal soup as Paul's preaching many years later, we tend to miss the tremendous significance of Paul's repeated statements about how his message was *brand new* and had never been explained in detail before by anyone on earth.

This leads us right into Fact #11.

Fact #11: Paul's new gospel was *very different than the gospel of the kingdom* preached by Jesus and the twelve disciples; although it's moral foundation was the same, its *primary instructions were different* because it was for *different group of people at a different stage in God's plan* than Jesus' and the twelve disciples' preaching to Israel.

The word "gospel" means "good news". Paul's good news for the whole world was very different than the good news Jesus and His disciples had preached to Israel years earlier. (See Gal. 1:11-12, 7 and the other Scriptures I quoted a moment ago where Paul repeatedly states that he was preaching something that was a mystery before he came along.)

Paul was the first person on earth (besides Jesus) to understand that the full purpose of the cross was to accomplish the justification of all mankind, making it as if mankind had never sinned in God's eyes, paying the price once and for all for all mankind's sin, past, present, and future (Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18, Eph. 3:2-5, 9-10, Col. 1:18-20). Paul's new gospel's fully informed instructions for taking part in the kingdom of God were no longer "earn it by repenting, behaving well, and obeying the Law of Moses well" as in Jesus' and the twelve apostle's gospel, but *replaced* that previous instruction given to Israel with a *new* instruction for the whole world: "Accept what Christ has already done for you by faith through grace, apart from works" (Rom. 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9).

If you look at Paul's instructions for taking part in the kingdom of God (the millennium and the New Jerusalem age on earth) as recorded in Romans 10:9-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9, you will see that these instructions *differ drastically* from Jesus' and His disciples' earlier instructions to Israel (at a previous stage in God's plan) for taking part in the kingdom of God as recorded in Luke 18:18-20, Matthew 23:23, and numerous places where Jesus and the disciples are recorded preaching their primary message to Israel, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near". This is not because we need to cut either Jesus or Paul out of the Bible so that it doesn't contradict itself – of course not. It's simply that Jesus and Paul were preaching *different messages* with *different primary instructions* to *different groups of people* for *different purposes* at *different stages* in God's plan.

I once came across a website that claimed Paul was a false prophet because he preached salvation by faith alone while Jesus preached salvation by both works and faith! The man who started that website was confused, but he did have one thing right: Jesus *did* preach that it *required works* (including obedience to the Law of Moses) to get a spot in the kingdom of God (Lk. 18:18-22, Matt. 23:23) *along with belief that Jesus was the Messiah*, whereas Paul said it was *not* by works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9). The man who started that website didn't understand that Jesus preached a works-based message (which included believing that Jesus was the Messiah) to Israel *at a particular stage* in God's plan, and that the works-based message preached to Israel was *destined to fail* (Rom 11:7-10, 25, 32, 36) as a testimony for posterity of mankind's failure to obey rules well enough to "earn it", in order to make way for (and be replaced by) Paul's fully-informed faith-based, non-works based message about how we all have fallen short of our potential and need God to save us from ourselves all by Himself as a gift to us (Rom. 3:23-24).

By now you should have the beginnings of a clear picture in your mind of why it is a massively confusing error to try to treat Jesus' primary instructions to Israel (repentance/works as a trigger for earning you a spot in the kingdom) as if they are the same as Paul's instructions to the rest of the world (your works cannot earn you a spot in the kingdom, you must instead put your faith in what Christ did for you on the cross). To go back to the example I used at the very beginning of this chapter, imagine a modern preacher telling someone that in order to take part in the kingdom of God they must obey the ten commandments, without ever mentioning a Romans 10:9-10 prayer! Such a scenario is unthinkable! Why is our modern "preaching of the gospel" so much different than the primary instruction Jesus gave to the rich young ruler? Because *we are preaching a different gospel than Jesus preached! We are preaching Paul's gospel!*

Paul's gospel retained the basic moral values of Jesus' gospel. It also retained the message that the kingdom would come to earth in the future, but without the "possibly in this generation" part. But Paul's new message and primary instructions for getting a spot in the kingdom *superseded* and *replaced* Jesus' old Law-of-Moses works-based primary instructions to Israel. Paul's gospel retained the need to repent of sin, but in Paul's gospel repentance is no longer the *trigger* that *produces* the *right* to a spot in the kingdom, rather the trigger is *faith in Christ's work on the cross*. And Paul's new gospel included new information about the eventual salvation of all mankind that Jesus never explained in detail to Israel (though He did make several statements about it that Israel did not understand).

Trying to mix the two gospels is like buying a new car to replace your old one that doesn't work anymore, but trying to stick one leg in the old car and the other leg in the new car in an attempt to drive them both at the same time!

This does not mean we should throw out every single thing Jesus said to Israel in His preaching and teaching; there are many general and timeless instructions and statements of truth in His teaching to Israel (see Matthew 6:19-24 for example). We must simply

remember that anything in the teaching of Jesus regarding obeying the Law of Moses and/or earning a spot in the kingdom through behavior/repentance no longer applies to us because this primary instruction applied only to the nation of Israel back then and has now been replaced by Paul's new primary instruction to put our faith in what the cross accomplished.

Fact #12: The twelve disciples did not begin to understand why Jesus had not returned yet, the true/full purpose of the cross, or anything about God's overall plan for mankind, until Paul explained it to them. (Gal. 1-2)

I've already touched on this but I'll just give you a bit more information here. In the first two chapters of Galatians Paul tells the story of how God led him to go to Jerusalem to explain his brand new message to Peter, John, and the other original disciples of Jesus. Before Paul's visit, the original disciples still thought Jesus' death and resurrection was just more proof that He was the Messiah. They did not realize the full implications of the cross for all of humanity. Their vision did not go beyond what we would now call the millennium when Israel would/will rule over the earth with Christ. They did not realize God had a grander plan.

When Paul came and explained these brand new concepts to them (as recorded in Galatians 1-2), they finally began to see *why* Jesus had not returned on their desired or assumed timetable. The missing link in their understanding was finally filled in! Some of the twelve disciples' later writings that are now part of Scripture, such as the book of Revelation (written by the apostle John toward the very end of his life) and 2nd Peter 3:3-16, for example, reflect some of the newfound understanding they gained from the apostle Paul.

Let's look at a couple of specific examples of how the original twelve disciples learned new things from Paul – 2 Peter 3:3-14 and 1 John 1:9.

If you read the passage in 2nd Peter it is obvious that by the time he wrote those words, Peter had learned a few things from the apostle Paul. He had learned that the end of this age, kingdom come, etc. would not occur for a while yet. His admonition in verse 3 about the type of people that will dominate the end of this age is virtually a direct quotation of Paul's words in 2nd Timothy 3:1-5. This is not surprising since Peter in this very passage states that he is familiar with Paul's writings.

And John's statement "If we confess our sins He is *faithful and just* to forgive us" in 1 John 1:9 tells us that by the time he wrote those words he had learned about justification from Paul. Before Paul's teachings about justification came along, there was no such talk among Israelites or preaching by the disciples about God forgiving anyone due to justice. But after Paul explained it to him, John understood that the cross satisfied God's justice, so it is now not just *nice* of God to forgive/overlook our sins from time to time if we ask Him to (an Old Testament concept, see David talking about this in Psalms 32:5 for example) but

it is actually *just* and *fair* and *right* for God to forgive us because the price for our sins has been paid once and for all (Rom. 5:18, 3:23-24). In other words, John learned from Paul that a believer is not limited to pleading for God's mercy for forgiveness of sins (an Old Testament concept), but that we can now tap into God's *justice* for forgiveness of sins – a justice provided for us for free by the cross.

To put it another way, in the Old Testament (and under Jesus' old gospel that still required obedience to the Law of Moses), you had to ask Dad for money every time you needed it; but under Paul's new gospel and its full information about what the cross accomplished (justification for all mankind, making it as if mankind had never sinned, see Rom. 3:23-24 and 5:18), all you have to do is pull out your debit card and use it – unlimited money is already in your account. *Unlimited mercy is now in mankind's account because of what Christ did at the cross* (Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18). It is “just as if” none of us had ever sinned – that's what “justification” means!

This astounding concept is why Paul had to deal with people saying, “If what you're preaching is true, then why not sin more so that grace will abound even more?” (Rom. 6:1) Paul had to say, (my loose paraphrase of Romans 6:2) “God forbid that I would purposefully spit in the face of the One who put unlimited money in my account even though I didn't deserve it!”

My point for the purposes of this chapter is that John had learned the concept of justification (unlimited mercy/grace in mankind's account because the cross satisfied God's justice) from Paul as evidenced by the fact that he used the phrase “faithful *and just* to forgive us”. No pre-Paul Israelite or disciple of Jesus would have ever used such terminology before Paul came along and explained all that the cross accomplished.

So we see that the original disciples of Jesus had a *gradually unfolding* understanding, and the final pieces of the puzzle were not evident to them until Paul came along preaching the whole picture and gave them the missing pieces. This is exactly what Jesus predicted to His disciples in John 16:12 – “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

I should also mention that understanding the order in which the books of the New Testament were written – a subject I won't go into here – is also helpful in understanding the gradually unfolding understanding the original twelve disciples experienced. To learn more about this you can read a book called *Restoring the Original Bible* by Dr. Ernest L. Martin.

On to Fact #13...

Fact #13: Paul's gospel and its "by faith through grace, not by works lest any man should boast" instructions are for us today during what I call The Kingdom Time-Gap (which I also call Paul's Pause), while Jesus' "earn it by repenting, behaving well, and obeying a bunch of rules including the Law of Moses" instructions were only for Israel in a previous stage in God's plan, and do not apply to us today.

I already touched on this but it's worth expounding upon just a bit more because it is so vitally important.

When Israel failed to heed the "earn it" "gospel of the possibly-soon-coming-kingdom" under the Law of Moses preached by Jesus and the disciples both before and after His resurrection, God

HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON

on the plans to bring the kingdom of God to earth. He instituted

PAUL'S PAUSE.

The Messiah's rule over the entire earth would now be delayed some 2,000+ years until what we modern Christians call the end times (the end of this age) and the beginning of the millennium (as described in Revelation 19:1-20:7).

Of course, we know that God planned to hit the "Pause" button at that exact time in history before history even began! I've already explained how God made sure Israel did not heed Jesus' gospel so that the kingdom would not come back then, giving Him time to institute an additional stage in His educational plan for mankind that was vital for reaching His ultimate goal of becoming "all in all" (Rom. 11:7-10, 25, 32, 36, 1 Cor. 15:28).

After God ensured that Israel would reject the Messiah both before and after His resurrection, He then chose a guy named Saul to be the first person to understand and preach a brand new message containing full information about what the cross had accomplished and God's ultimate plan for humanity. He chose Saul, and promptly changed his name from Saul to Paul (Acts 13:9).

If you study the name Paul, you find that it means "pause"! (God is so cool like that.)

During what I call "Paul's Pause" or "The Kingdom Time-Gap", the period of time we are in now (and will be in until the beginning of the millennium), God is giving the whole world, not just Israel, a chance to hear about Him. We are "witnesses" – we testify, regardless of who does or does not listen. During this time the world will actually hear a much greater message that reveals God in a much more complete way than the message Israel heard 2,000 years ago. Some people will understand and accept this great new

message now, and be reconciled to God now. But what will the world do, on the whole? The same thing Israel did: reject God.

God is allowing most of mankind to repeatedly reject Him so that no man can boast at the white throne judgment (Eph. 2:8-9, Rev. 20:11-13). Even those who strive to live Godly in this age, we Christians, must admit that according to God's Word, He chose us by His grace, we did not choose Him (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9). Not even we who know more truth right now than anyone else can boast! In fact, God chose many of us because we were even more weak, foolish, and needy than others! He did this precisely so that no human would ever be able to boast before Him (1 Cor. 1:26-29)! If not even the "chosen ones" (chosen for early salvation from death and a special purpose, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28, James 1:18, Rom. 8:20-21, and 1 Timothy 4:10) can boast, how could the rest of humanity ever boast?

In Paul's gospel for us today, the faith God gives us (Eph. 1:4, 2:8-9) in Christ's work on the cross allows us to consciously receive the free gift of permanent salvation from death at the rapture (earlier than the rest of mankind, who will only be saved from death at the consummation of God's plan, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28). When we consciously receive this free gift that Christ has provided for us through the cross, we become the righteousness of God in Christ – our very identity becomes Christ's identity – righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). In Paul's gospel our repentance (attempts to do what is right rather than what is wrong) are necessary, but they do not replace our faith in the justification and salvation from death that Christ has already accomplished for us all by Himself without any help from us (Rom. 3:23-24, 5:18).

On the other hand, in Jesus' and the twelve disciples' old "gospel of the kingdom" which included obedience to the Old Testament Law of Moses, if you were an Israelite living back then when Jesus was preaching, your repentance (works, doing what is right rather than what is wrong) would *earn you* a spot in the kingdom (see Lk. 18:18-20, Matt. 23:23).

Fact #14: The modern Christian's commission is *not* to preach the under-the-Law-of-Moses, works-based "gospel of the kingdom" or "gospel of the circumcision", but rather to preach Paul's (new, fully-informed) "gospel of reconciliation" or "gospel of the uncircumcision", which includes full information about all the cross accomplished and God's great plan for mankind.

The "great commission" (if I may redefine this man-made term) for modern Christians since the time of Paul's preaching is outlined in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, where Paul says that God

"reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

Putting various elements of Paul's preaching together, our commission today could be stated more completely as such:

“God has already accomplished the justification of all mankind, reconciling all mankind to Himself in principle through the cross (Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18, 1 Cor. 5:18-19) and He is in the process of reconciling all mankind to Himself in experiential reality (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Rom. 11:32, 1 Tim. 4:10, Col. 1:20, Eph. 1:10), so be reconciled to God now in experiential reality by believing in what He has accomplished for you and confessing (agreeing with the fact that) He is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9, 2 Cor. 5:18-19), thus receiving eonian life (life in the next two ages when most of mankind will be dead) and immortality (early at the rapture rather than later at the consummation of the ages) as a free gift (Rom. 3:23-24, 1 Cor. 15:22-28).”

Paul's new gospel gives a new and different *method* for getting a spot in the kingdom than was given to Israel through Jesus' and His disciples' preaching – faith/grace rather than works. And Paul's gospel has a greater/broader message than the old gospel preached to Israel – it's not only about how to get a spot in the kingdom of God (the next two ages of life on earth, the millennium and the New Jerusalem age), but it is also about how God has already justified and reconciled all humanity and all things both in heaven and on earth to Himself in principle through the cross and will eventually reconcile them to Himself in experiential reality (Rom. 3:23-24, 5:18, James 1:18, Rom. 8:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, 1 Tim. 4:10, John 3:17, Phil. 2:10-11, etc.).

Paul's new gospel tells us that following this “by grace through faith, not by works” instruction doesn't just get you a spot in the kingdom, it also does three other amazing things for you:

1) It permanently reconciles you to God in an *experiential* way (making the justification of all mankind in principle which Jesus accomplished on the cross as stated in Romans 5:18, Romans 3:23-24 and 1 Cor. 5:18-19 into an *experiential reality* in your life, *now*).

2) It makes you the righteousness of God in Christ in an *experiential* way. (Christ's righteousness is imputed/transferred onto you so that even though you may not act perfectly all the time while you're still in your mortal body, your core identity is no longer that of a sinner, but of a righteous person who is just as righteous as Christ, see 2 Cor. 5:21.)

3) It provides permanent salvation from death for you *earlier than the rest of mankind* (at the rapture instead of at the consummation of the ages, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Eph. 1:10, James 1:18).

Paul's gospel of reconciliation also goes beyond just “spots in the kingdom/next-two-ages-of-life-on-earth” to talk about the eventual permanent reconciliation to God and permanent salvation from death of *all mankind*. In other words, the justification of all

mankind in principle accomplished by the cross as described in Romans 5:18, Romans 3:23-24, and 1 Corinthians 5:18-19 will become an experiential reality and ultimately result in permanent salvation from death *not only* for Christians (those who “get it” in this age), but *also for the rest of mankind* who will “get it” (understand it) at the white throne judgment (Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11) and be “vivified” (the Greek word for getting an immortal/incorruptible body) at the consummation of God’s plan (after the New Jerusalem age), at which point death will be abolished (which can only mean that no one will be dead and no one will ever die again) – see 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

Obviously (at least it should be obvious to you after reading what you’ve read so far in this chapter), these amazing aspects of Paul’s gospel were brand new information to the original disciples of Jesus because it was a “mystery that had been kept hidden for ages and generations” (Col. 1:26) and had never been heard in detail before on earth until Paul learned it directly from God (Gal. 1:11-12) and began to preach it.

In light of this amazing information contained in Paul’s gospel that was not part of the old gospel preached to Israel by Jesus and the original disciples, let’s redefine another term that is commonly used in modern Christianity – “making disciples”. What modern Christians call “making disciples” is probably somewhat different than what the disciples originally thought they were supposed to do when they “made disciples”. We modern Christians teach many of the same moral precepts (what is right and wrong at a basic level) as the disciples back then would have been teaching, but we certainly do not command anyone to obey the Law of Moses!

When the original disciples went out to obey the “great commission” (remember this is a man-made term, not a Scriptural term), what they were preaching was still *works-based* (they did not yet have any knowledge of “by grace through faith, not by works that no man should boast”). And although the word “nations” basically just refers to people groups, they may have thought that their message would succeed to the point where political leaders of nations would accept it (indeed, in the millennium all nations will serve Christ and follow His rules politically, and that’s what the disciples were expecting to occur in their lifetimes.) But of course this version of “the great commission” (the way the original disciples understood it at first) stalled out because the disciples couldn’t even get Israel to listen. They couldn’t even get one nation – the nation that was supposed to rule with Christ! – to believe that He was the Messiah, do the right works, or obey the Law of Moses well enough!

On the other hand, the way we understand “the great commission” today as modern believers living under Paul’s new instructions, is preaching a *faith-based* message (not just believing that Jesus is the Messiah, but also “if you *believe* in your heart God raised Jesus from the dead and confess He is Lord you will be saved”). Our message is more fully informed, or “updated” with Paul’s new revelation, if you will. Although our message still includes the need to repent, it is not primarily works-based but faith-based, (Eph. 2:8-9), and is directed at reconciling *individuals* to Christ and forming them in His image in this age (Gal.

4:19) while also containing information about God’s grand plan for the ultimate salvation of all mankind (1 Cor. 15:22-28, Col. 1:20, etc.).

Our commission to preach Paul’s gospel and reconcile individuals to Christ will last during this age, and then *at the beginning of the millennium we will in a sense pick up where the twelve disciples’ commission left off and along with Israel we will make all the nations obey Christ’s rules* (Rev. 19:15, 20:6).

So what modern Christians commonly call “making disciples” is not really the same thing the original twelve disciples were doing at first. In their minds, “making disciples of all nations” meant preparing the way for what we can now read described in Revelation 19:15 and 20:6 by getting everybody (starting with the nation of Israel) to obey God’s rules, while we modern Christians use the term for what should more properly be described as “reconciling individuals to Christ according to 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 and laboring to see Christ formed in each of these individuals according to Galatians 4:19”.

In the grand scheme of things I don’t think it’s a big deal for us to continue using the term “making disciples” even if we mean something somewhat different by it than the first disciples did 2,000 years ago, because what *we mean* by that term today – *what we are actually doing today* is exactly what we *should* be doing according to Paul’s new gospel: *reconciling individuals to Christ and laboring that Christ be formed in them*. We’re doing exactly what God has empowered us to do: reconciling individuals to Christ in experiential reality by preaching what Christ accomplished on the cross, and laboring (through teaching of good Biblical information, moral principles and wisdom for living, encouragement, etc.) that Christ may be formed in those individuals.

A correct understanding of what I’ve just explained to you will relieve some significant frustration for many Christians. Many modern Christians erroneously think we’re supposed to be “making disciples of all nations” in the sense of “getting everyone on earth to listen to us” (similar to what the original disciples would have naturally thought). But the Bible makes it clear this will simply not happen in this age! (See Lk. 4:5-6, 2 Cor. 4:4.) Many Christians are frustrated because they’re trying to do something the Bible says is impossible (in this age)! Millions of well-meaning Christians are unnecessarily frustrated because they think they are supposed to be “winning the battle for Washington” and “winning the battle for souls” and “winning the culture war”. (Modern Christians can easily get caught up in this idea, sometimes called “dominionism”, because they want God to win *so badly* and can’t fathom why He would lose the battle on so many fronts in this age. They don’t realize He’s purposefully losing the short-term battle in many ways on a macro level in this age in order to win the longer-term war, as I’m explaining to you in this book.)

So it’s important to remember that scripturally the nations will not serve Christ politically until the next age. Forget about getting whole nations or the whole world to adhere to Christlike rules right now. It’s not going to happen in this age. That’s for the next age. God hit the PAUSE button on that plan when Israel didn’t listen to the disciples after

Christ's resurrection. The Bible makes it clear that God is allowing Satan to rule and to handpick the rulers of the nations in this age (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6). In the next age, the millennium (Rev. 19:15, 20:6), Satan's rulership of earth will be overthrown and we (along with the twelve disciples and the rest of the nation of Israel – true bloodline descendants of Abraham) will make all nations obey Jesus' rules as He reigns with a "rod of iron" (strict rules). But until then God is not concerned about getting whole nations or the whole world to listen, just certain individuals.

So you see that the church in this age is actually much more successful than most Christians think! We are doing exactly what we should be doing – reconciling individuals to God by faith and helping them to become more and more Christlike to prepare us to help Him rule in the next age (2 Cor. 5:18-19, Gal. 4:19, Rev. 20:6).

It's interesting that we're fabulously successful at doing exactly what God is empowering us to do (helping individuals be reconciled to God by faith in what the cross accomplished, and training them to become more Christlike), while we're absolute failures at doing what we sometimes erroneously think is our job, something God is not empowering us to do right now (getting everyone to listen to us, getting all the world's national governments to rule by Christ's rules and values, etc).

So the main point I want you to understand in this chapter is that Jesus' message to Israel was under the Law of Moses, and His disciples did not understand that the Law of Moses would be replaced by faith/grace, nor did they understand all that the cross accomplished *until the apostle Paul preached it much later*. This will keep us from erroneously applying to ourselves the works-based nature of many of the statements Jesus made to Israel.

Let's keep rolling – we're almost done! You've got a pretty clear picture in your head of what I'm trying to get across with this chapter; I just want to make a couple more important points.

Fact #15: Paul spent his whole life fighting to keep his new grace/faith-based gospel from being mixed with the Law of Moses.

I've already talked about how many of Paul's writings in Scripture (especially Galatians, for example) contain passionate attempts to keep the churches he ministered to from going backwards into the old gospel (Jesus' preaching to Israel) that still required obedience to the Law of Moses. The classic example of this is the book of Galatians. I will not belabor the point here, I just wanted to remind you of it as a segue into the next Fact:

Fact #16: After Paul's death, a faith/works mix crept in to the church, and although the Reformation sparked by Martin Luther restored the emphasis on faith rather

than works, a subtle and confusing faith/works mix still lurks in the minds of many Christians because they don't understand that Paul's new fully-informed "gospel of reconciliation" or "gospel of the uncircumcision" *replaced* Jesus' limited, temporary, works-based, under-the-law "gospel of the possibly-soon-coming kingdom" or "gospel of the circumcision" which was designed only for Israel at a certain (2,000-years-ago) stage in God's plan.

Christianity initially got mired in a faith/works swamp of misunderstanding due to the influence of Jewish believers who kept trying to say "you still gotta do stuff!" because they could not let go of the Law of Moses' reliance on "doing stuff" (1 Cor. 1:23). We can tell from Paul's New Testament writings such as the book of Galatians that he constantly had to fight off this mixing of his new gospel with the Law of Moses and Jesus' old gospel that still required obedience to it. Paul succeeded somewhat in defending the separation of his new gospel from the old gospel under the Law, but the Jewish believers who tried to mix the two succeeded somewhat as well.

Then the rise of the Catholic Church made the confusion worse because it mixed paganism (which is all works-based, condemnation-based, and fear-based) with the true teachings of the Bible and Christianity.

To this day the difference between Paul's gospel and Jesus' gospel has remained lost for the most part (most modern Christians don't understand it) because as time went by we forgot that Jesus' preaching to Israel included obedience to the Law of Moses (Matt. 7:12, 23:1-3, 23; Luke 18:18, 20, etc.) and we lost perspective of how groundbreaking and radical Paul's new gospel had been when he first began to preach it (Gal. 1-2, Eph 3:9, etc.). Because of this lost perspective, the church has continued to erroneously lump Paul's preaching together with Christ's into a faith/works mish-mash.

The Reformation and Martin Luther's brave actions in standing up to many of the ridiculous and unbiblical teachings of the Middle Ages Catholic Church did help a lot because it got Christians to focus on "by faith through grace, not by works" (Eph. 2:8-9) more than on trying to earn salvation by doing many of the ridiculous things the Catholic Church was telling people to do. (Such as giving money to improve your chances of salvation, walk up and down staircases on your knees to atone for your sins, etc.) However, after the Middle Ages Christianity never really grasped and held on to the difference between Jesus' and the original disciples' works-based preaching to Israel and Paul's preaching that replaced that old message. So the body of Christ is still to this day operating in a confusing faith/works mish-mash for the most part.

This confusing doctrinal soup doesn't taste that great – Christians constantly wonder how well they really have to behave to get a spot in the kingdom, they deal with fear that they won't behave well enough, and they play condemnation ping-pong as they flip back and forth between Paul's "just believe in what the cross accomplished" and Jesus' "behave well enough to earn yourself a spot in the kingdom" instructions. But many Christians just

keep eating the only soup they're fed because they simply don't know any better. Hopefully this chapter has separated the cream of mushroom soup from the chicken noodle soup for you.

To put it another way, modern Christians assume that they should automatically apply to their own lives every single thing Christ and His original disciples preached during Christ's earthly ministry and after His resurrection before Paul came along...because they assume Christ preached and fully explained everything that Paul preached and explained. This is simply not true; Jesus' message to Israel required obedience to the Law of Moses and was destined in God's grand plan to be rejected by Israel and be *replaced by* Paul's new, fully informed gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Once you see this simple distinction, it is exceedingly obvious that although we can learn from many of the timeless pearls of wisdom Jesus taught, we should not apply His and His disciples' primary instruction to Israel (repent/obey and obey the Law of Moses to earn a spot in the kingdom) to ourselves, and instead should apply Paul's primary instruction (put your faith in what Christ did on the cross, our works cannot earn us a spot in the kingdom) to ourselves.

But if you fail to see this distinction (as most of modern Christianity does), you will have a faith/works mish-mash in your mind, and despite Paul's preaching that "it's not by works", you will constantly muddy the waters of your mind with Jesus' primary works-based instruction to Israel (for example you'll read what Jesus said to the rich young ruler wonder how on earth it applies to you!), and thus you will be constantly wondering exactly how good you have to behave in order to make it into the kingdom. Paul's gospel answers this burning question for us with absolute clarity – I will explain it so it is crystal clear in your mind in the next fact, Fact #17, and you will never play condemnation ping-pong again.

OK, we've arrived at the last two facts I want to share with you in this chapter. The puzzle pieces I've shared now fit together in your mind so that you can finally see a clear picture of how to understand Jesus' and His disciples' preaching to Israel, and how to understand Paul's preaching to the whole world later – and the vital difference between the two. You are now ready for the punch lines – the main two points that all the other facts I've shared in this chapter have prepared you for.

I believe our next fact, Fact #17, will help you immensely in your walk with God, bringing you a level of peace in your relationship with Him that you could not have previously imagined.

Fact #17: Under Paul's new gospel, good works *cannot* earn you a spot in the kingdom (life in the next two ages on earth), but *dedicating yourself to bad works can cause you to lose your freely-received spot* in it. (Gal. 5:13, 19-21)

Paul spends virtually the entire book of Galatians telling the Galatian Christians that they do not have to obey the Law of Moses and that they cannot earn their salvation through works and “doing stuff”. In chapter 5 verse 2 he even goes so far as to say that if you try to earn your salvation by works or by “doing stuff” (my phrase, he used circumcision in obedience to the Law of Moses as his example), “Christ will be of no benefit to you” (Paul’s exact words).

Then, in chapter 5 verses 19 through 21 Paul lists certain sins and warns the Galatian believers that “those who *practice* such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Understanding Paul’s teaching in Galatians and particularly chapter 5 verses 19 through 21 will help us clearly understand exactly what the role of works in salvation is, and what it is not.

The key terms in Paul’s warning in verse 21 are “practice” and “inherit the kingdom of God”. First lets talk about the term “practice”. To “practice” something means to dedicate yourself to something. Doctors practice medicine. Lawyers practice law. I practiced the piano for many years (which is why I’m a pretty decent keyboard player). Paul is obviously not saying “If you mess up and sin sometimes you will miss out on the kingdom of God” – if that was his point, he would be contradicting everything he said in the rest of the book of Galatians (that you can’t earn a spot in the kingdom by doing stuff and obeying rules perfectly)! Instead, he’s saying, “*Dedicating yourself to practicing* certain sins – like a lawyer practices law, like a doctor practices medicine, as something you consider to be a normal part of your lifestyle without seeing the need or having a desire to repent – can disqualify you from a spot in the kingdom of God.” (More on this idea of “practicing” in a moment.)

To illustrate what Paul is saying, imagine a benevolent billionaire giving a homeless man a gift of a billion dollars. The homeless man can never claim that he earned the billion dollars – that would be a ridiculous and false claim. However, the previously homeless man could squander the billion dollars by practicing and dedicating himself to foolhardy, unwise, and careless spending habits without regard for wise investments, and find himself homeless again. It’s the same with us Christians living under Paul’s gospel. We’re not saved by our works – we could never claim that we earned our spot in the kingdom. However, Paul says in Galatians 5:19-21 that if we dedicate ourselves to certain sins, we could lose our (freely received) spot in the kingdom.

Now lets talk about the phrase “the kingdom of God”. I’ve already explained how this term does not refer to hanging out in heaven for eternity, but to partaking in life on earth during the next two ages, the millennium and the New Jerusalem age. So Paul is not talking about “eternal salvation” or “eternal destiny” or “eternal damnation” or any such thing in Galatians 5:21. (Those terms are not found anywhere in Scripture – remember, anytime you see the word “eternal”, “everlasting”, “forever”, etc. in your English Bible it is a ridiculous mistranslation of either the Hebrew word “olam” or the Greek word “eon”, neither of which refer to endlessness or eternity. You also have to watch out for the word

“never”.) So what you’d miss out on by practicing (dedicating yourself to) one or more of the sins Paul lists in Galatians 5:19-21 is life on earth in the next two ages (the millennium and the New Jerusalem age).

Worst case scenario, a man who dedicates himself to one or more of the sins listed by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 will die (become unconscious – Ecc. 9:5, 10), miss out on the rapture and life in the millennium, be temporarily resurrected into a mortal body to be judged at the white throne judgment where he will be taught/corrected personally by Christ and bow the knee in worship to Him (Rev. 20:5-6, 11-13, Phil. 2:10-11, Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11), after which he will die again (becoming unconscious again – Rev. 20:14, Ecc. 9:5, 10), miss out on the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 21-22), and finally be resurrected into an incorruptible/immortal body (Greek “vivified”) at the consummation of the ages (1 Cor. 15:20-28 – at which point God will be “all in all” and death will be abolished, in other words no one who has ever lived will be dead anymore).

As you can see, the whole debate about whether you can “lose your salvation” is confused by the fact that Christians don’t understand what “salvation” is. Most Christians think being saved means being saved from hell and eternal damnation. In reality, we are saved from the wages of sin, which is death/unconsciousness (Rom. 6:23, Rom. 1:32, Ecc. 9:5, Ecc. 9:10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17, etc.). Those who believe in this age will be permanently saved from death early (at the rapture) and get “eonian life” – a spot in the kingdom of God, life in the next two ages on earth (Rom. 6:23, Rev. 20:6, Rev. 21-22). Those who don’t believe in this age will be permanently saved from death after those two ages of life on earth, at the consummation of God’s plan (1 Cor. 15:22-28).

The bottom line is, you can squander (lose) your free-gift (unearned in the first place) spot in the kingdom (your *early* salvation from death at the rapture) by dedicating yourself to sin. If it wasn’t possible to lose your spot in the kingdom, why else would Paul warn the Galatian believers about it? But you can’t damn yourself to hell or even death for eternity because hell does not exist and everyone who doesn’t partake in the rapture will eventually learn to live correctly at the white throne judgment and later (at the consummation of God’s plan) get an immortal/incorruptible body and be one with God as death is abolished once and for all (1 Cor. 15:22-28).

This clears up the “Can you lose your salvation or not?” question once and for all. You can lose your freely-received (Rom. 6:23) *early* salvation (spot in the rapture and life in the next two ages of life on earth a.k.a. “the kingdom of God”) (Gal. 5:2, 19-21), but you cannot lose your *ultimate* salvation from death, because the ultimate salvation of mankind from the wages of sin (death) does not depend at all on the works of man, but on the work of God at the cross and His very identity as “the Savior of all men” (Rom. 5:18, 3:23-24, 1 Tim. 4:10, John 3:16-17 + 1 Cor. 15:20-28, James 1:18, Col. 1:16-20, Eph. 1:10, Phil. 2:10-11, John 12:32, Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11, Rom. 11:32-36, Rom. 8:20-21).

You can see how this knowledge frees us to obey God primarily out of love for Him and wisdom/understanding, rather than primarily out of fear. “The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10), but what is the end of wisdom or the ultimate wisdom? The ultimate wisdom is doing things God’s way not just because we fear consequences (like an immature/ignorant child, see Rom. 1:14-32 for example), but because we love Him in return for His great love for us (1 Jn. 4:18-19), and because we understand that His designed way of living life *works well* (minimizes pain and causes peace and joy and blessing in the long run). This is a mature adult’s perspective on wise behavior. The knowledge that you can’t run from God forever (you’re either going to “get it” now or “get it” later at the white throne judgment) frees you to obey God primarily out of mature wisdom (“it just works because it’s the Designer’s design for life, besides the fact that I love the Designer and want to please Him”) rather than primarily out of fear.

Before I close this point I also want to take this chance to clear up the often misunderstood statement in James 2:24, “...by works a man is being justified, and not by faith only” (Concordant Version). Many Christians take this statement by James out of context and throw it into the pot with their misinformed “Jesus and Paul combo soup”, causing even more confusion. But now that we know the difference between Jesus’ preaching to Israel and Paul’s later preaching to the whole world, we can look at the immediate context of James statement (verses 14-26) and understand James’ statements in the light of Paul’s gospel.

These statements in the book of James obviously do *not* refer to a return to the old way of *earning* a spot in the kingdom in the old gospel that required good behavior and obedience to the Law of Moses (Matt. 28:18-20, Matt. 23:23, Lk. 18:18-20, Lk. 24:44-49, Acts 2:37-38). If they were, we’d have to throw Ephesians 2:8-9 out of the Bible (along with many other statements the apostle Paul made)! Rather, they are simply another way of expressing what Paul said in Galatians 5:13, 19-21 and Romans 3:23-24 – that you *can’t earn* a spot in the kingdom (you can only get it by faith through grace as a free gift), but *dedicating yourself to bad works (or its counterpart, having no good works whatsoever) can disqualify you* because a person who does that obviously either has no faith or dead faith.

James states this himself two sentences later, in verse 26: “*For even as the body apart from spirit is dead, thus also faith apart from works is dead.*” He’s not talking about earning anything, he’s talking about *proof, outward signs*, that a person has real, living faith, just as a moving body is proof, an outward sign, that the person is alive. In verses 20-23 he again states that “faith apart from works is dead”, and uses the example of how Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (faith) and then had a visible outward demonstration of his faith through his willingness to offer up his son on the altar (works).

James’ point in this whole passage could be accurately summed up as: “If you claim you have faith but have no works to show for it, you don’t really have faith.” James is simply *condemning people who call themselves Christians but don’t have any outward action that identifies*

them as a Christian. He's saying such a person is not really a Christian. He's not contradicting that righteousness comes by faith – he stated in this very passage that Abraham simply believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness! He's just saying that if you don't have some walk to go with your talk, then your talk is fake.

In other words, James is simply restating the fact that you *can't* earn a spot in the kingdom by doing good works but you *can* throw away your free gift of a spot in the kingdom (the next two ages of life on earth) by dedicating yourself to certain evil lifestyles or by having no visible positive fruit in your life that would identify you as a Christian. If you read James 1:19-26 you will see that it is basically a perfectly parallel passage to Galatians 5:13, 19-21. Paul said it one way in Galatians 5:13, 19-21: “If you practice – dedicate yourself to – certain sins, you will not inherit the kingdom.” James said it another way in James 1 and 2: “If you get a free gift of a billion dollars but live in a cardboard box on the street, you obviously are not using the billion dollars.” (These are my paraphrases of course, not direct quotations!)

The most seemingly difficult of James' statements is James 2:24: “So you see that man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” But when we read it in the Concordant Version with more accurate sense of the verb tense, “*by works a man is being justified, and not by faith only*”, we see that James is talking about a process here, similar to Paul saying “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”. James is saying, “If your lifestyle shows no evidence of the process of walking with God, yet you call yourself a Christian, you are deceiving yourself.”

When you read this statement with an accurate verb tense and analyze the context around it, it becomes extremely clear that this statement does not at all contradict anything Paul said. Paul said that God has already justified mankind through the cross, not counting mankind's sin against them (Rom. 5:18, Rom. 3:23-24, 2 Cor. 5:18-19), and there is no Scriptural statement that this will ever be reversed. All human beings are already justified *in principle*. However, not everybody will “be justified” *in experiential reality* at the same time. Some people will experience it now in this age, while some won't “get it” until the white throne judgment (1 Cor. 15:22-28, Col. 1:20, Rom. 11:32-36, Phil. 2:11-12, 1 Tim. 4:10, etc.). Not everyone is *being justified* right now. Only those who truly know and walk with God are *being justified* right now.

So both Paul in Galatians 5:13, 19-21 and James in James 2:24 (actually all of chapters 1 and 2, the end chapter 2 is just the punch line) are saying that *if you dedicate yourself to certain sins and/ or have no positive Christlike fruit in your life, you are obviously not one of the people who is experiencing justification in experiential reality now.*

This warning by Paul and James is completely appropriate to give to Christians living under Paul's gospel of faith and grace. Some action is required. Paul and James agree (Remember James referenced Abraham's simple act of believing that made him righteous in God's eyes!) that the action (your good works) does not and cannot *earn* you a spot in the

kingdom. And Paul and James agree that action is a *natural outworking of your faith*, and *if there is no corresponding action whatsoever or if there is obvious dedicated contrary action (dedication to certain sins as a lifestyle), you obviously either have no faith or your faith (that you once had or claimed to have) is dead*. The main point Paul and James are trying to get across is the same: “Christians, don’t let your faith turn into dead faith and throw away your free gift of a spot in the next two ages of life on earth by having no Christlike fruit/actions in your life and/or dedicating yourself to a lifestyle of sin. And those of you who talk the talk but don’t have any evidence whatsoever of walking the walk, we see right through you, and God sees right through you – you are obviously not a true Christian.”

None of this is rocket science – all true Christians instinctively understand this. It’s just that if you take James 2:24 out of context and don’t get a good sense of the verb tense, it can at first seem to contradict Ephesians 2:8-9. With an accurate sense of the verb tense, and taken in context, James 2:23 agrees perfectly with Ephesians 2:8-9, and James 2:24 & 26 agrees perfectly with Galatians 5:13, 19-21.

A similar warning is found in the book of 1 John. (Keep in mind that John and James wrote their books/letters that are now in the Bible after Paul had taught them his new gospel, see Galatians 1-2.) I used to get scared out of my wits reading 1 John because he says things like “everyone who is born of God does not sin” (5:18), and “no one who abides in Him sins” (1 Jn. 3:6). I (like every Christian) sinned sometimes, so I thought John was saying I had to be perfect in order to qualify as someone who knows Christ! I was missing the Greek verb tense John was using (erroneously assuming he was talking about sinning only once or once in a while); so I was missing the fact that he was talking about *practicing* (dedicating oneself to) sin (1 Jn. 3:4, 7-9). When you realize that all of 1 John is summed up by chapter 3 verse 10 (which I’ll quote in a moment), you realize that John is just saying the same thing Paul says in Galatians 5:19-21 and James says in James 1 and 2.

1 John 3:10 says, “*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious* (he’s talking about right now, in this age, see chapter 5 vs. 19): *everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*” (NASB)

There’s that key word “practice” again, along with another key word – “obvious”. (The Concordant Version translates it “apparent”, Young’s Literal as “manifest”.) Everyone, both Christians and non-Christians, messes up and sins from time to time, and no Christian is perfect and never sins (Rom. 7:18-25). It is certainly not “obvious” or “apparent” or “manifest” who is a Christian just by looking at who is not perfect – no human (except Christ) is perfect! (1 John itself says this in chapter 1 verse 8!) You cannot determine who is a Christian and who is not just by saying, “Whoever never sins is a Christian but whoever sins at any time is not.” By that definition no one is a Christian (except Christ Himself)!

But what *is* exceedingly *obvious* as a way to distinguish who is a Christian and who is not? What people *dedicate themselves to (practice)*! If you read the sins Paul lists in Galatians

5:19-21, it is easy to see that anyone who dedicates themselves to one or more of these sins is not living for Christ – such a person is obviously not a Christian, and it would be apparent to any true Christian. If such a person were to call himself a Christian, every true Christian would instantly see right through their claim and realize that the person is not really living for Christ. What people *dedicate themselves to (practice)* is, just as John said, an *obvious* indicator of who is really a Christian.

So we see that Paul, James, and John all make the same point. Living for Christ and being a true Christian is not about being perfect, it is about what you *believe* (what Christ accomplished for you on the cross) which is borne out by what you *practice* – *what you dedicate yourself to* (not being perfect, but being consistent in seeking and pressing towards). The issue is not whether you sin sometimes (everyone does, see Rom. 7:18-25 1 John 1:8), it is what you dedicate yourself to – what you *practice*. My wife and I have a friend that is a doctor. Does she practice medicine 100% perfectly, all the time? No. But she's in the office every day, practicing medicine! She's not out in the street every day, practicing prostitution. She's practicing medicine. The issue is not perfection, it is dedication. That's the definition of the word "practice". Are you in the Word and in church regularly, seeking to be more like Christ as the main goal of your life? Or are you in bars every weekend trying to pick up women you're not married to so you can sleep with them? What you *dedicate yourself to* is the *obvious* indicator of whether you are a Christian or not. Perfection is not an issue, because no one is perfect. The issue is what you dedicate yourself to, what you constantly strive to achieve and be better at (whether you are perfect at it or not) – see Philippians 3:12.

I hope this frees you from the condemnation that unnecessarily plagues so many Christians. When we stop trying to apply Jesus' "earn it through good behavior" instructions to Israel to ourselves, and focus on the *true* "New Testament" and "New Covenant" writings of Paul (and the other disciples after Paul taught them, see Gal. 1-2), we can finally get a clear picture of what God truly expects of us. He does not expect us to be perfect right now in this age, in our mortal bodies (Rom. 7:18-25), but to dedicate ourselves to (practice) the things of God rather than the sins Paul lists in Galatians 5:19-21.

You also have to understand that the people to whom Paul and James were writing were newbie Christians who were not at all accustomed to "Christian culture"; it was new to them. In the modern Western world everyone is aware of the moral standards for which Christianity stands. But back then Christianity was brand new! These Christians to whom Paul and James were writing were what we would consider "newbie Christians". They were coming out of pagan religions that often practiced and encouraged many of the sins Paul addressed in Galatians 5:19-21 – orgies, etc. So Paul was telling these pagan converts, "Listen people, that stuff is *not* ok. God does not approve of those things." We modern Christians say in unison, "Duh!" But to those Christians back then, it was not "duh", it was "Oh! Thanks for reminding me! The pagan religion I came out of said that stuff was ok and even good! Let's be careful not to mix the religion we just came out of with this new Christianity thing. Thanks for clarifying the boundaries of this new Christ religion for us Paul!"

So we have to be careful not to take reminders by Paul and James to newbie pagan converts that “living a lifestyle of certain obvious sins is not ok”, and mistakenly superimpose our modern “I’m trying to live holy and never mess up” mindset on top of it and turn it into a “be perfect at all times or else!” message. That was not the intent of Paul and James. They were drawing a line in the sand for newbie Christians as to what behaviors and *practices* were ok and which ones were not. What Paul in Galatians 5, James in James 1-2, and John in 1 John were telling their converts was that there is an obvious line in the sand between a real Christian and a fake or deceived Christian. That line is what types of things you dedicate yourself to. Two thousand years later, that line in the sand has become such a part of Western culture that we take it for granted – everyone knows the moral values for which Christianity stands.

So we must remember the definition of *practicing* sin and *practicing* righteousness. Messing up sometimes as you dedicate yourself to righteousness is not “practicing” sin, any more than seeing a piano in the mall and playing a few notes before going on about your shopping is “practicing” piano. Practicing sin is living a lifestyle of sin and considering it to be normal and/or a goal of your life, like a lawyer practices law, a doctor practices medicine, or a pianist practices piano.

And of course, I must reiterate that even if a person practices one or more of the sins listed by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21, that person will not go to hell or suffer tortuously in death or experience eternal punishment or any such ridiculous pagan notion. Such a person will simply miss out on life during (be dead and unconscious during) the kingdom of God, the next two ages of life on earth (the millennium and the New Jerusalem age). That person will be temporarily resurrected into a physical mortal body after the millennium to be judged by Christ (Rev. 20:5, 12-13) and will then die and become unconscious again during the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 20:14, 21:27, 22:15), after which they will be “vivified” and receive an immortal body at the consummation of God’s plan so that death can be abolished and God can be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:22-28, Col. 1:20, Phil. 2:10-11, Rom. 11:32-36, 1 Tim. 4:10, etc.)

(Keep in mind that Revelation 21:27 does not say people who do certain sins will “never” or “ever” go into the New Jerusalem, but that “under no circumstances will those who practice such sins enter into it”, or “there may not at all enter into it anyone who practices these things” – a true statement that does not contradict 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 in any way. People who practice those sins in this age will be dead during the New Jerusalem age, and thus they will by no means enter into the New Jerusalem during that age. But they will have been corrected/judged/taught by Jesus Himself at the white throne judgment immediately before the New Jerusalem age, in essence becoming like Christians are now, humble Christ worshippers – see Isaiah 45:23 and Romans 14:10-11. They will then die and remain dead during the New Jerusalem age, in agreement with Revelation 21:27. But after that, at the “consummation” of God’s plan, they will be “vivified” so that God can be “all in all” – see 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, James 1:18, and Romans 8:20-21, 11:32-36. The point

is, Revelation 21:8 and 27 speak specifically of the New Jerusalem age and the fact that people who live a lifestyle of practicing sin in this age will be dead during it. These verses say nothing about the consummation of God's plan and afterwards. If they did, many statements and passages would have to be cut out of the Bible, such as 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, 11:32-36, 1 Timothy 4:10, Colossians 1:16-20, John 12:32, Ephesians 1:10, etc.)

To state it succinctly, you're either going to "get it" (experience the justification Christ provided for you in reality) now in this age and get your immortality at the rapture (1 Cor. 15:22-28), or you're going to "get it" at the white throne judgment and get your immortality at the consummation of God's plan after the New Jerusalem age (1 Cor. 15:22-28).

Personally, I'd rather "get it" now and be alive during the millennium and the New Jerusalem age; I want to experience the kingdom of God. That's plenty of incentive for me to dedicate myself to growing in God rather than dedicating myself to the sins Paul lists in Galatians 5:19-21.

I also want to make sure you understand that sin will eventually no longer be a part of any human being's life. Jesus' authoritative, "I'm-making-and-enforcing-the-rules" kingdom rulership that will be in effect during the millennium *will no longer be necessary* once the third vivification occurs, sin and death are abolished, and God becomes "all in all" as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. That's because the purpose of authority is to punish and curb evil (Rom. 13). Once there is no more evil to be punished or curbed, Jesus will not have to exert authority any more – His job will be done, He will have utterly defeated every enemy of God. At the consummation of God's plan, *sin will have been removed from the human race, making it possible for death to be abolished*. Sin and death will no longer affect any human, every human will have been "vivified" into an incorruptible/immortal body, Satan's negative influence will have been removed, and Jesus will hand the kingdom over to the Father (Rom. 6:23 + 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Those who "get it" and experience their justification in reality now in this age are simply tapping into the understanding of how God designed life to be lived (in love rather than selfishness) earlier than everyone else will, and thus God can trust us with immortality earlier and can use us to be on His leadership team in the millennium and to rule the earth with Him during the millennium and the New Jerusalem age (Rev. 20:6). Why wouldn't you want to "get it" now rather than later? The millennium and the New Jerusalem age sound like a lot of fun to me! And 1 Corinthians 2:9 says we can't even imagine how much fun it will be to take part in those two ages that God has prepared for us!

All right, last but definitely not least, we've reached Fact #18. Using all the puzzle pieces we have put together so far as a backdrop, Fact #18 will prepare you to understand the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, which I will explain in the next chapter.

Fact #18: The fact that Jesus' primary message to Israel was all about giving them an opportunity to see the kingdom come to earth within their lifetimes gives us a huge key to understanding the points Jesus was making with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (as well as Jesus' warnings to Israelites about the physical fire that will burn in Gehenna during the millennium).

Simply put, the *setting* of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (like the setting of all parables) was *fictional* (in the next chapter you will see how Jesus lifted this from the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition in order to mock their ridiculous pagan beliefs about a conscious afterlife), while the *points* of the parable (like the main point of Jesus' preaching to Israel) were all about *the next age of life on earth* (the kingdom of God, the millennium), not about "the afterlife" (a man-invented word referring to conscious death, a term and concept that is not found anywhere in Scripture).

In other words, most Christians mistakenly think the fictional setting of the parable is the point of the parable. Modern Christians are prone to make this error for four simple reasons.

First, modern Christians are for the most part completely unaware of the multiple Scriptures that plainly teach that death is unconscious (Ecc. 9:5, 10; Ps. 115:17, Ps. 6:5, John 3:13, etc.). The Scriptures I just listed (among many others) cannot possibly be true if Jesus was telling a literal or true story with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, and meant it to be a literal teaching about conscious death. If the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is a literal teaching about conscious death, then the Scriptures I just listed (and many others) are lies, and Jesus is a liar/schizophrenic who contradicted the rest of Scripture and even some of His own statements (John 3:13) with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The plain statements of Scripture I just listed are in the Bible, and they blatantly contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife. But most Christians don't ever think about the blatant Scriptural self-contradictions caused by incorrectly interpreting this parable as a literal teaching about the afterlife, because most Christians never hear any preaching about the Scriptures I listed above – they just ignore these plain statements in the Bible, acting as if they don't exist.

Second, modern Christians don't think about the fact that a parable by its very definition is *never* a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story. (The parable of the seed and the sower is not a literal teaching about farming techniques, is it?) Modern Christians do something with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man that they don't do with any of Jesus' other parables – they treat it like a literal teaching about the setting of the fictional story.

The third reason modern Christians misinterpret the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is that, unlike Jesus' audience 2,000 years ago (Israelites, including Pharisees), most modern Christians are unaware that Jesus lifted the setting of the parable directly from the

Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition. Jesus' Israelite audience would have been aware that the Old Testament Scriptures totally contradict the Talmudian version of the afterlife. Remember, at the time Jesus walked the earth, the Old Testament was the only Bible the Israelites had. There is nothing in Old Testament Scripture that could be remotely construed as matching the Talmudian conception of the afterlife Jesus used as the setting for His parable, and the Old Testament clearly teaches unconscious death, which is in direct contradiction to the fictional setting of this parable. But most modern Christians don't know that the setting of the parable comes directly from the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition (as I will prove in the next chapter). The Catholic version of the afterlife closely matches the pagan Talmudian version of the afterlife, so modern Christians with a "Catholic afterlife" mindset unthinkingly assume Jesus was *teaching* the Talmudian version of the afterlife, when in fact He was cleverly *mocking* it.

The fourth reason modern Christians have a difficult time understanding the points Jesus made with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, is that they don't understand what I taught you in this chapter. Many modern Christians erroneously think the main point of Jesus' preaching was about going to heaven and hanging out forever; they don't realize Jesus' preaching to Israel was actually about getting a spot in the next age of life on earth by repenting and behaving well enough. Thus modern Christians can't see that the points Jesus made with the parable match up perfectly with all the other times He preached His primary message to Israel. Instead, modern Christians instantly latch onto the setting of the parable, which matches up with their pagan/Catholic-inherited belief system about conscious death, eternal punishment, etc., and mistake the fictional setting of the parable as being the point of the parable.

I will explain the parable of Lazarus and the rich man thoroughly in the next chapter. For now simply realize that it is difficult to understand the point Jesus was making with the parable until you realize that *it's the same point He made in virtually all His preaching to Israel – it was about how to have a good spot in the next age of life on earth; it was not about eternity or conscious death.* The conscious death part (the fictional setting of the parable) was lifted directly out of the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition, as I will prove in the next chapter. It was not the point of the parable; it was a carefully chosen vehicle to make a point. Jesus chose a certain vehicle (a fictional story set in a pagan Talmudian vision of a conscious death afterlife) to make His points while simultaneously *mocking* the Pharisees by using a story set in their pagan traditions to scathingly criticize them. Jesus was *not teaching* the ridiculous pagan ideas about conscious death contained in their pagan Talmud (which they often put above the Old Testament Scriptures). If He was, he must've been lying in John 3:13 when He said, "No man has ascended into heaven"! In the next chapter I'll also give you a modern day illustration to help you understand how every person in the Israelite audience when Jesus told the parable 2,000 years ago would have understood it.

In this chapter I have given you a lot of background information that will help you understand the mindset of the Israelites who were hearing Jesus preach, and help you understand what Jesus was actually preaching to them, so that you can now easily

understand the point of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man the way the Israelites would have understood it back then, and the way Jesus intended it to be understood back then.

What you have learned in this chapter is also vital for understanding Jesus' warnings about the physical fire that will burn in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium (Is. 66:20-24, Mark 9:45-48, Rev. 19:15, Mal. 4). Many Christians have a hard time understanding why Jesus would warn Israelites 2,000 years ago about a physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that still has not yet begun to burn (it will be lighted at the beginning of the millennium, see the verses I just listed).

In this chapter I have explained to you *exactly why* Jesus would warn Israelites 2,000 years ago about a physical fire that would burn evil people at the beginning of the millennium – He was giving them a chance to see the kingdom of God come to earth (what we now call the millennium) *within their lifetimes!* (Again, see Matthew 24:35 accurately translated showing verb tense and other similar statements by Jesus in the Gospels using the same verb tense.) So it made perfect sense for Him to warn them about the fire in Gehenna that will be His version of capital punishment for evil people when He takes over the world.

Today we can look at these warnings/prophecies and realize that they will still come true in the future, but obviously they no longer apply to Israelites 2,000 years ago who did not meet the conditions for the kingdom to come in their lifetimes. Today we would apply these warnings and prophecies to unbelievers who will miss the rapture and live through the end of this age into the millennium. Jesus will take some of these people, those who are particularly evil, and will give them capital punishment, throwing their corpses in a fire in the Valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem – see Is. 66:23-24. Some people, those who were not particularly evil, will get to live on into the millennium in their mortal bodies, have children etc. until they die a natural death; these are the people we will rule over with Christ during the millennium.

(See my article “*Depart From Me!*” *Who Exactly Will Jesus Say This To?* that I recommend at the end of this book for more information on the timing and nature of the events at the beginning of the millennium, including the Gehenna fire, the “sheep and goats” event etc. Modern Christians often get unnecessarily scared when they read of Jesus warning Israel about these events, not realizing that these events will occur *after the rapture*, at the beginning of the millennium. Jesus warned Israelites about these events because they *could have* occurred 2,000 years ago if Israel had met the conditions to see the kingdom come, but because they didn't meet the conditions, these events have been delayed and will occur *after the rapture*, at the beginning of the millennium.)

Conclusion: No More Condemnation Ping-Pong!

I had three goals for this chapter, and I hope I have accomplished them.

The first goal was to help you permanently escape what I call “condemnation ping-pong”. This brutal and tortuous form of mental, emotional, and spiritual ping-pong is played by flipping back and forth between Jesus’ “earn it” instructions to Israel (and His warnings to Israel about Gehenna fire etc. that in actuality don’t apply to Christians at all) and Paul’s “you can’t earn it, just accept what Christ did for you” instructions, trying to decide which one to believe and whether to feel condemned or not. Hopefully you now realize that condemnation ping-pong is only caused by throwing Jesus’ gospel to Israel in the same pot of doctrinal soup with Paul’s later, new gospel for the whole world. When you realize that Paul’s “accept what Christ did for you on the cross as a free gift by faith, not by works” instructions *replaced* Jesus’ previous, destined-to-fail “earn it” instructions to Israel, suddenly a light goes on in your brain:

Condemnation ping-pong is totally unnecessary!
Hallelujah! What a feeling of freedom!

My second goal for this chapter was to help you understand the logical reason why Jesus warned the Israelites about the physical fire that will burn in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium. (They were being given a chance to see the millennium begin in that generation and thus it was logical to warn them about this.)

My third goal for this chapter was to help you understand the mindset of Israelites in Jesus’ day so as to be able to understand the points of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man the way they would have. In order to understand the points of the parable (and restore your focus onto the points of the parable rather than on the fictional pagan-Talmud-based setting of the parable) you need to realize that Jesus’ primary “gospel of the kingdom” message to Israel was not about going to heaven for eternity or “the afterlife” (an unscriptural term and idea), but about the future kingdom of God *on earth*.

Let us now carefully examine this parable whose meaning has been butchered so often and so badly by so many Christians who do not have the background information necessary to properly understand it. You now have the background information needed, so you will be able to understand it just as Jesus’ Israelite audience 2,000 years ago would have understood it.

Chapter 10

5 Keys To Understanding the Parable of Lazarus & the Rich Man the Way Godly People In Bible Days Would Have Understood It

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is recorded in Luke 16:19-17:2. This parable is commonly misinterpreted by many modern Christians because their preconceived “hell mindset” inherited from Middle Ages Catholicism causes them to interpret it completely differently than a Godly person in Bible days would have understood it. Let me show you what I mean.

People who believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife are tempted to use *a completely different rule* to interpret the parable of Lazarus and the rich man than they use to interpret all of Jesus’ other parables (and any other parable told by anyone). Many modern Christians treat the parable of Lazarus and the rich man as a **literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story**. Yet with every other parable told by Jesus or anyone else, we always assume that it is **not** a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story! Folks, if we’re going to be this inconsistent with the rules we use to interpret Scripture, we’ll always end up being confused.

The confusion in many modern Christian’s minds about this particular parable comes because although they must admit (when confronted about it) that the story is fictional (that Jesus made it up, that He was not telling the true story of a real guy named Lazarus and a real rich guy), they think that the setting and details of the story, though not a true story, are “true to life” in the same sense that Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins might be called “true to life” (back then, in oriental style weddings there really were virgins with lamps). This confusion is a result of the fact that most modern Christians totally ignore what Jesus said in John 3:13 (which we’ll look at in a moment), and they don’t realize that Jesus took the setting and key details of the story *directly from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition, not from Scripture*.

Later in this chapter I will list the places in the pagan Talmud that match up perfectly with the setting and details of this fictional story Jesus told about of Lazarus and the rich man. If the Pharisees’ pagan oral Talmudian tradition had existed in written form at

that time, Jesus may as well have been quoting directly from the Talmud. You will see that there is nothing in Scripture – especially in the Old Testament, which was the only Scripture Jesus and the Israelites had back then – that even remotely resembles the pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife. Find me one place in Scripture (other than this fictional story Jesus told) that talks about someone going to “Abraham’s bosom” when they die. Hmm...nothing. It’s not in the Bible. But it’s in the Talmud! It was part of the Pharisees’ pagan tradition! Now find me a single place in the Bible (other than this fictional story Jesus told) where dead people talk to each other. (I’m not talking about the two instances where dead people temporarily woke up and talked to living people on earth or to God, and then went back to sleep – Samuel and the souls of the 5th Seal of Revelation. I’m talking about dead people talking *to each other while they’re in a state of death or “sleep” as the Bible calls it.*) Hmm...Nothing. It’s not in the Bible. But it’s in the Talmud!

Now let’s look at absolute proof, from Jesus’ very own mouth, that He did not consider the story of Lazarus and rich man to be a true story or “true to life”. In John 3:13 Jesus said, “No man has ascended into heaven.” (From the context it is clear He is referring to heaven where God lives.) So...if no man has ascended into heaven...then in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, *where did Lazarus go?* Most modern Christians assume “Abraham’s bosom” is just a fancy term Jesus used to refer to heaven, and that when He told the story, He meant us to understand that Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell. But this cannot be! Because Jesus Himself said that no man has ascended into heaven!

So the million dollar question is, *Where is “Abraham’s bosom”?* *Where did Lazarus go?* If we say “Abraham’s bosom” is heaven and Lazarus went to heaven, we make Jesus into a self-contradictory liar or schizophrenic. What is the solution here?

The solution is simple. *Jesus was telling a fictional story that had its setting and details lifted directly from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition but was not “true to life” according to reality and according to the rest of Scripture.* The Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition (their oral tradition which was later written down as the Talmud) contained talk about a conscious afterlife, good people going to “Abraham’s bosom” when they die and bad people going to the flames the afterlife, the flames of the afterlife being separated only by a short distance from heaven, etc. But outside of this one fictional story Jesus told (the parable of Lazarus and the rich man), the rest of the Bible says nothing about a conscious afterlife, “Abraham’s bosom”, a nebulous spirit-fire of the afterlife, or flames of the afterlife being within shouting distance of heaven.

Remember, the only Bible the Israelites in Jesus’ day had, and the only Bible Jesus Himself had, was what we now call the Old Testament, which contained nothing even remotely resembling the setting of this parable. The Old Testament clearly teaches unconscious death, over and over and over again (Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, etc.) This was all the Israelites knew regarding what happens to a human at death. It would have been exceedingly obvious to them that the setting of this parable was not taken from

Scripture. It is inconceivable that Jesus would teach the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition in direct contradiction to Old Testament Scripture. Especially given the fact that one of the points He made with the parable was "Listen to Moses and the prophets"! Moses and the prophets (the OT Scriptures) contain nothing resembling the version of the afterlife Jesus used as the setting for His fictional story.

So we see that the only way to keep Jesus from contradicting Himself when we read John 3:13 and the parable of Lazarus and the rich man side-by-side, is to understand that the story of Lazarus and the rich man is set in a setting taken directly from the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition. The parable is not set in reality or "Biblical reality". The parable is set in a false pagan "Talmudian reality", the "Talmudian version of the afterlife", which of course, is not reality at all, but a lie, a pagan invention.

Scripture tells us that Jesus' audience that day included the Pharisees, who often put their pagan Talmudian traditions above the Old Testament Scriptures. Talmudian terms like "Abraham's bosom", conscious death, and the pagan Talmudian concept of the flames of the afterlife, etc., would have been instantly recognized by the Pharisees; they would have instantly understood that this story Jesus was telling was set in the Talmudian afterlife, not an Old Testament afterlife.

And every other Israelite present that day would have also instantly understood that this story Jesus was telling was not set in "Old Testament reality" but in "the Talmudian afterlife". Again, the Old Testament was the only Bible the Israelites had back then, and they knew the OT Scriptures much better than most modern Christians do. Therefore, they knew that the OT Scriptures say nothing, zero, nada about conscious death, but rather plainly state several times that death is unconscious. So as soon as Jesus started talking about conscious death, dead people talking to each other, "Abraham's bosom", etc., they would have instantly known the fictional illustrative story Jesus was telling was not set in a setting from the Bible. Most of them were probably at least somewhat familiar with the Pharisees' oral Talmudian tradition as well, so they probably would have recognized the story as being set in that version of the afterlife, in the same way that modern Christians would recognize a story about a dead guy hanging out with 70 virgins as being taken from the Muslim version of the afterlife. Jesus also would have been familiar with the Pharisees' oral traditions, since the Bible records Jesus at age twelve asking insightful questions of the religious leaders of the day (Lk. 2:46-47).

So, Jesus' statement in John 3:13, "No man has ascended into heaven", proves beyond any shadow of doubt that He did not think of the story of Lazarus and the rich man as being set in reality or as based on the truth of the Bible. As we learned in Chapter 4 of this book, Scripture is clear that a human being's *spirit* "returns to God who gave it" – for example, when Jesus said the moment before He died on the cross, "Father, into Your hands I commit my *spirit*." But a human being's spirit is not conscious apart from a functioning physical body. Remember, in Genesis 2:7, Adam did not become a "living soul" until a human spirit created by God joined with a physical body. The Bible is absolutely

clear that death is the reverse of Genesis 2:7 – the spirit “returns to God who gave it”, the body “returns to the dust from whence it came”, and the soul/consciousness/life disappears (goes to “the unseen”, so that the person “sleeps” or “rests”.) *The Bible treats death as the absence of life or separation from life, not as a second life.* The second life does not come until resurrection from the dead. Again, if death was a second life, what would be the need for resurrection? Resurrection to life is necessary because death is the absence of life/consciousness. Stop me when I stop making sense. Paganism is what makes things nonsensical. The Bible’s clear teachings about death make perfect sense when you understand them correctly.

Dear reader, in this chapter I’m going to interpret the parable of Lazarus and the rich man *using the same rule that we use to interpret all of Jesus’ other parables*: the assumption that a parable is a fictional story whose point is *not* a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story, but rather the fictional story is merely a vehicle to make one or more points. We will also interpret this parable and analyze its points from *the same mindset that Jesus and His Israelite audience 2,000 years ago had, that of focusing on the kingdom coming to earth*, and in so doing we will understand this parable accurately and correctly the way Jesus meant it and the way His audience would have naturally and effortlessly understood it. There are five simple keys to understanding this story correctly and interpreting it accurately, the way Israelites in Bible days would have:

1. It is a *parable*, not a true story or a re-telling of a literal event. The story Jesus told in this parable did not really happen; it is a fictional illustrative story He made up. Jesus’ statement in John 3:13, “No man has ascended into heaven”, proves that He did not intend the story of Lazarus and the rich man to be taken as a true story, “true to life”, based on reality, or based on Scripture.

2. A parable is *not* a literal teaching about the fictional setting or the fictional details of the fictional story, but the fictional setting and fictional story are merely *vehicles to illustrate a point that is separate from the setting and details of the fictional story.* John 3:13 proves that (just as with all His other parables, and all parables ever told by anyone!), Jesus *did not* intend the story of Lazarus and the rich man to be a *literal teaching* about the setting of the story, but rather He intended it to be a *fictional story designed as a vehicle* to make a few points. The points are only related to the setting and details of the story in the sense that the setting and details *illustrate* the points. The setting and details of the story *are not the point in and of themselves*, they are only a fictional vehicle to *illustrate* one or more points. For example, the parable of the seed and the sower uses farming as a vehicle to illustrate points about the Word of God, but the farming is not the point; the parable is not a literal teaching about farming. In the same way, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man uses the pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife as a vehicle to illustrate several points, but the Talmudian idea of the afterlife is not the point; the parable is not a literal teaching about the Talmudian idea of the afterlife (or any other conception of “the afterlife”). Keep reading the rest of this chapter to discover the points Jesus made with the parable; you will see that none of them have anything to do with “the

afterlife”. This is initially hard for modern “Catholic afterlife mindset” Christians to grasp, but when you put yourself in the mindset of an Israelite 2,000 years ago, it is easy to understand.

3. Jesus took the “conscious afterlife” setting and certain details of the story directly from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition, not from Scripture. Again, the “conscious afterlife” setting of the fictional story is *merely a fictional vehicle* that helps illustrate the points Jesus made with the story; Jesus could have made the same points with a story set anywhere, but He carefully chose a “conscious afterlife” setting directly lifted *from the Pharisee’s pagan Babylonian Talmudian traditions* and then inserted clues in the story to show His audience that He did *not* believe in any pagan “conscious death” ideas, but rather was *mocking such pagan ideas*, as an additional affront to the Pharisees whom He was condemning with the parable. (This explains why the details of the story completely contradict the rest of the accurately translated Bible’s teaching on death, but completely agree with the pagan Talmud – and ironically, the Catholic version of the afterlife that has the same type of pagan origins as the Talmud!)

4. The people who heard the story 2,000 years ago would have naturally interpreted the story very differently than the typical modern Christian does, because they had a set of *knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions that modern Christians do not have.* Namely, they understood the clear Scriptural teaching that death is unconscious, and they understood #1, #2, and #3 above, whereas modern Christians by and large do not understand these things or bring them to mind when reading the parable of Lazarus and the rich man thousands of years later.

5. The main point of the parable is “A switch in fortunes between the elite and the downtrodden is coming” – but this switch does not refer to eternity or the afterlife, but rather to *the next age of life on earth, when Jesus will rule over the whole world.* This is in line with the primary message Jesus preached to Israel, which was not about eternity or the afterlife, but was about giving them the chance in their lifetimes to rule with Him during the next age of life on earth. The main point of the parable was designed to criticize the Pharisees, who had positions of power and were aligned with the corrupt political leaders of this age, and simultaneously to encourage the ordinary powerless person being exploited by the powerful. The secondary point Jesus made with the parable was, “Listen to Moses and the prophets. Listen to the Old Testament Scriptures, rather than the pagan Talmudian nonsense that I’m subtly mocking with this parable whose fictional setting is taken from it.” The third point Jesus made with the parable was a prophecy about the fact that even after He rose from the dead the Pharisees (and Israel at large during that time) would not listen to Him. None of these points have anything to do with conscious death or the “afterlife”. Again, let’s go back to #2 and #3 above; the fictional “pagan Talmudian version of the afterlife” was merely a fictional vehicle to make certain points that have *nothing, zero, nada to do with an “afterlife”* just as the parable of the seed and the sower has *nothing, zero, nada to do with farming.*

This chapter is going to undo years of confusion about this parable caused by Christians interpreting it with a totally different rule than they use to interpret all His other parables (and any other parable ever told by anyone) in their attempts to make it match up with the Catholic version of the afterlife.

So let's unravel one of the final threads of confusion that lingers in the minds of many Christians concerning what happens at death and God's plan for mankind – the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

A Parable Is a Fictional Story

The story of Lazarus and the rich man *is a parable* – a fictional illustrative story Jesus made up. Even though most people know what a parable is, I'm still going to take a moment to explain how a parable should be interpreted, because many Christians have interpreted the story of Lazarus and the rich man as a literal teaching on “the afterlife”, of which it is nothing of the sort. If it was, it would contradict Jesus' own words in John 3:13, everything else in the whole testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures (what we now call the Old Testament) as well as the whole testimony of the writings we now call the New Testament concerning what happens at death.

When reading the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, many modern Christians suddenly throw out all common sense and the common sense rule they use when interpreting Jesus' other parables. But we cannot just make up our rules of interpretation as we go. We must Jesus' parables for what they are: *parables*. What is a parable?

A parable is a fictional (invented, made up) illustrative story with one or more points, which are illustrated by the story's fictional setting and details. In other words, the setting and details of a parable illustrate the point, but are not in themselves the point. Many Christians make the mistake of assuming that the setting and details of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man *are in and of themselves the main point of the story*, when in fact they are just a *fictional vehicle* to make the points Jesus wanted to make. In all of Jesus' parables, just as with any parable told by anyone, it would be ridiculous to assume that we should treat the fictional setting and fictional story as literal or try to learn something from the setting and details themselves, other than understanding the point they illustrate.

Friends, is the parable of the seed and the sower about agriculture and farming? Is the parable of the wise and the foolish builders about home construction techniques? Is the parable of the lost coin about finding money that you've lost? Is the parable of the wise and foolish virgins about what virgins at an oriental style wedding should do with their oil? The answer to all these questions is obviously “no”.

So then, is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man about “the afterlife” and “conscious death”?

If it is, then it is the only parable in the history of the world, and the only parable told by Jesus, that is a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story! If we assume this parable is a literal teaching about the afterlife, then we must also assume the parable of the seed and the sower is a literal teaching about farming techniques and would be essential reading for farmers all over the world; we must also assume the parable of the wise and foolish builders must be about wisdom for constructing houses in the right type of soil and would be essential reading for homebuilders all over the world...you see what I mean. *Just because the setting of the story in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is “the afterlife” or “conscious death” does not mean that we should interpret the story/parable as being about that subject. In fact it is not about that subject precisely because it is a parable!*

And indeed, if we look at *the points* Jesus was making, viewing them from the perspective of His main message and constant preaching to Israel about the kingdom of God coming *to earth* (Acts 1:7, Matt. 6:10), we see that his points have *nothing, zero, nada to do with “the afterlife” or “conscious death”*. His points are 1) in the coming kingdom of God (remember, Scripturally this will be on earth!) a switch in fortunes between the downtrodden and the powerful will occur, and once it comes it will be too late for the powerful to repent and take part in the good things the downtrodden will enjoy, 2) people should listen to the Word of God (“Moses and the prophets”) before the kingdom comes so as to have a good part in it when it comes, and 3) even if the Pharisees saw someone rise from the dead they would not believe in Jesus (Jesus prophesying about His death and resurrection, and how the Pharisees and Israel as a whole would still not accept Him as Messiah even after that). All these points make perfect sense *without having anything to do with the afterlife or conscious death or eternal destiny*. All these points are exactly in line with the primary subject Jesus constantly preached to Israel about – the coming kingdom of God on earth. (See Chapter 9 of this book if you’ve been naughty and skipped to this chapter without reading Chapter 9 first!)

When Catholic-afterlife-trained modern Christians read the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, they they *artificially add, in their own minds*, the idea of “be afraid of hell” to Jesus’ explanation. But all of His points make perfect sense as having nothing whatsoever to do with hell or the afterlife or conscious death, especially when you understand what I taught you in Chapter 9 of this book. There is no need to add the idea of “be afraid of hell” to His points. The pagan Talmudian afterlife setting of the story is just a fictional vehicle.

Folks, if the fictional story Jesus told was a true depiction of the afterlife, it would be laughably ridiculous and absurd. First of all, why would a man suffering in the flames of the afterlife ask for just a drop of water on his tongue? I’d ask for a swimming pool or a water hose! Jesus creatively added this absurd detail to the story to make it extra-clear that He did not consider it to be “true to life”. Many Christians completely ignore this absurd detail;

they act as if the flames of the afterlife are true to life but never address or point out this absurd detail.

Another absurd aspect of the story, which Jesus lifted directly from the Talmudian version of the afterlife, is the idea of the flames of the afterlife being within shouting distance of heaven. Friends, how are we supposed to enjoy ourselves in heaven with the screams of the tortured damned – many of them our loved ones – emanating from right next door? Even if the flames of the afterlife were far away from heaven, how could we enjoy ourselves knowing that billions of people including many of our loved ones are screaming in agony continuously? Come to think of it, how can we worship God *now* and claim that He is love *now* and enjoy ourselves *now* while simultaneously believing that billions of people (including many of our loved ones, and including billions of people who never heard the gospel) are being tortured at this very moment, and that God can't bring Himself to stop it because He has an inner need to see them continually tortured? This is the type of question that is the elephant in the room to thinking unbelievers, while Christians who have been steeped in Catholic-afterlife tradition try to shove it to the back of their minds.

So we must be careful to take note of the absurd aspects of the fictional story that Jesus made sure to include. This will keep us from taking something Jesus intended to mock (the Pharisees' silly Talmudian conception of the afterlife), and teaching it as if it was true! For example, one of the points Jesus made with the parable was, (my paraphrase) "Listen to Moses and the prophets; if somebody doesn't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen if somebody rises from the dead either." A modern Christian will read that and *add to it*, "...and if you don't believe Paul's gospel you will go to hell." But folks, Jesus didn't say anything about Paul's gospel – He hadn't even died yet, the basis of Paul's gospel had not even *occurred* yet, at the moment He was telling this parable! Modern Christians never think about the fact that *we no longer ask people to believe in Moses and the prophets as their primary instruction for "getting saved"!* Instead we ask them to *believe in what the cross accomplished – Romans 10:9-10*. Folks, "Believe Paul's gospel or go to hell" cannot possibly be the message of the parable, for obvious reasons! The modern Christian is *artificially adding the "believe Paul's gospel or go to hell" idea*, because they are *so blinded by a Catholic afterlife mindset that they can't think straight; they don't even notice key details of the parable or think logically, instead their mind jumps unthinkingly and automatically* to the assumption that Jesus intended the fictional story of Lazarus and the rich man to be "true to life".

I just read through a list of all Jesus' parables, and with every single one of them it would be absurd and ridiculous to claim that He was giving a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story that He used for the parable. *The setting and details of a parable are not the point of the story; they are only a vehicle to get to the point.* If you read through all of Jesus' parables you will notice this in every single one! The setting and details of a parable are *illustrative and fictional vehicles, not literal teachings in and of themselves.*

Modern Christians have no trouble understanding this when they read all Jesus' other parables, but they suddenly "switch gears" when reading the parable of Lazarus and the rich man; they suddenly assume that the setting and details of the parable are a *literal teaching in and of themselves*. They usually understand that the rich man and Lazarus are fictional characters, but they think Abraham is really conscious in heaven talking to people, they think dead people go consciously either to heaven (what they assume "Abraham's bosom" means) or "this flame" immediately upon death, and they assume that Jesus is *giving a literal teaching about the fictional story and fictional setting*. They have just shattered the normal rule for interpreting parables and have simply thrown it out the window! They are suddenly assuming that *the details of the fictional setting and story are the point of the parable*.

Think of how ridiculous you would think I am if I tried to do this with the parable of the seed and the sower. Imagine if I tried to claim that the parable of the seed and the sower is a literal teaching about agriculture and farming techniques. Imagine if I stood up and preached a sermon using the parable as a "proof text" to exhort all the farmers in my congregation to make sure they don't cast their literal seed on hard ground on their farms! Every single Christian who heard me preach that way would laugh me out of church, and for good reason! That parable contains details that are ridiculous if taken literally – farmers do not throw seed on hard ground or among weeds, because it's stupid to do that. That detail is ridiculous if taken literally, but when taken as a fictional vehicle, it serves to illustrate a point that has nothing to do with farming. In the same way, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man contains details that are ridiculous if taken literally, but serve to illustrate points that have nothing to do with the afterlife. For example, Jesus used the Talmudian idea of dead people talking to each other and afterlife flames being separated by a short distance or wall from heaven, to make a point that had nothing to do with the afterlife. Those details are ridiculous if taken literally (again, how are we supposed to enjoy ourselves in heaven with the screams of our loved ones emanating from right next door?), but as a fictional vehicle serve beautifully to illustrate Jesus' point that once the kingdom of God comes and brings a switch in fortunes between the downtrodden and the powerful, many (formerly) powerful people will wish to repent and take part in the nice circumstances the (former) poor will be experiencing, but it will be too late at that point. This point is exactly in line with what Jesus constantly preached about to Israel – the coming kingdom of God on earth.

Israelites 2,000 years ago would have understood this without the confusion that modern Catholic-trained Christians have, because Israelites back then had a certain religious culture, a particular set of background knowledge and starting assumptions *that modern Christians do not have*. The people who heard the story 2,000 years ago would not have had any of the problems modern Christians have with understanding what Jesus meant by the story, because the preacher and the audience were living in the same culture and had the same assumptions and background belief system based on the Law of Moses and the Old Testament Scriptures.

Some of you might be thinking, “Yeah, but the Bible says the Israelites didn’t understand Jesus’ parables.” Well, the Israelite masses to whom Jesus told parables 2,000 years ago often had trouble grasping the significance and import of Jesus’ parables because of their hard hearts, not because of cultural confusion. The Bible tells us that the Israelites who heard Jesus’ parables had a *hard heart* problem, which is what caused them to fail to see what Jesus was all about in general (Lk. 8:10, Matt. 13:13).

Modern Christians, on the other hand, have a different problem understanding some of Jesus’ parables – a *cultural* problem. In His illustrative stories, Jesus, like every good speaker, used settings and events that would have been very familiar to His audience. Modern Christians sometimes have trouble understanding Jesus’ illustrative stories because we live in a completely different culture with a very different set of background knowledge, assumptions, beliefs and expectations than Israelites living 2,000 years ago.

For example, in order to understand the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, we have to do some historical study to understand marriage customs back then. But with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, modern Christians tend to *forget* to jump back in time and think like an Israelite in those days.

Jesus knew His audience and their beliefs, knowledge and attitudes well, and as we shall see, this illustrative story was a powerful message to the Israelites that made up His audience that day. However, because *modern Christians live in a different culture with a very different “default” set of assumptions and beliefs than the people to whom this story was told 2,000 years ago*, most modern believers unknowingly misinterpret the story *by matching it to the knowledge set and belief system of modern Christians who have been trained to believe in the Catholic afterlife*. (As I’ve shown you, in order to do this, modern Christians have to use a different rule to interpret the parable than they use to interpret any other parable, and they have to blatantly ignore many other statements in Scripture such as John 3:13.)

In order to correct this (understandable) misunderstanding, we as modern Christians must put ourselves in the shoes of the Israelites living 2,000 years ago, and we must also put ourselves in the shoes of Jesus, who understood their beliefs and attitudes and was directing the story to them. In order to understand the story and its message, we must “stand under” (understand) their situation by immersing ourselves in their knowledge set, belief system, assumptions, and attitudes.

If we don’t do that we will completely misunderstand the point of this parable. We’ll interpret it according to the modern “Catholic afterlife” mindset and we will be 100% wrong in our interpretation.

So let’s take a moment to compare the knowledge set, belief system, and attitudes of the Israelites, disciples, and Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking, to those of the typical modern Christian, so that we can correctly understand the points Jesus made to them with His illustrative story about “Lazarus and the rich man”.

The 2 (BIG!) Differences Between the Beliefs of Israelites Living 2,000 Years Ago, and the Typical Modern Christian's Beliefs

Here are two of the biggest differences between the average modern Christian's belief system, expectations, and culture, and those of Israelites two millennia ago:

First, as I've already mentioned, *Jesus and Israelites 2,000 years ago did not believe in conscious death* because (what we now call) the "Old Testament" Scriptures (correctly) teach that a person becomes unconscious at death (Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, Ps. 115:17). *Modern Christians, however, by and large believe in conscious death* because this pagan belief was mixed with Christianity by the Catholic Church in the middle ages and has never been purged from Christianity. (And it doesn't help that many modern English Bibles artificially insert the mistranslated words "eternal" and "hell" due to that pagan/Catholic-inherited tradition.) On this particular difference in viewpoints, the Israelites living 2,000 years ago were absolutely right, and the typical modern Christian is absolutely wrong. (See Chapter 4 of this book for more details.)

The second huge difference is, *Israelites 2,000 years ago were not thinking about "eternity" or "the (conscious) afterlife"*, and their *primary expectation of the Messiah* was that He would *come to help them in their lives on earth by forcibly defeating whoever ruled the earth, and ruling the earth from Jerusalem with Israel*. On the other hand, *modern Christians are primarily focused on "the (conscious) afterlife"*, and their *primary expectation of the Messiah* is that He will give them "eternal life" by which they mean "hanging out in heaven forever, starting immediately upon death". The tricky thing about this second difference in viewpoints is that both groups had/have *blind spots* in their understanding. Let me explain.

Jesus *will* come and forcibly rule the earth with Israel. Israelites living 2,000 years ago were **right** about that. But they were also **wrong** because they thought it would happen immediately as soon as the Messiah showed up and they had no conception of God's larger plan to have the Messiah die on the cross and to eventually give all humanity immortality. For this reason, most of them misunderstood Jesus' delay in bringing the kingdom to earth (He did not defeat the Romans by force 2,000 years ago), as an indication that He was not the Messiah (because He didn't do the one thing they were expecting the Messiah to do – bring the kingdom to earth as soon as he showed up). This was the cause for all the confusion we see in the gospels where Israelites were constantly wondering about and debating whether Jesus was the Messiah or not. He was doing amazing miracles right and left which seemed to demonstrate that He was from God, but He did not do the main thing they expected the Messiah to do.

Modern Christians are **right** because they understand that Jesus' primary reason for coming to earth was not just to (temporarily for a 1,000 years in the millennium) rule the

earth, but to provide immortality to the human race through His death and resurrection. (Most Christians think this immortality is only offered to some in this age, when in reality it is given to all as a free gift and will eventually be received by all – see Is. 45:23, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, etc. Most modern Christians also tend to think we’ll be hanging out in heaven forever starting immediately upon death, when in reality we’ll be dead/unconscious until the rapture, and then come to earth to rule it with Jesus shortly after the rapture and stay here and later live on a “new earth”.)

So modern Christians, through the writings of the apostle Paul, realize God’s plan is bigger than just ruling over the earth with Israel. (Israelites in Jesus’ day did not have that revelation because Paul hadn’t come along yet. Jesus hinted at it at times when speaking to Israel and His disciples but it went right over their heads.) But the typical modern Christian is also **wrong** because they don’t realize that Jesus’ earthly ministry in preaching to Israel was all about the coming kingdom of God on earth (which Israel at that time was being given a chance to see happen in their lifetimes). For this reason, combined with blatant mistranslation of the Greek word “eon” in many popular English Bibles, modern believers incorrectly force their “eternal life” mindset onto many things Jesus said to Israelites that only had to do with the coming earthly kingdom of God! (What we would now call the millennium, or the millennium and the New Jerusalem age.) Israelites in Jesus’ day did not have this confusion; their mindset before Jesus came along, and during the entire time Jesus walked the earth, was focused on the Messiah’s coming earthly reign.

So the Israelites did not have a “hanging out in heaven forever” mindset, and they never would have dreamed that the Pharisees’ Talmudian conception of the afterlife was taken from Scripture. This enabled them to instantly understand the parable of Lazarus and the rich man correctly without the cultural confusion modern Christians have to fight through.

Understanding these two enormous differences between the assumptions of Jesus’ Israelite audience 2,000 years ago, and those of a modern Christian trained to believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife, is essential to correctly understanding the illustrative story Jesus told about a guy named Lazarus and a rich man. The point of the story was that a change in fortunes is coming between those who have it good now (the world’s political and religious elite) and the downtrodden who are exploited by the world’s political and religious elite. An Israelite living 2,000 years ago who got the point of the story would have assumed Jesus was talking about this “switch in fortunes” occurring in *the next age of life on earth – the coming kingdom of God*. This would have been a *correct* assumption; Jesus *was* talking about exactly that. To Israelites back then, this was just another point about the same thing Jesus constantly preached about and the main thing they were looking forward to – the coming kingdom of God on earth. The Israelite living 2,000 years ago and Jesus were on the same cultural and belief system page; they were both talking and thinking about the same thing: the coming kingdom of God *on earth*.

However, the typical modern Christian who reads the story immediately assumes Jesus was giving a literal teaching about the conscious afterlife and eternity. This is an *incorrect* assumption. The modern Christian and Jesus are *not* on the same page here. Jesus was talking to Israelites 2,000 years ago, about the primary subject He constantly preached to them about during His earthly ministry and the primary subject His audience was thinking about: the coming kingdom of God *on earth*. But the modern Christian is on a different page, on a completely different wavelength – the modern Christian is thinking about a (*supposed*) *conscious afterlife and hanging out in heaven for eternity*. It is ironic that Middle Ages Catholicism has trained much of modern Christianity to accept as truth the pagan afterlife nonsense that the Pharisees taught.

To Jesus, as with all His parables, the fictional setting and fictional details of the fictional story were *just a vehicle to get to a few points about the same thing He always preached to Israel about: the coming earthly kingdom of God*. This seems confusing to us modern Christians; we think, “Why would Jesus be so confusing by using a story set in the conscious afterlife to talk about something that will occur in the next age of life on earth?” But you have to understand that this *would not have been confusing at all* to His Israelite audience back then, because they *had not been subjected to centuries of unscriptural pagan/ Catholic lies about conscious death and “being in heaven forever” as modern Christians have been*. Israelites back then would have been no more confused about this parable than modern Christians would be if I stood up in the pulpit and told a fictional story about a Muslim suicide bomber who got a surprise in the afterlife – his 70 virgins all weighed 500 pounds! – to make a point that “you should know what you’re getting into before you commit to something” or “you should be careful what you believe”. Every single one of you knows that I don’t literally believe in the Muslim conception of the afterlife. You would not be confused at all if I told such a fictional illustrative story set in the Muslim conception of the afterlife. In the same way, Jesus’ Israelite audience that day would have known that Jesus didn’t believe in the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife, and they would have instantly and effortlessly understood that Jesus was *mocking* the Pharisaical Talmudian conception of the afterlife, just as I would be *mocking* the Muslim conception of the afterlife with a story like the example I just used.

Jesus’ story about Lazarus and the rich man must be understood in the context of *the main message He preached to Israel 2,000 years ago, which was all about the coming kingdom of God in the next age of life on earth*. Mistranslations of the Greek word “eon” in many English Bibles notwithstanding, Jesus did not preach to the Israelites back then about “eternity” or “the afterlife” or any such thing. He mentioned “the resurrection” once or twice in response to a question from some Pharisees and Sadducees who were arguing about it – Israelites back then would have thought of this as the resurrection of godly people like Abraham and David to enjoy the Messiah’s reign on earth (a correct, if somewhat limited, understanding of what we call the rapture). And He mentioned the eventual permanent salvation of all mankind a couple of times – these brief comments went right over the Israelites’ heads. (And remember John 3:16-17 was spoken to one man in private, not as public preaching.) But these things were not the main message that Jesus constantly preached to Israel. As I

explained in the last chapter, His primary message to Israel was all about how to have a good spot in the next age of life *on earth* – the “kingdom of God” – which He was giving Israel a chance to see occur in that generation. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man, like most of Jesus’ parables, was a part of His message to Israel about the coming kingdom of God *on earth*.

If you are wondering why Jesus would preach to the Israelites, His disciples, and the Pharisees about something that we now know was not going to happen until over 2,000 years later, it can only be because you didn’t read Chapter 9 of this book yet! If you haven’t read that chapter, you might be thinking, “Why would Jesus warn Israelites about His impending defeat of the current evil world leaders and takeover of world rulership, thus ushering in the next age of life on earth, what we now call ‘the millennium’ (Revelation 20:1-6), when that event has not even happened yet, 2,000 years later?” I explained the answer to this question in tremendous detail in Chapter 9. Chapter 9 explains much of the basic background knowledge needed to understand that the story of Lazarus and the rich man was not about “eternity”, but was typical of Jesus’ constant preaching to Israel about *the next age of life on earth*.

When we understand the knowledge and belief systems Jesus and the typical Israelites had 2,000 years ago, we realize that it never would have crossed their minds that the story might have been about “eternity” or nebulous spirit realms (even the real spirit realm of heaven). Israelites 2,000 years ago knew that the Old Testament does not teach conscious death, they were not thinking about “eternity” or “hanging out in heaven consciously immediately upon death”, and they knew Jesus was not talking to them about “eternity”. *They were all on the same page, they were all thinking and talking about the same thing – the next age of life on earth where the Messiah would rule over the whole world with Israel.* When we modern Christians get on the same page with them, we can finally understand the parable correctly.

Major Changes Are Coming - In the Next Age of Life On Earth, Not a Fictional Afterlife

The main point of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man was that *a switcheroo is coming*. *Some (the elite, for example the Pharisees, symbolized by the rich man) who have it good now, will not have it so good later, and vice versa. The poor and downtrodden who are exploited by the elite (symbolized by Lazarus) will have it good later on when Jesus brings the kingdom to earth.* The key to understanding the parable is that this “switcheroo” to which Jesus was referring *had nothing to do with eternity or the afterlife*, but rather it was about *the next age of life on earth*.

Now that we correctly understand the historical backdrop in which Jesus told the parable, we can interpret it properly in that context. When we read the parable we can now see that it has nothing to do with a teaching about the “afterlife”, but instead it was an

encouragement to the downtrodden that their life experience would improve *in the next age of life on earth under Jesus' rulership*. We realize that it was a message to the Israelites about a reversal of fortunes that was coming *in the next age of life on earth under His rulership*, and a scathing condemnation of the Pharisees in which Jesus made it clear to them that their position and experience *in the next age of life on earth under His rulership* would not be good.

It is important to note that the parable is about a *poor* guy and a *rich* guy. If we were to treat the parable as a literal teaching about a conscious afterlife, we would have to conclude that merely being poor is enough to get you into conscious eternal bliss in the afterlife, while merely being rich is enough to earn you torment in the afterlife.

The message of the parable is still very relevant today because it is a message about the fact that in the next age when Jesus rules the earth the exploitative elite will have their fortunes switched with the exploited and powerless downtrodden. The same basic satanic political and religious authority structure rules the world today as that which the Pharisees were caught up in back then. (I'm not referring to the average Christian pastor today, I'm referring to deceptive religions, etc. – I would imagine that most Christian pastors, though like me they may not understand everything about God yet, probably have much purer heart motives than the Pharisees and teachers of the law back then, who blatantly kissed up to the Roman political system and benefitted greatly from it.)

The bottom line is, there *will* be a “switcheroo” in fortunes between the oppressed and the oppressors. And it *will* occur in exactly the way Jesus was pointing to with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man – when He forcibly takes over rulership of the earth (Rev. 19:11-20:5). When we understand this in the light of Scriptural prophecy (especially the aspects of OT prophecy that Israelites back then focused on, the Messiah coming to earth to physically rule over it) it makes perfect sense why Jesus told this fictional illustrative story about a *poor* man and a *rich* man.

Jesus said in the parable that the rich man and his brothers didn't believe the Old Testament prophets that predicted the Messiah's takeover of earth and the justice/switcheroo-in-fortunes that would accompany it. You see, the Pharisees were not interested in the kingdom of God coming, because they benefitted greatly in the current political system! They *said publicly* that they were interested in the kingdom coming, but they felt extremely threatened when confronted with the idea that it might actually come on their watch, and that the King did not think highly of them!

Jesus also made it clear through the parable that once He takes over the earth – once He enforces a switcheroo in fortunes between the elite and the downtrodden – it will be too late for the elite to say, “Now I believe You are the Messiah and I want to change my ways.” This is perfectly in line with what Jesus constantly preached to Israel: “Repent (now), for the kingdom of God has drawn near (its power is being demonstrated through My miracles, and it may come fully to earth soon if certain conditions are met).”

Many modern Christians take the “it’s too late once the switcheroo occurs” point as meaning, “If you don’t believe Paul’s gospel, you will go to hell.” But this message has nothing to do with believing Paul’s gospel. How could it? Folks, it would be ridiculous to assume that Jesus was holding the elite or the Pharisees accountable for not believing that He died on the cross, because He had not even died on the cross yet! Again, the only way this parable does not become a mush of confusion is if we stop artificially superimposing the Catholic afterlife idea that this parable is a literal teaching about a conscious afterlife, and instead interpret it in the light of what I taught you in Chapter 9 of this book. Jesus hadn’t even died on the cross yet when He told this parable! How could the point be “believe Paul’s gospel or go to hell”? Paul’s gospel (based on faith in what Jesus’ death and resurrection accomplished) had not even occurred yet!

Jesus obviously was not asking Israel to believe in Paul’s gospel. He was asking them to listen to and obey “Moses and the prophets” (the Old Testament Scriptures and the Law of Moses). Jesus predicted as one of the points He made with the parable that Israel as a whole and particularly the Pharisees would not obey the Law of Moses well enough and believe the Old Testament prophecies about Him either *before* He died on the cross, *or after* He rose from the dead. Jesus was predicting/prophesying that Israel would be given *another* chance to believe He was the Messiah in that generation, through the preaching of the apostles *after* His resurrection – but that *even then* Israel as a whole would not accept Him as the Messiah.

This point makes perfect sense when you understand what I taught you in Chapter 9. But as soon as we start superimposing a Catholic afterlife mindset on top of the parable, we enter into nonsense land. It is absurd to interpret the parable as “believe Paul’s gospel or go to hell”; how could Jesus have expected Israel to understand and believe Paul’s gospel from merely reading “Moses and the prophets”, when it was many years later before the apostle Paul got his brand-new, never-before-preached revelation from God that was “hidden from ages past”? How could Jesus have been holding Israel accountable for understanding and believing something that nobody (except Jesus) understood, and nobody (including Jesus) preached until Paul came along? Give a copy of Moses and the prophets to a person in Africa that knows nothing about Christianity; see if they are able to deduce Paul’s gospel from it. Ain’t gonna happen. (Yeah, the barebones are there and can be found by working backwards from Paul’s writings, but it took a special revelation from God to a man who spent his whole life studying the OT – Paul was an expert in it before his conversion – to put the pieces together.) Give a person in Africa Paul’s writings, of course they’ll understand his gospel. We take our understanding of Paul’s gospel for granted because we’ve been able to read his writings for hundreds of years. But Israel had never had anything remotely like Paul’s gospel enter their brains. Jesus’ own disciples could not comprehend why He would have to die! Folks, how could the message of the parable be “believe Paul’s gospel or burn forever” when all Israel had was Moses and the prophets? Are we to believe God would torture people forever because they were unable to deduce Paul’s gospel from Moses and the prophets?

And of course this brings up another “elephant in the room” question that Catholic-trained Christians try to ignore: How could God justify throwing billions of people who lived before Jesus died on the cross, into hell because they didn’t believe the Paul’s gospel? How could the Israelites alive during Jesus’ earthly ministry – and anyone who lived before His death and resurrection – be held accountable for failing to believe something that had not even occurred yet?

Again, let me reiterate, because this is important to grasp. Modern Christians often act as if this parable is a literal teaching about the fires of hell for anyone who doesn’t “believe the gospel”. But what *we* usually think of as “the gospel” is *Paul’s gospel* as outlined in Romans 8:9-10, that if you confess Jesus as Lord and believe He rose from the dead, you’ll be saved. In contrast, when Jesus told the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, *He hadn’t even died yet. So how could He have been holding the Israelites accountable through the parable for not believing He rose from the dead?* Again, the parable only makes sense if you understand that the gospel Jesus preached to Israel and which His disciples preached again immediately after His resurrection was *different* than the gospel Paul preached later! With this parable Jesus made the point that the rich man and his brothers (representative of the elite in this age) did not believe *the Old Testament prophecies about Him or obey the Law of Moses well enough* (“*listen to Moses and the Prophets*”), and would not believe those prophecies or obey the Law well enough even after He rose from the dead. In other words, they did not and would not, in their lifetimes believe *that He was the Messiah or meet the behavioral standards of the Law of Moses*. There is a big difference between merely believing Jesus is the Messiah and meeting the behavioral standards of the Law of Moses, and understanding the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection.

With this parable Jesus predicted that Israel would on the whole reject *His gospel*. (NOT *Paul’s gospel*, which no one heard until later when the apostle Paul started preaching the full significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection!) In other words, Israel, both before and after Jesus’ death/resurrection, rejected the message that “Jesus is the Messiah as proven by the OT prophecies so shape up (repent) because if you do He will come in this generation!” *This is a very limited message that has nothing to do with Paul’s gospel*. With the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, as with the vast majority of His preaching to Israel, Jesus was not preaching Paul’s gospel (“believe that Jesus rose from the dead and the full significance of what that accomplished”) – how could He have? He hadn’t even died yet!

You see what I mean. One of the points Jesus clearly made with this parable was a prediction of what Paul talks about in Romans 11, etc., about how Israel’s hearts would be hardened for a season so that Paul’s gospel could come to the whole world. But if we try to make the parable into a message that “if you don’t believe Paul’s gospel you will burn in hell”, we are in nonsense land, because Jesus told the parable *before He died! He could not possibly have been holding His audience accountable for not believing Paul’s gospel, because Paul’s gospel had not even occurred, much less been preached, yet!* Yet many modern Christians ludicrously pull out this parable of Jesus and act as if its message is “Believe that Jesus rose from the dead according to Romans 8:9-10, or burn!” This is the height of silliness. Jesus hadn’t even died

yet at the time He told the parable! How could the message of the parable be “believe Jesus rose from the dead, or burn”?

Folks, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man had nothing, zero, nada to do with “eternity” or “the afterlife” or Paul’s gospel, but had everything to do with the same things Jesus *constantly* preached to Israel about: the changes that will occur when He takes over physical rulership of the earth, which He was giving Israel a chance to see occur in that generation. This parable *only makes sense if you take into account that it is all about Jesus’ message to Israel, not Paul’s gospel, and if you take into account that it is all about Jesus giving Israel two chances (before and after His resurrection) to accept Him as Messiah so as to see the kingdom come to earth in that generation.* If we try to make it into a message about Paul’s gospel or “the eternal consequences of not believing that Jesus rose from the dead according to Romans 8:9-10” we are in nonsense land, for Jesus told this parable before He even died on the cross.

Now I want to take a moment to talk about the Pharisees, because understanding them will help us understand Jesus’ message to them through the story of Lazarus and the rich man.

Jesus’ Message About The Next Age Vs. The Pharisees Who Had It Good In This Age

If you read the section of Jesus’ preaching that includes the parable of Lazarus and the rich man starting in Luke 15:1-3, you will see that a group of Pharisees, along with regular Israelite people, were part of Jesus’ audience for the parables He told in chapters 15 and 16. The first verse of chapter 16 says, “He was also saying to the disciples...” which tells us Jesus’ disciples were part of the audience too (that would make sense, since they usually went with Him wherever He went). So all these illustrative stories Jesus told as recorded in Luke 15 and 16 were heard by regular Israelites, Jesus’ disciples, and Pharisees.

The Pharisees would have been enraged by the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The story was a scathing criticism of the Israelite religious leaders of the day who loved money and were entrenched in the Roman political system at great benefit to themselves, while not lifting a finger to truly help others. It will help us understand this particular parable better if we examine why Jesus was so forcefully critical of the Pharisees throughout His earthly ministry.

The regular people and the downtrodden in Israel 2,000 years ago were being exploited, not helped, by their religious leaders (Lk. 11:42-46). This was because their religious leaders had bought into, entrenched themselves with, and were benefitting greatly from the world’s political authority structure in this Satan-ruled age. The story of Lazarus and the rich man was a direct slap in the face to the Pharisees because they *did not want a*

change in world rulership and a “switcheroo” of fortunes between the downtrodden and the elite leadership class. *They already had it good in this age, in the current system.*

Most modern Christians realize that the Pharisees didn't like Jesus. But what most don't realize is that it wasn't just Jesus Himself they didn't like; they didn't like the idea of *anybody, including the Messiah – whoever He might be – coming to upset the apple cart of the present age's authority structure.* In other words, they didn't care if Jesus was the Messiah or not – they were not interested in *any* Messiah or in *any* change in the current power structure! They spent so much time and effort trying to trap Jesus into saying or doing something by which they could condemn Him, not just because they didn't believe He in particular was the Messiah, but because they didn't want *any* Messiah or *anybody at all* to challenge their authority, disrupt their station in life, or upset the religious and political structure within which they were quite comfortable and prosperous.

The religious leaders of Israel 2,000 years ago were deeply invested in, and benefitted greatly from, the leadership structure of the current age. They cooperated with the political rulers, and there were definite benefits to that cooperation. Elsewhere the Gospels tell us that the Pharisees loved money (Lk. 16:14), and that they loved to make and enforce the rules for everybody else but never lifted a finger to help anybody (Lk. 11:42-46). They were exactly like the ruling elite class that exists today and has existed throughout virtually all of human history so far (with some of the only exceptions being some of the largely-righteous rulers of ancient Israel such as Moses, Joshua, and David).

So Jesus' point to the Pharisees through the story of Lazarus and the rich man, was, “You rich and powerful have got it good now. But a time is coming – the next age, when I take over the earth and rule it – when you exploitative elite who have it good now will be on the bottom of the totem pole (or simply given capital punishment), and those who are downtrodden now will suddenly leap frog you who have exploited them; they'll have it great in the next age, but you certainly won't!”

Through the story of a poor guy and a rich guy having their fortunes switched, Jesus was telling the Pharisees that their good lot in this age would not always last, and *if* the kingdom of God were to come in that generation (as God was giving Israel a chance to see happen *if* they met certain conditions, see Chapter 9 of this book), Jesus was letting the Pharisees know in no uncertain terms that *they would not have it so good in the next age of life on earth under His rulership*, because they were dirty exploitative jerks who were wedded to the Babylonian satanic system of world rulership in the current age.

(Of course now that Israel failed to meet the conditions to have the kingdom come in that generation 2,000 years ago, we know that the Pharisees who lived back then will not take part in the kingdom of God – the millennium and the new Jerusalem age – at all. They will not be resurrected until the white throne judgment, where God will correct them; after which they will die again, be dead during the New Jerusalem age, and then receive immortal

bodies at the consummation of the ages. See Rev. 20:5 & 11-15, Rev. 21:8, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, Rom. 3:23-24, Rom. 5:18, 1 Tim. 4:10, and the rest of this book.)

As I mentioned earlier, some modern Christians may wonder why Jesus would choose a story set in an “afterlife” setting to make points about the coming kingdom of God on earth. To modern Catholic-afterlife-trained Christians, this seems unnecessarily confusing. Couldn’t Jesus have used a less confusing story, or a less confusing setting for the story, to make His points? Well, first of all, as I mentioned, we have to remember that it would not have been at all confusing to Israelites back then; they would have never dreamed that the “afterlife” setting had anything to do with Scripture. But the question is still valid and important question: *Why did Jesus choose to set this parable in a “conscious afterlife” setting, in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures’ teaching about death?*

There is a second, very important reason Jesus chose an “afterlife” setting – not just any afterlife setting, but the Pharisees’ Talmudian afterlife setting – as the vehicle for this parable. In addition to driving home His main point (“a switcheroo in fortunes is coming”) as a scathing indictment of the Pharisees in particular, Jesus *added insult to injury by mocking the Pharisees’ Babylonian Talmudian tradition*. In this regard the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is a little slice of genius, a remarkable demonstration of Jesus’ communication skills. He not only made points that ripped the Pharisees’ love of this age to shreds, He did it using their silly pagan Talmudian traditions as His vehicle!

You see, the fact that the Pharisees had bought into pagan Babylonian nonsense rather than sticking with Scripture, was both a cause and a symptom of their inability to lead God’s people properly and their total opposition to Him. If you read the book of Revelation, you will see that “Mystery Babylon” has been a force opposing and killing Godly people throughout history. (See Rev. 18:14, and see my book *End Times Explained* to learn the dual identity that Mystery Babylon has taken on in the modern world.) The Pharisees had bought into the benefits of the Mystery Babylon system, as proven by their entrenchment with the corrupt political system of the day and their acceptance of pagan traditions and ideas (eventually written down as the Talmud). This was the root of their problem, the foundational reason they hated Jesus. Their acceptance of paganism was a loud signal that they had bought into the world’s current satanic (Lk. 4:5-6) Babylonian power structure and modus operandi (selfishness, exploitation of the weak by the powerful). This is why Jesus slammed the Pharisees for loving the respect of men while failing to lift a finger to help anyone, and why He warned His disciples that they must not be like the rulers of this age, who lord it over their subjects, but must be servants instead.

So Jesus cleverly addressed the Pharisees’ foundational problem – their acceptance of the satanic world system in this age as signaled by their acceptance of paganism (ideas about the afterlife etc.). How? By mocking the paganism they had accepted. He took a message about the coming switcheroo in fortunes between the exploiters and the exploited that the earthly kingdom of God will bring (a dagger in the heart of the Pharisees!), and added insult to injury by *wrapping His dagger in the skin of a fictional story set in the Pharisees’ pagan*

Talmudian conception of the afterlife. In doing this He *made sure to highlight the absurdity of that pagan version of the afterlife* by including the Talmudian detail regarding *afterlife flames being within shouting distance of heaven*, and by including His own creatively added absurd and humorous detail about the *man supposedly suffering in afterlife flames asking for a mere drop of water on his tongue.*

It's absolute genius.

Jesus Sets His Story In A Scene From the Pharisees' Pagan Talmud To Mock Paganism, Not Teach It!

Everyone in Jesus' audience 2,000 years ago would have understood that the setting of the fictional story was *not* from their sacred Scriptures, and that Jesus did *not* actually believe that any of the details of the story's setting were true in real life. They would have known that the setting of the story was very different from what their sacred Scriptures taught about death. Their Scriptures said (and say), "The dead *know nothing*...there is *no activity or planning or knowledge* or wisdom in sheol (the unseen, the grave) where you are going" (Ecc. 9:5, 10), "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into *silence*" (Ps. 115:17), "In death there is *no remembrance of You*. In sheol (the unseen, the grave), who is proclaiming You?" (Ps. 6:5), and "Do not trust...in mortal man...his spirit departs, he returns to the earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish*" (Ps. 146:4).

As soon as Jesus reached the point in the story where Lazarus and the rich man are conscious and talking to each other in the afterlife, every Israelite listening to the story that day would have realized, "The setting of this story is not from Moses and the prophets, it is not from the Scriptures", because the Old Testament Scriptures (along with the New Testament now as well) specifically teach *unconscious* death. And many if not most of the audience that day would have instantly realized where the setting of Jesus' story came from: the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition. The Pharisees *certainly* would have realized this, for this was a tradition they had bought into and accepted. I use the term "pagan Talmudian tradition" because during Jesus' day it was an oral tradition, and some time later it was written down as the Talmud. Here are the passages in the Talmud that contain the pagan ideas about the afterlife that Jesus used for the setting of His parable. If those pagan oral traditions had been in written form at that time, Jesus would have been virtually quoting the following passages from the Talmud:

"There are wicked men, that are coupled together in this world. But one of them repents before death; the other doth not; so the one is found standing in the assembly of the just, the other in the assembly of the wicked. The one seeth the other and saith, Woe! and Alas!" (Midrash on Ruth, fol.44, 2; and Midrash on Coheleth fol.86, 4)

I don't have to explain to you how obvious it is that this matches up with the fictional setting Jesus used in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Here we have two

dead people talking to each other. There is no such thing anywhere in Moses and the prophets (OT Scripture). (Samuel being “disturbed” from his rest, temporarily called up from the dead by the medium, doesn’t count, for he was “disturbed” from his normal state, and he did not talk to any other dead person, he talked to living people on earth while in this temporary “disturbed” state.) OT Scripture clearly teaches unconscious death, and Jesus Himself said, “No man has ascended into heaven” (Jn. 3:13). John 3:13 proves that Jesus did not consider the setting of this parable to be true to life. The above quote from the Talmud tells us exactly where Jesus got the setting – from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition. To think that Jesus was teaching this pagan Talmudian tradition in contradiction to OT Scripture and in contradiction to His own words in John 3:13, is unthinkable. It cannot be. Jesus was not teaching the pagan conception of the afterlife, He was mocking it. How? Let’s see...

Chagigah, fol.77. Treatise on Exodus xxiii 17 tells of a good man and a wicked man that died; the good man walked in gardens, and by pleasant springs, but the wicked man suffered *“with his tongue trickling drop by drop, at the bank of a river, endeavoring to touch the water, but he could not”*.

We see how Jesus took this and added His own creative twist to it, saying that the man suffering in the flames of the afterlife asked for a drop of water on his tongue. In the Talmudian version, the man’s tongue is dripping as he hopes to get to the river; Jesus changed this to the man asking for a mere drop of water on his tongue, taking something from the Talmudian tradition that sort of makes sense (a man wishing to get to the river), and changing it to something absurd and nonsensical (why would a man suffering in afterlife flames ask for only a drop of water on his tongue). Why would Jesus make this creative twist? The only logical reason He would purposefully add such an absurd detail to the story is to highlight the fact that He considered His fictional story to be absurd and *not* true to life. If He was trying to make it appear as true to life as possible (as the Catholic version of the afterlife claims), it is incomprehensible that He would creatively add such an absurd detail/twist to the “afterlife setting”.

And Midrash on Coheleth 103. 2 adds some absurdity of its own without Jesus having to invent it; it speaks of how the fires of the afterlife and paradise are supposedly *“a hand-breadth”* apart from each other, and how the Rabbis say they are *“so close to one another, that they may see out of one into the other.”*

If you read Luke 16:19-26 you will see that it matches almost exactly with the passages I just quoted from the Talmud. The setting of Jesus’ story about Lazarus and the rich man is straight out of the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition! And so is the terminology He used to describe what happens at death in the pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife.

“Going to Abraham’s bosom” at death was a concept and phrase straight out of the Talmudina tradition. For example, here is a quote from the Juchasin, fol.75, 2, a long story

about what Levi said of Rabbi Judah, speaking of the day he died: *“This day he sits in Abraham’s bosom”*. And in Midrash Echah, fol.68. 1 the Talmud tells the story of a woman whose son was about to die, who told him, *“Go thou, my son, to Abraham my father, and tell him: Thus saith thy mother, Do not thou boast, saying, I built an altar, and offered my son Isaac. For thy mother hath built seven altars, and offered seven sons in one day”*, etc. So we see that this concept of dying and “going to Abraham’s bosom” consciously (being able to think and speak in death, and talk to other dead people) is pure paganism, from the pagan Babylonian Talmud.

Another phrase and concept found in the Pharisees’ Talmud was the idea of being “carried by angels” at death. In Jesus’ story, Lazarus was “carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom”. This was another direct quote from the Talmudian tradition!

Remember, Jesus would have certainly been very familiar with the Pharisees’ oral traditions, since as early as the age of 12 He was asking the religious leaders of His day all sorts of insightful questions. In Jesus’ illustrative story of Lazarus and the rich man, both the setting of the story and the terminology and concepts used in speaking about death are straight out of the pagan Talmudian tradition, in direct contradiction to Jesus’ own words elsewhere (Jn. 3:13) and in direct contradiction to clear, specific statements in OT Scripture (Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, etc.) This tells us that Jesus was not trying to teach what He believed to be true about the death state, but rather He was *taking the setting of the story* from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition.

The main point of this parable was “a switcheroo in fortunes between the elite and the downtrodden is coming in the next age of life on earth”. Jesus could have chosen any number of settings and details for a story that would communicate this point. However, Jesus cleverly chose the fictional setting and details of the story from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition, including one absurd aspect of it (afterlife flames within shouting distance of heaven), creatively adding another absurd aspect Himself (drop of water on tongue) to make a mockery of it, as an additional affront to the Pharisees to whom the main point of the parable was extremely offensive.

Jesus was using the false teachings of the Pharisees against them, to deliver a scathing blow to their pagan beliefs and their pride in their superior station in life (which they had attained largely because they embraced the current satanic world system, as evidenced by the fact that they often put the Talmud above the Old Testament Scriptures, etc.)

Jesus was openly *mocking* the Babylonian Talmud and its pagan teachings by setting his story in a situation derived from the Talmudian conception of the afterlife and then making the main point of the story an obvious slap in the face to the Pharisees who had it good in this age (because they embraced the evil spirit of this age as illustrated by the fact that they were buddy-buddy with the rulers of this age and the fact that they placed their pagan Talmudian traditions on equal or higher authority with the Old Testament Scriptures).

Let me give you a modern example to help you understand better what Jesus was doing with the parable. Imagine if you showed up in church one Sunday and in addition to the normal Christian faithful, a local group of Muslims who had been severely persecuting and opposing your pastor, decided to show up and sit in the front row (I know this would be unlikely to happen today, but bear with me for the sake of the illustration, because this is in some ways similar to what Jesus was facing when hostile Pharisees showed up to hear Him preach). So with these hostile Muslims sitting in the front row, your pastor begins his Sunday sermon with the following story:

“A man man was eager to die, because he was anxious to meet his 70 virgins. So he volunteered to set off a suicide bomb. Upon reaching heaven, he was led to the room where his 70 virgins were being kept. As he shook with anticipation, the door was opened. His excitement turned to dismay as he saw that each of his 70 virgins weighed 500 pounds, had abundant facial hair, and their garlic breath could be smelled from where he stood! Therefore, my friends, be careful that you fully understand what you believe before committing wholeheartedly to it.”

Obviously, no one in the audience would even remotely imagine that your pastor was giving a literal teaching about what he believed the afterlife to be like. And I don’t even need to explain to you how this story would be perceived by the Christians in the audience, as opposed to how it would be received by the visiting Muslims.

This story “works” (the pastor gets his point across clearly to his audience) today because modern Christians understand the basics of the Muslim conception of the afterlife (70 virgins) – and obviously, Muslims do too. In the same way, Jesus’ story about Lazarus and the rich man “worked” (He got His point across to His audience) because Israelites 2,000 years ago understood the basics of the pagan conception of the afterlife (conscious death), as did the Pharisees, who were embracing pagan Talmudian ideas.

By choosing a setting for his “illustrative story/joke” straight out of the Muslim conception of the afterlife and then making a joke out of it, your pastor is cleverly *mocking* the beliefs of the Muslims in the audience while making a point that is also a scathing indictment of them. Jesus did exactly the same thing to the Pharisees with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

Notice in this example, the *main point* of your pastor’s made-up story is *completely unrelated* to the *setting* of the story. The *main point* (“*be careful what you believe before committing to it*”) is *true*. But your pastor is making it extremely clear that he believes the *setting is fictional, and in fact silly*. Your pastor intends the setting to be fictional, silly to the point of being humorous (if you’re not the one being insulted!), and the audience knows that in the mind of the pastor none of the details of the story are true or real in any way. Everyone in the congregation, including the visiting Muslims (though they are offended), knows that your pastor believes the setting is fictional, and that none of the details of the story are true or real in any way. No one is confused.

But now let's imagine that a man from a far off planet where a strange combination of Christianity and Islam is taught, was visiting the service for the first time, when your pastor told this illustrative story. This person will be confused. They might not pick up on the fact that the pastor intends the setting of the story to be *only* that, a *fictional setting* for a story with an *unrelated true point*. This man (if he didn't pick up on the ripple of laughter after the punch line of the story) might think your pastor was giving a literal teaching about the afterlife with the details of the setting of the story! Such a person, because they are not on the same wavelength as the pastor and the congregation, could totally misunderstand the pastor's point. This is the same thing that happens to many modern Christians when they read of Jesus telling the story of Lazarus and the rich man.

Modern Christians, when reading Jesus' story about Lazarus and the rich man, incorrectly assume that the *fictional setting and fictional details of the story* are the main point of the story. Wrong. The details of the story are just a vehicle to get to the main point, and are totally unrelated to the main point except as a vehicle to get there, just as the details of the story of the seed and the sower are totally unrelated to the main point except as a vehicle to get there. Jesus *used* the details of the story to make a point, just like your pastor could *use* the details of a story that uses Muslim beliefs about the afterlife to make a point.

By using a setting and details straight from the Talmudian tradition, Jesus was mocking pagan Babylonian Talmudian teachings about the afterlife, just as your pastor would be mocking Muslim teachings about the afterlife with a "seventy 500-lb virgins surprise" story.

It was extremely significant that Jesus mocked the Pharisees' Talmudian traditions. They were *not inspired by God as the Old Testament is*. I do not have space here to go into a detailed explanation of the origin of the Babylonian Talmud and why the Pharisees embraced it; if you're interested in the subject you might start with a book by Elizabeth Dilling called *The Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today*. Here's a quote from her book:

"The leading paganisms of all the centuries have been gathered up and treasured by Pharisaic Talmudism."

That pretty much says it in a nutshell.

The Pharisees had embraced the Satanic Babylonian-originated world system ruled by Satan, and that is why Jesus was so hard on them. Jesus the Messiah represented a completely different world system that will rule the earth in the next age, when many or most of the members of the political, financial, and spiritual exploitative ruling class in this age will suddenly have the tables turned on them as justice is finally carried out on earth.

Jesus cleverly picked the setting of this fictional illustrative story to reflect the pagan beliefs found in the Pharisees' Babylonian Talmudian tradition – with a joke and portions of

the story thrown in to make it clear that He did *not* consider the story or its pagan setting to be literally true.

Let's take a look at Jesus' joke which poked fun at the Talmud's teachings about the afterlife, and a couple of the other details of the story that make it extremely clear both to His audience back then, and to us today, that Jesus did *not* believe any of the details of the story to be true or real in any way.

Jesus Tells A Joke To Mock Paganism

If your pastor were to stand up on Sunday morning and tell a story about a Muslim man who went to heaven only to discover that his 70 virgins each weighed 500 pounds, he would expect to get a laugh. Do you think Jesus was capable of getting a laugh? Of course!

As Jesus began to tell the story of a guy named Lazarus and a rich guy, as soon as He reached the part about the rich guy who is supposedly burning "in agony" in torturous fires, asking for *a drop of water* on his tongue, His Israelite audience would surely have chuckled. They knew this was ridiculous. They knew it was a subtle dig at pagan beliefs about the afterlife, and at the Talmudian traditions of the Pharisees. For this same reason, the Pharisees would *not* have been laughing! They would have been fuming.

I mean, think about it – if I was burning "in agony" in flames, I would ask for a swimming pool to jump into, not a drop of water on my tongue! It's the exact same story-telling convention your pastor would be using in talking about seventy heavyweight virgins – "How ridiculous! Haha, chuckle chuckle."

In the example of your pastor telling the story about the 70 heavyweight virgins, the audience and the preacher both know that the story is not a literal teaching on the afterlife, but rather a *subtle mockery* that *makes a joke* out of *Islam's* literal teaching on the afterlife. A Christian present in the service who agreed with the pastor's viewpoint that Islam's teaching on the afterlife is ridiculous, would find the story funny. On the other hand, any Muslims present in the service would certainly be offended.

In the same way, the Pharisees would've been offended when Jesus told the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus was mocking the Pharisees' Talmudian traditions, and everyone in the audience back then would've known it! Every Israelite present that day would have recognized the setting of the story as coming not from inspired (what we now call Old Testament) Scripture, but from the Pharisees' Talmud, and they certainly would've picked up not only on the joke, but also on the subtle mockery of the pagan belief system the Pharisees were mixing with inspired truth.

Let's look at a couple more details of the story that not only directly contradict the Old Testament Scriptures, but are ridiculous and incredible to boot.

In the story it seems that Lazarus is in a good place of some sort, maybe some sort of heaven. "Going to Abraham's bosom" was phrase from the Talmud about what happens at death – but in this weird version of death (which totally contradicts plain Old Testament Scriptures such as Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Psalm 6:5 and 115:17, etc.), Lazarus is conscious, and it looks like he's in a fairly pleasant place; at least he's not in pain like the rich guy. So he must be in some type of heaven. And the rich guy is apparently in some kind of pagan afterlife fires. And they're talking to each other! This blatantly and directly contradicts the Scriptures Jesus and every Israelite knew well. Again, try to find one place in the Bible outside of this parable that refers to dead people talking to each other. You'll come up dry.

So in the parable, this guy in the Talmudian conception of heaven is talking to a guy in the Talmudian conception of the flames of the afterlife. Are we really to believe that heaven and hell are within shouting distance of each other? Are we really to believe that a person in heaven can carry on a conversation with a person in hell, perhaps by each of them leaning over the edge of heaven and hell respectively, or by shouting? That would put heaven and hell within about 40 yards of each other at most – less than half the length of a football field. (Or, as the Talmud says, within a "hand's breadth" of each other – obviously with a wall or chasm in between so no one can go to one side to the other.) How are we supposed to enjoy partying in heaven forever if there's constant burning and screaming and tortured hopeless wailing going on right next door?

You can see how the whole setting of Jesus' story is *utterly ridiculous*. Jesus chose this utterly ridiculous setting on purpose. It blatantly contradicts the Scriptures, and Jesus knew that, as did His audience. This is exactly why Jesus chose a setting from the pagan Talmud – to highlight the fact that, like all paganism, it is *utterly ridiculous, utterly absurd*, and it *blatantly contradicts the Scriptures*.

Jesus used the inherently absurd setting of a pagan conscious afterlife for His story for the same reason your pastor might choose the inherently absurd setting of a Muslim afterlife – to *get a laugh* and at the same time to get in *a not-so-subtle dig at a belief system He didn't agree with*.

The fact that Jesus picked a setting for the story straight out of the Talmudian tradition explains why modern Christians are so easily confused into thinking it is a literal teaching about conscious death. The "Talmudian conscious afterlife" setting of the story closely matches false beliefs about "the afterlife" (conscious death and eternal punishment) that still cling to the minds of many Christians, because these false beliefs, and the Talmud, *both originated in paganism!*

Modern well-meaning Christians, who are still ignorant of the fact that conscious death and eternal punishment are just pagan leftovers, think Jesus was *teaching and reinforcing* those beliefs when really He was *mocking* those beliefs!

It was important in Israel 2,000 years ago for Jesus to separate pagan beliefs from the truth, just as it is important for teachers and preachers of God's Word to do the same today. Pagan beliefs, by themselves or mixed in with some truth, have a devastating effect on a person's ability to understand, and therefore trust, God. You have to understand that Satan's main deception strategy ever since the beginning of mankind was to *lie about God's nature*. In the garden he said, "God's not telling you everything that is beneficial to know." In other words, "God is not trustworthy, He is a deceiver and a liar because He is withholding something good from you – so He is fundamentally unfair; He is a **monster** – He created you, but now He is withholding something beneficial from you and not doing what's best for you; **You can't trust Him to do what's good for you or for humanity.**"

This is the exact same lie about God's nature propagated by pagan beliefs about the afterlife. The idea that God would create billions of precious people knowing beforehand that most of would end up suffering in agony forever, says, "God is a **monster; You can't trust Him to do what's good for humanity.**" The idea that billions of people who haven't even had the chance to hear the gospel preached will supposedly be tortured for eternity, says, "**God is fundamentally unfair; You can't trust Him to do what's good for humanity.**"

Pagan ideas about the afterlife are satanic lies designed to make God (or whatever pagan gods are believed in) out to be a monster who is to be obeyed primarily out of fear of "torments" in the "afterlife" (conscious death). Pagan teachings about people being tortured when they die, being tortured for eternity because they're not good enough, etc., are also extremely useful for religious leaders because they are an extremely powerful fear lever to get the people to obey them, give money, etc. – "Do what we say! Obey! Lest you (gasp!) be tortured for all eternity!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

I know the average Christian pastor does not teach about conscious death and eternal punishment for that reason. Most modern pastors have simply inherited a pagan/Catholic leftover in their mostly true belief system (and are stuck reading partially-mistranslated English Bibles to match). Still, it's a simple historical fact that this "fear of eternal punishment in conscious death" has been used (and in some cases, is still being used) masterfully throughout history by religious leaders of various religions to control and exploit billions of people.

You see, the Pharisees, chief priests, etc. who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Israelites 2,000 years ago, were doing the same thing Christian leaders have been doing ever since the days of Tertullian and Augustine, which was brought to full fruition in the dark days of the Middle Ages – *combining pagan beliefs about conscious death, etc., with God-inspired teaching*. (Attempts to combine pagan ideas with Christian teachings even

started during the apostle Paul's lifetime, but many key elements of paganism like "eternal" punishment, Mary worship, doing penance for your sins, paying money so your loved one has a better time in conscious death or purgatory, etc. did not become a "normal" part of Christianity until the "powers that be" made these things common/official in the Middle Ages by removing the Bible from its original languages and taking it out of the hands of the common people.) The pagan combination of "conscious afterlife and eternal punishment" lies with Scriptural truth eventually spread from the Pharisees' pseudo-pagan version of Judaism to the linguistic and theological creativity of Tertullian and Augustine (driven by ideas brought to their minds from cultural and religious forces outside of the Bible) and infected pure Christianity as it was founded by Jesus and His disciples and brought to light by Paul. The Apocryphal books contain seeds of these pagan teachings about the afterlife, and the pagan-Christian-combo Roman Catholic Church made these Apocryphal books part of their Bible.

The Talmudian traditions were a key influence in pagan ideas about the afterlife not only being mixed with the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures, but later on, being mixed with the New Testament Scriptures too. Here's a quote from one of the definitive books on the Talmud:

"Many also of the legends of the Middle Ages to be found in the works of Dante, or those of Boccaccio, Cervantes, and Milton, are taken, consciously or unconsciously, from their original source, the Talmudic Hagada." – *Babylonian Talmud, Book 10: History of the Talmud*, tr. by Michael L. Rodkinson

Remember the famous *Dante's Inferno*? It was full of pagan conscious death, hell, and eternal punishment ideas. This was simply a continuation of Babylonian Talmudic paganism, which was simply a continuation of the ancient pagan Babylonian mystery religions.

These pagan teachings about the afterlife still cling to the minds of many Christians today; they never fully been purged from the Christian church as a whole. It is the accurate Bible teacher's (and the accurate Bible student's) job to separate the paganism from the truth, so the original teaching of the Scriptures can come to light and people can truly understand God, His inspired Word, and His plan for humanity.

I wish to point out that despite the fact that many modern preachers fail to separate pagan beliefs about the afterlife from the true teaching of Scripture on the subject, I believe there is a big difference between the Pharisees and these modern preachers. Most 21st century Christian leaders have no clue they are combining paganism with true Scriptural teaching, while the average Pharisee in Jesus' day probably had much more awareness of what they were doing. I think it would be fair to say that most Pharisees back then had more understanding of what they were doing when they put the Talmud on equal – or higher – authority than the Old Testament Scriptures, while the average pastor today has no

clue he is reading a mistranslated Bible and that the concept of conscious death and eternal punishment is nowhere to be found in the Bible when you translate it accurately.

So I believe there is no need to be as hard on these modern well-meaning pastors and Bible teachers as Jesus was on the Pharisees. My intention is not to be hard on well-meaning Christians and Christian leaders who have much less awareness of what they are doing than the Pharisees did. My intention is simply to point out that the accurate Christian Bible teacher and student today must do the same thing Jesus was doing 2,000 years ago with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man – separate the paganism from the truth of God’s Word, and point out the inherent absurdity of the pagan versions of the afterlife.

Verse-By-Verse Analysis Of the Parable

Now I will quote this parable verse by verse with a few comments interjected. Hopefully you will now be able to read it with the correct historical and cultural perspective, so you can correctly understand what Jesus was trying to get across to His Israelite audience 2,000 years ago with this fictional illustrative story.

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; and besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.”

This is a vivid depiction of the circumstances of the poor and downtrodden and exploited in this age in contrast to the circumstances of the elite. Notice it is not primarily a depiction of “one guy doing good things as opposed to another guy doing bad things” or “one guy hearing preaching and believing it as opposed to another guy who doesn’t believe it”. The picture is clearly focused on the circumstances of the downtrodden vs. the elite.

“Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom;”

Instantly upon hearing the phrase, “carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom”, every Pharisee in Jesus’ audience that day (and many or most of the regular Israelites too) would have recognized it as being not from the Old Testament Scriptures, but from their Talmudian tradition.

“And the rich man also died and was buried. In hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said,”

Here we have another use of “Abraham’s bosom”, and as if that weren’t enough, we have the rich man in hades/sheol using his eyes to look around and talking to another dead man. This is – and would have been to Jesus’ audience back then – even more confirmation

that Jesus was choosing the setting of this story from the Talmudian tradition, not the Scriptures. This passage matches the Talmud almost word-for-word, but directly contradicts plain statements from the Old Testament Scriptures such as *“The dead know nothing...there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in sheol* (Greek “hades”, the unseen, the grave) *where you are going*” (Ecc. 9:5, 10), *“The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence”* (Ps. 115:17), *“In death there is no remembrance of You. In sheol* (Greek “hades”, the unseen, the grave), *who is proclaiming You?”* (Ps. 6:5), and *“Do not trust...in mortal man...his spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish”* (Ps. 146:2-4).

As we saw in Chapter 4 of this book, Solomon’s and David’s statements are directly confirmed in the New Testament when David is quoted regarding what happened to Jesus’ spirit and soul at death, and not a single passage in the New Testament contradicts them when we fill in the blanks of any unclear NT statement with specific statements in the OT and the mindset of Godly people in Bible days who assumed David and Solomon’s statements were true (rather than creatively assuming with no proof that we are allowed to superimpose the modern pagan/Catholic idea of conscious death upon unclear NT statements). The New Testament makes it abundantly clear over and over again that the great hope of the Christian is the resurrection/rapture, not conscious death. (Why would the rapture even be necessary if we were consciously hanging out in heaven immediately upon death?) And of course there is not a single place in the rest of Scripture that refers to dead people talking to each other. (Samuel and the souls of the 5th Seal of Revelation were temporarily “disturbed”/awakened from their rest/sleep and talked to humans alive on earth or to God, and then went back to sleep. They did not talk to each other while in the normal death state of “sleep” or unconsciousness.)

And of course, Jesus Himself said, “No man has ascended into heaven.” (Jn. 3:13).

At this point in Jesus’ story – two dead people being aware of each other and talking to each other, one of whom is in “Abraham’s bosom” or some pagan idea of heaven – we are faced with a clear choice: Either Jesus is directly contradicting Himself and the entire testimony of both Old and New Testament Scripture with this story about Lazarus and the rich man, or He is lifting the afterlife setting of the story from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition. The latter is obviously what is going on here.

“And he (the rich man) cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.”

Chuckle chuckle. The guy’s supposedly burning in agony in the flames of the afterlife, and he asks for...a drop of water on his tongue? A small (or maybe big) ripple of laughter flows through the crowd. The Pharisees are stonefaced.

“But Abraham said,”

Here we again have a dead man talking to another dead man. Another direct contradiction of the Old Testament Scriptures that matches up perfectly with the teaching of the pagan Talmud. According to very specific statements in the Old Testament Scriptures, when a person dies and his soul goes to “sheol/hades” (“the unseen” or “unperceived”) their “thoughts perish”, they “know nothing”, and “there is no activity or knowledge”. How can you talk if you have no thoughts or knowledge? Talking is an activity that requires thoughts to run through your brain, and knowledge to active in your brain. The Scriptures say there is no talking or knowledge in sheol/hades, yet here Jesus is saying that in hades/sheol there is talking. What gives? You already know the answer.

“But Abraham said, ‘Child remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.’”

At this point the Pharisees are beginning to fume. They know exactly where this is going. They know Jesus is saying, “Just because you have it good now doesn’t mean you always will. A switcheroo in fortunes between the downtrodden masses and the elite is coming.” Again we see the focus is on the switcheroo in circumstances between the elite and the downtrodden. Why are their circumstances switched?

Well, later on in the story we see that the rich man did not listen to the Law of Moses and the prophets. Modern preachers like to claim that this means, “he wasn’t saved”. My friends, how can listening to and observing the Law of Moses and the Old Testament prophets save you? *They can’t. Only faith in Christ’s work on the cross can do that.* How can Jesus be condemning the rich man in the story for not “being saved through faith in the cross”, as a lesson to His audience that “they should get saved according to Romans 10:9-10”, when the means of “Romans 10:9-10 salvation” (Paul’s gospel) had not even been provided yet at the moment Jesus was telling the story?

The point of the story cannot possibly be “the rich man didn’t believe Paul’s gospel, therefore he went to hell.” That’s impossible, because the means of salvation as preached by Paul had not even occurred yet! The point of the story was, A) the elite and the downtrodden will have their circumstances switched in the coming kingdom, B) a person’s obedience to the Law of Moses and good behavior, combined with believing that Jesus was the Messiah, is what could earn them a spot in the next age when the kingdom of God comes to earth, C) Israel as a whole and particularly the Pharisees would not accept Jesus as the Messiah either before or immediately after His death and resurrection. This is the same primary message Jesus preached to Israel throughout His entire earthly ministry! (Point C was one of those enigmatic messages that His audience probably did not fully understand. But points A and B they understood perfectly.)

And again, we see that the *setting* of the story, a pagan Talmudian afterlife, is a completely *unrelated vehicle* for getting to the *points* of the story, just as the *setting* of the parable of the seed and the sower is a completely *unrelated vehicle* for getting to the *points* of the story.

And once again, notice that Jesus mentions the rich man's agony, in direct contradiction to the multiple plain statements in the Old Testament Scriptures that declare a dead person's thoughts "perish" and they "know nothing". How can you be in agony if you have no thoughts? If you were in agony you would obviously *know* you're in agony; yet the Scriptures plainly state that in death a person knows nothing. The Scriptures also plainly state that there is "no planning" in sheol/hades; yet here is the rich man planning how he can try to get out of his agony. Contradictions, contradictions, contradictions...until you realize that the whole setting of the story is from the Phrisees' pagan Talmudian tradition, not from the Scriptures.

(Dead Abraham continues to speak to the dead rich man in the story...) "*And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and none may cross over from there to us.*"

So we have "Abraham's bosom" (wherever that is, it's a phrase from the Talmudian tradition, obviously some sort of nice place or conception of heaven) and "this flame" of "hades" (in this pagan-setting story, some sort of pagan Talmudian conception of the bad side of the afterlife that has flames and conscious people able to think and talk in direct contradiction to what Scripture specifically states about people being unconscious in "hades" or "the unseen") within speaking distance of each other, but with a separation in between them. This is another detail not found anywhere in the Old Testament (or New Testament) Scriptures, but lifted directly from the Talmudian conception of the afterlife.

And again, how can dead people "wish to switch sides" if there are no thoughts or activity or planning in sheol/hades? Contradictions, contradictions, contradictions between the setting of this parable and the clear teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. You know why.

Jesus here was using the pagan Talmudian conception of a "chasm fixed" between "Abraham's bosom" and the flames of the afterlife to make the point that *once He takes over rulership of the earth, it will be too late for the exploitative elite (symbolized by the rich man) to change their ways – they will miss out on the pleasures of the kingdom of God on earth.* This is the same point Jesus made over and over again in His preaching to Isreal, when He said things like "What good does it do to gain the whole world (now) and lose your soul (die and miss out on the next age and its pleasures)?" Remember, the Scriptural definition of soul is consciousness or the ability to interact with your environment, and Scripture makes it clear that "the kingdom" is not "eternity" or "hanging out in heaven forever" but refers to the millennium and New Jerusalem age *on earth*, after which Jesus will hand the kingdom over to the Father at the consummation of God's plan for the ages (1 Cor. 15:22-28).

Again, we must resist the urge to superimpose modern pagan/Catholic-inherited ideas on top of this parable. Jesus is talking about how when He takes over physical rulership of the earth (the same thing He always preached to Israel about), it will be too late

for the elite of this age to change their ways so as to get a good spot in the coming earthly kingdom. He's not saying *anything* about "eternity" with this parable. He's using the pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife as an illustrative vehicle to make *the same points He always made in His preaching to Israel*. To claim otherwise would be to say that Jesus suddenly preached a message through this parable that is totally different than all His other preaching to Israel, and to descend back into the confusion caused by Tertullian and Augustine etc. with their creative mistranslations and misunderstanding of the Greek word "eon" and corresponding creative theology that artificially causes all sorts of unanswerable philosophical and logical problems with God and the Bible.

Let's commit ourselves to interpreting this parable through the lens of everything else Jesus preached to Israel and everything else the Bible specifically says about death. When we do that everything is crystal clear. Jesus was using the pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife and its "you can't cross from here to there" aspect as nothing more than an illustrative vehicle to make *the same points He always made in His preaching to Israel: "The time to repent is now. Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand (will come in this generation if you, Israel, as a whole, repent); don't wait until the kingdom comes to change your ways, do it now. If you don't do it now the kingdom won't come in this generation, or if it does, but you as an individual Israelite do not change your ways, it will be too late for you to change your ways once the kingdom comes, and you will miss out on the earthly kingdom."*

Jesus then continues this idea:

"And he (the rich man) said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him (Lazarus) to my father's house – for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'"

Here we have the dead supposedly having the ability to go talk to living people, just because they want to. I could have mentioned this earlier as another detail of the story that is purposefully ridiculous in order to make it clear that it is not literal. The only mention of any remotely similar thing in the Old Testament Scriptures is possibly an instance in 1 Samuel 15 where Samuel (according to Saul – it may have been just an evil spirit impersonating Samuel) was roused from the dead and "disturbed" from his rest/sleep during a divination by a witch; and the only similar thing in the New Testament is a description in Revelation 6:9-11 of the "souls of the martyrs" crying out to God, which I explained in Chapter 4, where the passage makes it clear that both before and after these souls temporarily wake up to cry out to God, the souls are in their normal state of "sleep" - unconsciousness. I addressed both these passages in Chapter 4 of this book. Both these instances are a far cry from a dead person being constantly conscious and then just walking up to a living person and talking to them, just because they want to. There is no such thing in Scripture.

I should also point out that in this fictional story we have dead Abraham conscious and talking. One would assume that if the pagan/Talmudian/Catholic version of the

afterlife was true, Abraham would be consciously enjoying his reward in heaven at this moment. Yet this is impossible Scripturally, Jesus cannot possibly have been teaching this as a literal teaching about the afterlife, because elsewhere He said “No man has ascended into heaven” (Jn. 3:13). How could Abe be in heaven if Jesus said nobody had ascended into heaven? What gives? You already know the answer.

We should also remember that in Daniel 12:13 the angel told Daniel, “You will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.” Daniel is now resting and will be resting until the rapture. He will not get his “allotted portion”, his reward, until he rises again at the end of this age. The heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11:35 knew this as well – they lived their lives “in hopes of a better resurrection”, not a better conscious death! Are we to believe that Abraham is the only exception amongst all the Godly men of old – that he is the only one who is already enjoying his reward in heaven without having to wait for the rapture? Did Jesus say, “No man except for Abraham has ascended into heaven”? No. He said, “No man has ascended into heaven.” Folks, no Godly person of old or Christian will get to enjoy their reward until the rapture, because all dead Christians and Godly men of old are now “resting” or “sleeping”, unconscious. They “know nothing”, they are in “silence”, they “do not praise the Lord”.

The apostle Paul also understood this, for he said in 1 Corinthians 15:32, “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’” According to Paul, if there is no resurrection, our actions are meaningless and will not be judged or rewarded. A modern Catholic-trained Christian would never write what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:32! They would write, “If we don’t go to heaven or hell when we die...” But Paul didn’t write that. He wrote, “If the dead are not raised...”

So again and again we see that the setting and details of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man directly contradict everything else in Scripture about what happens to a human at death. In the fictional story, Abraham and the poor guy are enjoying themselves consciously in heaven. If this is a literal depiction of the afterlife, then Ecclesiastes 9:5 and 10, Psalm 6:5 and 115:17, John 3:13, Daniel 12:32, Hebrews 11:35, and 1 Corinthians 15:32 suddenly become lies. The only possible way to relieve the contradiction is to realize that Jesus considered the story to be fictional and not in any way true to life, and that He took the setting and many of the details from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition.

“But Abraham said, ‘They (the rich man’s brothers) have Moses and the prophets; let them bear them.’ But he (the rich man) said, ‘No, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Here Jesus reveals another important point He’s making with the parable. He’s predicting that even after He rises from the dead the Pharisees (and Israel in general) won’t listen to Him or believe that He is the Messiah, because they don’t understand the Old Testament prophecies about the fact that He is the Messiah! This is the climax of Jesus’

story. Jesus is predicting the fact that those who weren't listening to or obeying the Law of Moses (most of Israel, especially the Pharisees) well enough while He was preaching, would not do so after He rose from the dead either. This prediction came true immediately after His resurrection when His disciples went around preaching the same "repent, behave, obey the Law of Moses, obey the rules" message, and most of Israel didn't listen then either.

This is why I have told you repeatedly that you cannot properly understand the points Jesus made with this parable until you understand that Jesus' message was *under the Law of Moses*, about *behavior* (in stark contrast to Paul's gospel for a different stage in God's plan, later). The main point of the parable is the same as Jesus' gospel: "Behave and obey the rules, obey the commandments, obey the Law of Moses, etc., if you want to earn a good spot in the (possibly soon-coming) kingdom of God on earth." And the climax of the parable is a prediction of exactly what happened later: Israel failed to heed this message even after seeing the proof of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. *Jesus' gospel (as also preached immediately after His resurrection by the apostles) to Israel was destined to fail, Israel was destined to fail to heed it, and Jesus knew this (e.g. Matt. 13:14).*

But if you think the parable of Lazarus and the rich man somehow has to do with a literal teaching about the afterlife or Paul's gospel of grace, you are going to be massively confused.

Now that Jesus has reached the climax of the story, He turns to His disciples...

(Keep in mind that there are no chapter breaks in the Greek manuscripts and that Luke 17 begins with Jesus saying something to His disciples seemingly immediately after finishing the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.)

"He said to His disciples, 'It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It is better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.'"

Immediately after His scathing indictment of the Pharisees and His clever mockery of their pagan Talmudian tradition which was both a symptom and a cause of their high station in life that resulted from their entrenched status in the authority power structure of this present age (see Lk. 4:5-6), Jesus then turns to His disciples and says, "It's gonna be bad for these Pharisees who cause the Israelite people to stumble. It would be better for them to die now than to continue causing them to stumble and to miss who I am."

His use of the phrase "these little ones" means there were other people there. The "little ones" Jesus is referring to are obviously the Israelite people who were being caused to stumble by their religious leaders. This statement Jesus made to His disciples is a clear continuation of the message of the parable. Jesus often did this; after telling a parable, He'd give a more in-depth explanation to His disciples.

Next Jesus said to His disciples, “*Be on your guard!*” This is part of verse 3, but again, there are no chapter or verse delineations in the Greek text, and it seems to make much more sense as a conclusion to the previous thought than as an introduction to the next. Let me ask you, which makes more sense to you:

“The Pharisees are stumbling blocks – woe to them. They lead the people but exploit them and lead them away from the truth because they don’t love the people, they love themselves and their position and their money instead, and therefore they will not have a good position in the next age if it comes in this generation. BE ON YOUR GUARD (lest you, my chosen leaders, become like them)! (Remember, Jesus at other times condemned the Pharisees for this, and He had to rebuke His disciples because they were getting caught up in “who would be the biggest big-shot in the coming kingdom authority structure”, reminding them that a true leader is a servant.)

I think that makes a lot more sense than:

“BE ON YOUR GUARD! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times, and returns to you...etc.”

What does “be on your guard” have to do with the subject of forgiving people? Uhhhh...not much that I can see. Maybe He was saying “Be on your guard against bitterness and holding grudges”, but it makes much more sense to me that Jesus would be, as He often did, warning His disciples about what He referred to as “the leaven of the Pharisees” (hypocrisy, pretending to be a servant of God and the people but really being a selfish, self-centered, exploitative jerk who lords it over his subjects).

If it were up to me, I would put the chapter/subject break after Jesus’ warning to His disciples, “*Be on your guard!*” which fits perfectly with the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus was trying to train His disciples for their future roles as rulers on earth (Lk. 22:30), and He had to make sure they had servant hearts – the very opposite of the Pharisees and the rulers of this age. Jesus has to make sure that His leadership team in the next age is the opposite of the typical leaders in this age – servants, not exploitative status-loving money-loving power-hungry selfish jerks.

Jesus is trying to train us for reigning too. We Christians will help Jesus rule the world along with the twelve disciples in the millennium. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man applies to us today in the sense that we can be on our guard against the leaven of the Pharisees – hypocrisy, love of this age and adultery with its authority structure, and mixing paganism with Scriptural truth.

However, the parable of Lazarus does *not* apply to us today in the sense that it was simply a restatement of Jesus’ gospel (not Paul’s gospel) to Israelites only, 2,000 years ago, about obeying the Law of Moses and displaying good behavior in order to earn a good spot in the kingdom of God were it to come to earth in that generation. That has nothing to do with us today. Today we live under Paul’s gospel, which *replaced* the instruction for Israelites

to obey the Law of Moses, with *new* instructions to place our faith in what God has done for us all by Himself through Christ's work on the cross.

Once you realize that the setting and details of the story were *lifted directly from the pages of the Pharisee's pagan Talmudian tradition*, and that *the details of the story (the pagan idea of conscious death and "the afterlife", the pagan idea of the existence of some type of fire in this afterlife within shouting distance of heaven, "Abraham's bosom" – a phrase found only in the Talmud and never in Scripture, etc.)* it suddenly makes perfect sense why Jesus made the points He made with the parable:

"Hey Pharisees, listen to the Word of God (Moses and the prophets, which teach the truth and prophecy of Me!), *not your pagan Talmudian tradition*...however I know you're not going to do that, your hearts are so hard that *even when I rise from the dead you won't believe in Me because you've given yourselves over to paganism and the satanic/pagan power system of this world in which you greatly benefit*. And the rest of you Israelites listening, you get the point: Don't listen to the Pharisees' pagan Talmudian tradition, which directly contradicts God's Word. Listen to God's Word (Moses and the Prophets, which teach the truth and prophecy of Me!) instead."

The parable is a clever restatement of the same things Jesus constantly preached to Israel about, with a dig at the Pharisees and their pagan Talmudian traditions thrown in for good measure, along with a prophecy that the Pharisees and Israel as a whole would not accept Him as Messiah or understand the OT prophecies about Him as the Messiah, either before or immediately after His death and resurrection.

The parable was amazingly clever and made such great use of irony. Jesus was a genius of communication.

I think I've made my point well enough.

So, as a review, here are the five keys to an accurate understanding of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man:

1. It is a *parable*, not a re-telling of a literal event. The story Jesus told in this parable did not really happen, rather it was a fictional illustrative story He made up. Jesus' statement in John 3:13, "No man has ascended into heaven" (along with specific statements elsewhere in Scripture such as Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, Dan. 12:13, Heb. 11:35, and 1 Cor. 15:32) proves that He did not intend the story of Lazarus and the rich man to be taken as a true story, "true to life", based on reality, or based on Scripture.

2. A parable by definition is *not a literal teaching about the setting or details of the fictional story*, rather the **fictional setting and fictional story are merely vehicles to illustrate a point**. For example, the parable of the seed and the sower is not a literal teaching about agricultural techniques. Both the parable of the seed and the sower and the

parable of Lazarus and the rich man (as is the case with many of Jesus' parables) contain details that would be absurd and ridiculous if true to life or taken as literal teachings about the setting and details of the story itself. This is because the setting and details of the fictional story used in a parable are merely vehicles to make one or more points.

3. **Jesus took the “conscious afterlife” setting of the story directly from *the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian tradition, not from Scripture.*** The “conscious afterlife” setting of the fictions story is *merely a fictional vehicle* that helps illustrate the points Jesus made with the story; Jesus could have made the same points with a story set anywhere, but He carefully chose the “conscious afterlife” setting *from the Pharisee’s pagan Babylonian Talmudian tradition* and then inserted clues in the story to show His audience that He did *not* believe in any pagan “conscious death” ideas, but rather was *mocking such pagan ideas*, as an additional affront to the Pharisees whom He was condemning with the parable. This explains why the setting and details of the story completely contradict the rest of the accurately translated Bible’s teaching on death, but completely agree with pagan Talmudian and pagan Middle Ages Catholic ideas about the afterlife. This is the only possible solution to the mystery of why Jesus would apparently contradict His own words in John 3:13 (and Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, Dan. 12:13, Heb. 11:35, 1 Cor. 15:32, etc.) when telling the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

4. **The people who heard the story 2,000 years ago** would have naturally interpreted the story very differently than the typical modern Christian does, because they **had a set of *knowledge, beliefs and assumptions that modern Christians do not have.*** Namely, they understood the clear Scriptural teaching that death is unconscious, and they understood #1, #2, and #3 above, whereas modern Christians by and large do not understand these things or do not bring them to mind when reading the parable.

5. **The points Jesus made with the parable make perfect sense as having to do with the primary message Jesus constantly preached to Israel about, the coming kingdom of God on earth (nothing to do with the afterlife).** The first point of the parable is “A switch in fortunes between the elite and the downtrodden is coming” – but this switch does not refer to eternity or the afterlife, but rather to *the next age of life on earth*, when Jesus will rule over the whole world; this point exactly matches the primary message Jesus preached to Israel. Jesus’ primary message to Israel was not about eternity or the afterlife, but was about giving them the chance to rule with Him during the next age of life on earth. (See Chapter 9 of this book.) This parable was designed to lambast the Pharisees, who had positions of power and lived selfish exploitative lives, while encouraging the ordinary powerless person being exploited by the powerful that justice will eventually be served when the kingdom comes to earth. The second point Jesus made with the parable was, “Listen to Moses and the prophets (the Scriptures, rather than the pagan Talmudian tradition that I’m subtly mocking with this parable whose fictional setting is taken from it).” Jesus also said this because Moses and the prophets prophesied of Him, and He was making the point that if people understood Moses and the prophets properly they would understand Him. Another aspect of this point was, “Listen to and obey the Law of Moses

and behave well, that you may earn a spot in the possibly-soon-coming kingdom of God on earth”, which was just a restatement of Jesus’ main message to Israel. (See Chapter 9 of this book.) The third point Jesus made with the parable was a prophecy about the fact that even after He rose from the dead the Pharisees (and Israel at large during that time) would not believe He was the Messiah or understand the OT prophecies about Him being the Messiah, despite the apostles preaching along these lines for some time immediately following His resurrection. *None of these points have anything to do with conscious death or the “afterlife” or Paul’s gospel.*

Conclusion

The bottom line is, the message of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man was not “the rich man went to hell because he didn’t believe Paul’s gospel” as many modern Christians think. The parable says nothing about the rich man’s or Lazarus’ belief in Paul’s gospel – how could it have? When Jesus told the story, the means of salvation (His death and resurrection) had not even been provided yet! Paul’s gospel had not even occurred yet! The parable highlights the fact that the one guy was rich and the other poor, to make the point that a switcheroo is coming (when the kingdom comes to earth) between the circumstances of the exploitative rich and the exploited poor, and once the kingdom comes to earth it will be too late for the exploitative rich to change their ways. The parable also makes the point that people should listen to the OT prophecies (“Moses and the prophets”) regarding Jesus, because those prophecies explain and reveal Him. Finally, Jesus uses the parable to predict/prophesy that the Pharisees and Israel as a whole would not accept Him as their Messiah during that generation, even after He rose from the dead.

The parable has zero, nothing, nada, to do with the afterlife, eternity, or Paul’s gospel. It has everything to do with the same subject Jesus constantly preached to Israel about, the coming earthly kingdom of God which He was giving Israel a chance to see come to earth in that generation. The rich man symbolized the evil exploitative elite in this age, which the Bible elsewhere calls “Mystery Babylon”, and in particular the Pharisees who had exalted positions of wealth and power in this age because they were part of Mystery Babylon and put their pagan Babylonian Talmudian traditions above Moses and the prophets (Scripture). The parable also cleverly pointed out that Israel’s leaders during that time did not heed Moses and the prophets; they did not obey the Law of Moses satisfactorily (e.g. see Matt. 23:1, 23) and did not understand or heed the prophecies in the Law and the prophets about Jesus the Messiah. The parable prophesied that the Pharisees in particular, but also Israel as a whole, because they did not understand or heed the Law and the prophets to the extent necessary, would not accept Him as Messiah in that generation, either before or after Christ’s death and resurrection. The poor man Lazarus symbolized the poor and downtrodden who will have good circumstances in life when the kingdom comes to earth (what we call the millennium), while the “rich guys” of this age (people like the Pharisees and other people in exalted political positions) who exploit the

downtrodden, will not have it nice at all when the next age of life on earth (“the kingdom” ruled by Christ) comes. Jesus was prophesying, predicting and preaching that when the kingdom of God comes to earth, the poor and downtrodden who are alive on earth at that time will be very happy as justice is finally served on their selfish exploitative satanic rich elite leaders (e.g. see Lk. 4:5-6, 2 Cor. 4:4, Is. 66:23-24).

It’s very simple once you get the paganism out of the way and learn to think like an Israelite living 2,000 years ago.

In conclusion, here are the four points Jesus got across in the parable and what we modern Christians can learn from them:

1. A switcheroo in fortunes between the exploitative elite and the downtrodden will come in the next age when the kingdom of God comes to earth. *Christians today can still take hope from this message.*

2. The Israelites living 2,000 years ago were instructed to heed the Law of Moses and the Old Testament prophets (obey the Law of Moses and understand how the OT prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus) in order to earn a good spot in the possibly-soon-coming kingdom of God on earth. This is the same primary message Jesus constantly preached to Israel during His earthly ministry. *This message does not apply to Christians today the same way it did to Israelites back then. Today we Christians do understand that the OT prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus, but that is not the main prerequisite for us to get a spot in the future kingdom of God on earth. Paul’s gospel outlines our primary prerequisite in Romans 10:9-10 – believe Jesus rose from the dead and confess Him as Lord.*

3. Jesus made it clear to the Pharisees that they would not have a good spot in the possibly-soon-coming kingdom on earth, and simultaneously mocked their pagan inclinations (which were a big part of the reason they would not have had a good spot in kingdom come to earth), by choosing the setting for His story straight from their pagan Babylonian Talmudian tradition and making a joke of it. The ridiculous details in the pagan setting also served to remind His audience and us today that the setting of the story was not a literal teaching about the setting and details of the fictional story, but rather a subtle (or not so subtle) mockery of pagan beliefs about the afterlife. *Modern Christians can learn from this that we must not be like the Pharisees, putting pagan beliefs over the teaching of Scripture, but rather we must be careful to separate pagan beliefs from the truth of Scripture.*

4. Jesus then warned His disciples to be on their guard so as not to be like the Pharisees, who were stumbling blocks because they did not understand the Scriptures as well as they should have, kept their Israelite flocks from the truth by mixing paganism with Scripture, and exploited those they led. *Modern Christian leaders can learn from this that we must be careful to separate pagan beliefs from the truth of Scripture in our teaching and preaching, and that we must not exploit those we lead as the rulers of this age do, but serve them. And all modern Christians can learn from this the importance of a servant attitude, as part of our “training for reigning” in the next age.*

Bottom line, if we interpret this parable as the Catholic version of the afterlife does, as a literal teaching about the afterlife, we are left with numerous blatant Scriptural self-contradictions (Jn. 3:13, Dan. 12:13, 1 Cor. 15:32, Ecc. 9:5, 10, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, etc.) and obvious absurdities. (How are we supposed to enjoy ourselves in heaven with the screams of the damned emanating from right next door? And are we really to believe that a man in the flames of the afterlife would ask for only a drop of water?) The Catholic version of the afterlife also claims that this is the only parable in the history of the world that is a literal teaching about the setting and details of its fictional story. On the other hand, if we interpret the parable the way I put forth in this chapter, Scripture remains perfectly cohesive in its teaching about what happens to a human being at death, and we are treating the parable the same way we treat every other parable, as a fictional illustrative story that is not a literal teaching about its setting and details but merely a vehicle to make one or more points.

Chapter 11

10 Difficult Questions About God & the Bible Answered Effortlessly By This Book

In this chapter I want to list several questions that many Christians have tremendous trouble answering when they are asked by thinking people who don't believe in God or are questioning what the Bible teaches. As you read these questions, you will see how what I've taught you in this book answers these questions with amazing simplicity.

10 Difficult Questions For Christians

The following are ten difficult questions for which many Christians have no logical answer. These are the biggest questions about life, God, and the Bible. My wife calls these "the questions no Christian dares to ask but everybody secretly wonders about". You rarely hear modern Christian preachers teaching subjects or bringing up these questions because they *seem* to have no logical answer when you believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife.

But there *is* a simple Biblical answer to all these questions, which you already understand because you've read this book. When certain key words in the Bible are translated accurately, the Bible itself logically answers all the following questions in a way that makes perfect sense; in most cases, the questions themselves simply disappear.

Here are ten difficult questions artificially caused by the Catholic version of the afterlife. (I'll word some of them in a few different ways to get the point across more powerfully.)

1. Why can't God bring Himself to stop the continuous torture of billions of precious people who are burning in hell at this very moment, most of whom never heard the gospel? Why is continuous eternal torture necessary? What is its purpose? What does it accomplish? (Typical pat answer from person who believes in the Catholic version of the afterlife: "Well...ummm...God's holiness demands it!") So...God *has an inner need* to see *billions of precious people* made in His image *continually burning and screaming for trillions of years with no escape* ever? How could such a God turn around and with a straight face claim that His nature is love? Wouldn't such a God by any common sense reckoning be considered a

monster, Hitler and Stalin and Pol Pot rolled into one times infinity? Who would want to voluntarily love and serve such a God? Would you voluntarily love and serve a human leader who was sentencing millions of people to continual torture for years on end? Human judges will not sentence people to torture because it is unethical – so why would God act according to a completely different sense of justice and ethics than that which He built into humanity? (Person who believes in the Catholic version of the afterlife: “Stop making me think so much! I’ve spent my whole life trying not to think about these questions!” Or, if they’re willing to learn, they’ll get curious and ask God for the answer to these questions, relying on the Holy Spirit to lead them and guide them into all the truth, as I did.)

2. Why would God create billions of people knowing beforehand that the vast majority of them would end up burning and screaming forever (trillions upon trillions of years!) in torture and agony in hell? (1 Peter 1:19-20 tells us God knew mankind would sin and need Jesus to die on the cross, before He even created us.) How could a loving God bring any sentient being into existence knowing beforehand that eternal agony would be its fate? Why would God create billions of people knowing that their entire existence would amount to nothing more than a few decades of difficulty (remember, half the world still lives on less than \$2 a day!), followed by endless torture?

3. How can God justify sending billions of people who have never heard the gospel or lived before Jesus came to earth, to hell when the Bible itself says, “How can they believe in Him whom they’ve not heard?” and “How can they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14)? (Romans 1:18-21, 2:11-16 tell us that sinners are without excuse for their sin because of the testimony of nature and the conscience God built into them, but then Romans 3:23 says *all* have sinned, and Romans 10:9-10 says in order to get saved you must believe Jesus was resurrected and say He is Lord with your mouth, which means *it is necessary for a person to hear and know the gospel story in order to be saved, as Rom. 10:14 clearly states.*) How can God punish people with endless continuous torture for failing to believe something they never heard?

4. How can God send a nice Chinese man who never heard of Jesus but worked hard to feed his family, committed some sins like the rest of us, and died, to hell to burn forever in agony? Isn’t the punishment way out of proportion with the crime? How can trillions of years of (endless) torture be the punishment for 100 years or less of (a finite amount of) sin? Why would God operate according to a sense and system of justice so different than that which He built in to us?

(In addition to questions # 1 and 2 above, #4 is another “elephant in the room” question that thinking unbelievers ask for which Christian who believe in hell have no satisfactory answer. Thinking unbelievers – rightly so – cannot fathom why most of the billions of precious people in this world would be so absolutely worthless in God’s eyes to the point where their only value is to function as kindling for God’s inner need to torture people in fire continually for trillions of years.)

5. How could God “choose us in Him before the foundation of the world” “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:4-5), knowing that those He *didn't* choose will end up burning and screaming forever – how can God just arbitrarily choose who will go to heaven and who will go to hell? (This is the nagging question that the common hell-inclusive version of Calvinism can never really answer satisfactorily.)

6. Or, for those who take the other side of the predestination dilemma (the “we alone choose whether to get saved and God’s choice has nothing to do with it, let’s just throw verses like Eph. 1:4-5 in the trash and ignore the problem of the billions of people who never heard the gospel” side of the dilemma, also known as Armenianism): If this is the all-important age when God is determining who goes to hell and who goes to heaven, why does He allow Satan so much leeway? God can lock up Satan any time, so why does He wait until the next age – when it’s too late? If the stakes are so unfathomably high, why is He allowing such difficult circumstances on earth to seemingly make it much harder than necessary for people to understand God? Why doesn’t God write His name in the sky for all to see, and shatter all belief systems contrary to His Word in one fell swoop? Why is He holding back much of His convincing power in this age?

(To put it simply, the Armenians have an incompetent monster God and the Calvinists have an all-powerful monster God. The predestination dilemma is solved instantly and effortlessly when the “monster” part is eliminated by the information in this book, allowing us to fully embrace all the predestination statements in Scripture without making God appear to be a monster. The predestination statements in Scripture speak of those who come to the knowledge of God in this age. Meanwhile, the rest of the testimony of Scripture tells us that the cross has already reconciled all humanity to God in principle, and everyone who doesn’t get reconciled to God in practicality in this age will do so later and eventually be saved permanently from death so that God will be “all in all” as scriptures such as Col. 1:16-20, Is. 45:23, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, James 1:18, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:16-20, Rom. 11:32-36, Rom. 8:20-21, 1 Tim. 4:10 etc. plainly state and predict.)

7. If God is trying to advance His Kingdom as much as possible and save as many people as possible during this age, why are we “losing the battle” so badly? Why is Satan getting so many more people to go to hell than we are able to get to heaven? How can God be losing to His own creation Satan? Why would He create a situation where He loses to Satan? And again, why would God create humans knowing He would lose so many to endless burning and screaming? Why would God make the punishment for sinning and failing to believe the right thing before you die *eternal torture*, which *would please Satan*? Why is God making a rule that pleases Satan? And why is Satan enforcing God’s torture-punishment on people in hell? Doesn’t that imply cooperation between Satan and God?

8. Why do so many evil people have so much power, wealth, and influence – and why are we so unsuccessful at replacing their power and influence with our own in this age? In other words, why is God allowing Satan to continue to be the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4) and to handpick its high-level leaders (Lk. 4:5-6)? If this age is the only chance anybody

has to come to the knowledge of Christ, why did God wait so long to send Christ to earth, and why is He allowing us to lose the battle for culture, politics, education, etc., with the eternal destiny of billions of people at stake? If people escaping the tortures of eternal hell is completely dependent on the preaching of Christians now in this age, why didn't God send Jesus sooner to give us a chance to reach more people, and why doesn't He give us more power to reach everyone on earth with the gospel? Why does He allow evil rulers to make the preaching of the gospel illegal in some nations?

9. If you go to heaven immediately when you die, why would you need to be resurrected/raptured?

10. If an unsaved person goes to hell immediately when they die, how does God justify giving them this horrible punishment *before* He gives them their chance to be judged at the white throne judgment?

By reading this book you've learned the simple answer to all these questions and dilemmas.

There are other questions and dilemmas artificially caused by the Catholic version of the afterlife, that I didn't mention above. Lord willing, in the future I plan to come out with a book dedicated to pointing out more of them. To give you a taste, here are just a couple more:

Why do Christians who believe in hell fight abortion? According to the doctrine of hell, an aborted baby gets a free ticket to heaven, but a baby that lives is given a chance to go to hell, and (let's be realistic here and look at the number of people in this world that are true Christians compared to the number that are not) is more likely to end up in hell than in heaven. So you would think Christians who believe in hell would encourage abortion as a way to get more people to heaven! It is self-contradictory for a Christian who believes in hell to fight abortion.

If hell and eternal punishment are true, how can you – or the Holy Spirit, for that matter – ever comfort a person whose loved one has died without knowing the Lord? How could a person who thinks their loved one – their child, or parent, or sibling, or friend – is screaming in agony in fire continuously and will be doing so for all eternity without end, *ever be comforted?* Does comfort come from denying the (supposed) “reality of hell” and shoving it out of our minds? Is that the way God brings us comfort, by denying reality and causing us to temporarily forget it like the effect of alcohol? It's very easy for Christians who believe in hell to prattle on about *other people* burning and screaming forever, but when it's someone you know and love...the horrific terrifying brutality of the hell doctrine comes crashing home, and there is no escape until you learn the information in this book. **This reason, and this reason alone, should be enough to inspire you to email everyone you know the link to this book and share it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, everywhere you can think of.**

Who cares if people think you're crazy (at first – they won't if they take the time to read it!) – for one thing, God's reputation is more important than yours, and for another thing, there are too many Christians out there who suffer emotional agony because they've been told a loved one is burning and screaming in hell right now and will never escape. Let's set them free!

Chapter 12

10 Unique Characteristics of a Worldview Based On the Accurately Translated Bible

Everyone is faced with the choice of whether to believe in God or not. All worldviews can be divided into “God-based” or “non-God-based” categories. *“Do I believe in God?” is the first decision every person must make in deciding what they believe about the origin and meaning of life, the future of the human race, and how all of mankind’s problems might be fixed.*

I should point out that it requires exactly the same amount of faith (belief in the unseen) to believe in God as it does to be an atheist. People who believe in God don’t know where God came from, and atheists don’t know where the matter that makes up the universe came from.

Once you have decided whether you believe in God or not, there is a next step.

If you decide you *don’t* believe in God (or if you’re an agnostic that basically says, “I don’t know”), the next step is to try to figure out a way to help mankind fix its own problems. Good luck with that. We’ve had thousands of years to do it, and look at us – I ain’t holdin’ my breath. Not to say we shouldn’t try to make the world a better place no matter what our beliefs are, but to think that mankind will escape on its own from the cycle of corruption and exploitation of the weak by the powerful that has existed throughout human history, would require blind optimism and the utmost naivete. (See Romans 8:20-21 and 11:32-26 for the apostle Paul’s insight into why God is allowing corruption to ruin many aspects of the human experience on a macro level throughout this current age. It is so that all humanity will long for and appreciate freedom from corruption. Or to put it more simply, it is so we will learn from thorough experience that corruption and sin cause pain and doing things God’s way works much better.)

Those who decide they don’t believe in God (or give up and say “I don’t know”) are left with an ultimately meaningless existence; if we don’t have to answer to a higher power for our actions, then life is just “the survival of the fittest” and any action is fair game if we can get away with it. Even if you don’t treat life that way, and you try to do good, in this age you will continually face people who *do* treat life as “the survival of the fittest” (“if I can get away with it, I’m willing to hurt you to get a benefit for myself”), and if you’re honest you’ll realize that these types of people are the ones that often get ahead and end up running the

world in this age. How many times in your workplace have you seen people who are good at “playing politics”, backstabbing, gossiping, switching sides at the drop of a hat to get ahead, etc. be promoted while honest, loyal people are left behind or ostracized? It’s the same on the level of world leadership. If you think politicians, high-level financial leaders, and mega-corporation bigshots are looking out for what’s best for you, you are naïve in the extreme. These people are in the positions they are in precisely because they have the least scruples and are the most willing to compromise in any way that will help them get ahead. The more people that fit this profile attain power, the more they reward others who are like them with power, and the more they resist honest and moral people who would expose them. This is the cycle of corrupt power that has existed throughout human history. This is what God warned Israel about when they got tired of having God be their direct leader, and cried out for a human king; God told them, “A human king is going to exploit you and take advantage of his power over you” (my paraphrase of 1 Sam. 8:9-18). God knew what corrupt, sinful man is made of. (Also see Jn. 2:24-25.)

Without an intervention from God, humanity is stuck in this cycle of the powerful exploiting the weak. The game is set up in this age to where if you are clever, living without scruples can often get you more power (an “in” with other selfish exploitative leaders) more quickly and easily than being honest and moral. (Keep in mind that as a Christian, you are connected to God in this age and He will bless and provide for you despite the actions of exploitative immoral leaders. The only exception to this might be if He allows you the privilege of being a martyr for your faith.) So on a macro level, God has allowed this dynamic of evil ruling over good to operate in this age (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6), for the reason Paul explains in Romans 8:20-21 and 11:32-36.

As Solomon so aptly put it in Ecclesiastes, life “under the sun” (viewing the human experience apart from God) is meaningless or striving after the wind. Because of the inherent corruption of sinful human nature, humanity is incapable of fixing all its own problems. Even if you are a generally honest and moral person who attains wealth and fame and have everything the world has to offer in this age, you are still left looking down from your ivory tower wondering why there is so much suffering in the world, why it’s so hard to find true love when you’re rich and famous (people just want to use you for your money and power, they usually don’t truly love you), why you have so much and so many others have almost nothing, why you’re so powerless to fix it and even if you gave away all your money to try to fix the world’s problems, it would only amount to a tiny drop in a bucket and the world’s problems would still exist. This is why so many people who seem to “have it all” end up spiraling into drugs, alcohol, suicide, etc. – because they don’t actually have it all. They’re missing the Creator’s master plan, which imbues life – every decision, every action, every thought, every person’s life – with meaning.

People who have very little think that if they could just be rich and respected, they would feel fulfilled. They might be more comfortable, of course, but what they don’t realize is that “having it all” just gives you more time and perspective to think about the world’s macro level problems, and to realize how powerless you are, that no matter how much

wealth you have you are powerless to fix humanity's problems on a macro level. You will see this sense of hopelessness and meaningless (apart from God) expressed eloquently in the pages of the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, who "had it all" in the natural realm, and thus had the time, the means and the perspective to meditate on life at length and realize that apart from God it is meaningless and striving after the wind.

If, on the other hand, you decide you *do* believe in the existence of God (or gods), the next question is, "Who is God (or gods)?" All the religions can't be right. Either only one of them is right and the rest are wrong, or none of them is right. Or, maybe one of them is *partly* right.

The world's religions spend a lot of time and effort trying to convince the "unconverted" that their teachings are the truth. Some religions gain converts because they simply provide something to believe in, and there are a lot of people who don't think much and need something to fill their hunger for God, larger meaning in life, and need for a sense of belonging and acceptance (when you join a religion you instantly become accepted as part of a united tribe). Religions also tend to feed human pride – a sense of "We're right and if you don't agree with me there will be bad consequences for you" is subtly satisfying to the human ego. And if a religion gains enough traction, it can continue to exist simply by becoming "the norm" in a given geographical area. The power of peer pressure (or law, if the religion becomes state-sanctioned) does the rest.

But there are a lot of people in the world who use their brains. They will ask questions like, "How do I know this religion is the truth, and even if it was the truth, is the God this religion espouses worth my service and devotion?" This is where the vast majority of the world's religions falter.

You see, there are four primary things that keep people from believing in God. One is the fact that many people want to do whatever they want without having to ever answer to anyone for it. The second is the fact that so many people are busy making a living that they don't feel they have much time to explore the large questions of life. Third is the fact that the vast majority of religions do not or cannot do a satisfactory job of providing any semblance of proof that they are "the truth". And fourth is the fact that the God/gods presented by the major religions have tragic plans for the majority of humanity that seem to thinking people to be inherently sad and absurd, thus rendering such a God/gods unworthy of worship to a thinking person. It is this fourth reason that I want to expound on here.

Arguments about how exactly Genesis 1 ought to be interpreted aside, science has not ruled out the possibility of creationism. Yet many thinking people – including atheists, evolutionists, and others who aren't sure what to believe – simply don't feel that any of the religious options they are presented with are worth pursuing. They *don't want* to believe in any of the versions of God that the major religions espouse. Why? Because *they understandably despise the "God's plan for mankind is a tragic ending for most people" versions of God they are presented with by the major religions.*

On the other hand, Christians (for example) *want* to believe in God because many or most of them have had what they believe are personal experiences with God, and they relate to what they believe is the beauty, wisdom, and logic of the Bible's instructions and moral code, etc. Yet many Christians and other religious people never think through all the ramifications of their belief system, especially the part where most of mankind is burned and tortured forever (or has some other type of tragic ending such as reincarnation as a cow). Because this type of tragic ending for most of mankind is terrible to think about and seems to make no sense (wouldn't a God who is able to bring us into existence have a better plan, and why would He even bring us into existence if He knew that would be our end?), most people who believe in God – even Christians – largely avoid thinking through this part of their belief systems, and most preachers avoid preaching about it. If they do preach about it, they just preach the “what” without ever addressing the “why”. Those preachers who preach the “what” part of their God's tragic plan for mankind (for example preachers who say, “Believe or burn! Them's the rules! Deal with it!” without even attempting to explain why God would make such rules) simply expose to more scrutiny the absurdity of the idea that a loving and sovereign God would create mankind knowing beforehand that he would sentence most of them to an eternally tragic and tortuous ending.

So it is understandable that many thinking people are not in the least interested in Christianity. Who would want to willingly love and serve a God that has an inner need to continually torture billions of people forever and can't bring Himself to stop it? This is the elephant in the room to thinking unbelievers. It is the first thing that comes to their mind as soon as they hear the word “Christianity”. They cannot fathom why Christians seem obsessed with passionately worshipping their God, talking about Him as if He is the most wonderful thing in the universe. The reason modern Christians who have been taught to believe in the Catholic version of the afterlife can think of God as a God of love and worship Him passionately, even though they don't have satisfactory answers for the “elephant in the room” questions about hell, is because *they ignore the elephant*. They step over the poop in the living room and duck as it swings its trunk above the couch. They rarely mention hell in church, and if they do it is in passing, because hell is so utterly depressing and horrific that any Christian leader who wants to be uplifting will avoid the topic like the plague. Folks, if hell was real, it should be the topic that is most often mentioned and preached about in church, by far. So why do most Christian preachers and churches totally avoid the topic in most of their services? *Because they don't have answers to the elephant in the room questions, and deep down inside they know it.*

You see, most people come to the knowledge of Christ (“get saved” in common Christian vernacular) without thinking too much about all the details and macro level ramifications of the belief system they are subscribing to. There are people (Josh McDowell, for example) who come to Christ by studying the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection, etc. - from a perspective of thinking and studying the evidence. But most people have a very simple encounter/experience: they find themselves in a meeting or conversation where the gospel is shared (“you're a sinner and you need forgiveness, Jesus died to provide that

forgiveness, and rose again, you need to give your life to Him”), the Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, they believe the simple message of the gospel, and that’s that.

Then these new Christians sit in church and unthinkingly absorb the Catholic version of the afterlife that permeates the typical modern Christian preaching and conversation. No one ever points out to them that statements like John 3:13, Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:32, Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 10, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, James 1:18, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16-20, Romans 11:32-36, Romans 8:20-21 etc. are in the Bible. By the time they come across these Scriptures for themselves in their own Bible reading, they have been so indoctrinated with the Catholic version of the afterlife that their brain’s computer simply flashes “Does not compute. Does not compute. Does not compute. It is not possible that you or your wonderful Christian leaders (most of whom *are* truly wonderful in so many ways!) could be wrong on something so important. It is not possible that they, or you, could be missing something on this subject. What you just read does not make sense, but since you don’t know why, simply ignore what you just read, and keep reading til you find something that does not confuse you.”

And of course it doesn’t help that the translators of the easy-to-read Bible they bought in the bookstore took it upon themselves to creatively add the most horrific word in the English language (“hell”) into the Bible and to violate every ounce of common sense in the universe with their inconsistent and inaccurate translation of the Greek word “eon/eons/eonian”.

So eventually new Christians learn to do what most other modern Christians do – ignore the elephant in the room. If they find themselves wondering, “Why hell?” (or any of the other related elephant in the room questions listed in the previous chapter), their brain goes into “Avoid Cognitive Dissonance” mode and shuts down. Four factors in combination will determine whether such a Christian will ever get past “Avoid Cognitive Dissonance” mode: 1) Their level of willingness to entertain the idea that maybe their leaders don’t know everything, 2) their level of trust in the Holy Spirit to teach them about things they don’t yet understand, 3) their level of willingness to endure loss of friends, ministry positions, and/or social comfort/status should they learn something that puts them at odds with their Christian friends/church, and 4) their level of burning desire to know the truth. It all really comes down to #4. If a person has a burning desire to know the truth, eventually nothing will stop them and they will be willing to seek it, learn it and live it regardless of the consequences. (See John 7:17.) On the other hand, without a burning desire to know the truth, a modern Christian can live their entire life in “Avoid Cognitive Dissonance” mode (otherwise known as “Comfort Mode”).

(See the Pharisees for an extreme example of what this mode can do to a religious person. Folks, it is possible for a person who knows and studies Scripture for years to fill their head with knowledge while missing out on massively important pieces of understanding like “The Messiah is walking the earth right in front of your eyes” or “Hell is

not in accurately translated Scripture.” Please understand, I am not equating modern Christians who believe in hell with the Pharisees, as I believe modern Christians have far more excuse than the Pharisees did. I am simply using the Pharisees as an extreme example of the religious pride that can blind “Biblically literate” people from learning the answers to the most important questions of life.)

So modern Christianity, as it presents itself to the world, is stuck in a cycle where it experiences much success because of the power of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin with a basic if limited presentation of the gospel, but then indoctrinates its new converts with the Catholic version of the afterlife, thus alienating anyone who uses their brain before converting. God has allowed Christianity to be stuck in this cycle for hundreds of years, just as He allowed worshipping Mary, praying to dead people, and paying money so your loved one has a better time in purgatory to be considered “normal Christianity” for hundreds of years. (Remember, God’s goal for this age has never been to teach everyone all truth, but to allow humanity on a macro level to try all sorts of ways apart from His way, in order to humble mankind later at the white throne judgment so they will recognize their utter helplessness apart from Him as they look back on human history.)

I personally believe that now is the time that God has ordained for Christianity to begin getting unstuck from this cycle where we have no satisfactory answers for thinking people regarding our God’s ultimate plan for mankind. In other words, I believe it is time for Biblical universalism (what I teach in this book, the truth that the Catholic version of the afterlife is not supported by Scripture but rather death is unconscious and God has a good plan for all people eventually) to become mainstream. It is time for it to go viral. Rob Bell cracked open the gate and said “Let’s talk about the ramifications of belief in hell” with his book *Love Wins*, but unfortunately he didn’t do a good job of proving anything Scripturally. Christians don’t want to hear wishful thinking. They want Scriptural proof, and rightly so. The book you have just read provides it. I am working on video and audio versions that will succinctly and clearly teach the main points. I encourage you to test in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and compare what I teach here to anything you read from any other source in the body of Christ on this subject. And if you think this book contains better answers than the Catholic version of the afterlife does (even if you’re not 100% sure you agree with every single statement in this book – it’s pretty long!), I encourage you to *spread the Word via email, Facebook, Twitter, and in person, any way possible.*

It is time for the Catholic version of the afterlife to go the way of the dinosaur. Oh yes, dinosaurs never come down easy. Every major revelation or restoration of truth in church history was bitterly opposed by the religious status quo (e.g. Jesus preaching, Paul’s preaching, Martin Luther’s Reformation). I can predict that people will call us names, call us dangerous, call us a cult, call us heretics, but one thing they will never do is debunk this book point-by-point, because that is impossible to do. Someone may find a bone to pick with one or two minor points, but they will not be able to debunk the entire jigsaw puzzle I present here. And if a person insists on clinging to the Catholic version of the afterlife, they will never be able provide satisfactory answers to the “elephant in the room” questions

about hell or the dozens of Scriptural self-contradictions artificially caused by the Catholic version of the afterlife.

In my research and truth-seeking journey I have come to the conclusion that one of the world's major religions, Christianity, is *mostly* right. Or, to put it more accurately, *the original version of Christianity* (Christianity minus the Catholic version of the afterlife, as taught by the early church and early native Greek speaking church fathers) *is 100% right*. In this book I'm not going to go into the details of why I believe the accurately translated Bible was inspired by God and is a trustworthy account of how life came to be (the past) and of how all of humanity's problems will eventually be fixed (the future). But I have explained here one of the primary reasons I believe the Bible was inspired by God: when translated and interpreted accurately it reveals a God who is absolutely worthy to be loved and served, unlike any other religion I've ever come across.

A worldview based on the accurately translated Bible is the only one based on writings that contain *logical proof* that God inspired them, *and it is the only one that logically solves the typical religious dilemmas* about God and life for which most religions have no satisfactory answers.

Most religious people rarely consider if there is any *logical proof* that their god is who he says he is. The Bible does have this proof, for example in the many prophecies that have come true without a single miss so far. Yet unfortunately, most modern Christians, even though their "holy book" is the only one which has logical proof behind its claimed divine inspiration, *never allow themselves to think about why God would create billions of precious people only to place them in a system where He knew beforehand most of them would end up burning and screaming for trillions of years.*

Meanwhile, the atheists and agnostics can't stomach the thought that God exists as the traditional religions say He does *because the ultimate plans these religions claim their gods have for mankind, seem absurd or horrific*. To thinking people who don't like any of the versions of God offered by the major religions, the resurrection of Christ or my friend's ear being healed instantly and miraculously (yes, it really happened) must be simply ignored or brushed off as the imaginings of ignorant or weak-minded people who need a crutch. Even though atheists can't explain how the Bible foretold the future so many times so accurately without missing, or why the disciples would die horrible painful deaths as martyrs if the resurrection was only a scam they had invented, or how my friend's deaf ear got healed in an instant when someone prayed for her in the name of Jesus, *they still want to reject the thought that God exists because they've been told by the Catholic version of the afterlife that God will burn and torture most of mankind forever.*

So the "mainstream religious" world in its current state leaves thinking people, whether they believe in God or not, in a lurch. Thinking people in both the atheist and "popular/mainstream" religious camps are ultimately *stumped* by the question, "If God does

exist, why would He be a torturing monster – wouldn't He have a better plan than that?" Most of the world at our current stage in history has been presented with only two choices:

- 1) **Religious choices that are ultimately tragic, absurd, unthinkable, and/or horrific:** Believe that God is real but He will cause most of His most precious creations to be burned and tortured for eternity, or some other variety of tragic or absurd ending for most of mankind that offers no real hope, such as an endless cycle of reincarnation as a cow, a happy few Muslim men getting 70 virgins in the afterlife, etc.

- 2) **The atheist choice:** Believe that God doesn't exist.

What I am offering to you and laying before you is a **third possibility**. It is based on the Bible and largely the same as what is taught by most of Christianity. But it eliminates the Catholic afterlife through *accurate, consistent translations* of the Hebrew/Greek words that are mistranslated in many English Bibles as "hell" & "forever" and *insistence upon using common sense communication rules* in the interpretation of Scripture on the subject of what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for humanity. It is the choice originally offered to the world by Christianity through the early church and the early native Greek speaking church fathers.

This **third possibility** to choose from is

3) **A religious choice that is palatable to person who is not afraid to use their brain, and offers real hope that all mankind's problems will eventually be solved:** God exists, and He will not burn anybody forever or concoct some other absurd or terrible plan for most of His precious creations, rather He has a great plan for all mankind to free us all from corruption (and its natural consequence, death) by teaching us through experience the value of living life the way He designed it to be lived.

As I've explained in this book, this "3rd choice" worldview says that God is working out His plan of the ages (Greek "eons"), each age or "eon" being a stage in mankind's education, which will culminate at the consummation of God's plan (1 Cor. 15:20-28) at which point *all* mankind will have been judged/corrected by God and will have learned to operate correctly (in love, without exploiting each other) so we can *all* be given immortal, incorruptible bodies. At this point God will be "all in all" and we will all live in love, peace, and prosperity with each other without hurting each other. In other words, *the deepest desire of mankind will be fulfilled because God will have taught and trained us, through experience and righteous judgment, to live the way He designed us to live.*

The accurately translated Bible teaches that the very God who created us has had a plan from the beginning to teach us to live the way He designed us to live: full of love and appreciation for each other and for Him. Everything He does and allows is aimed toward this goal. This is the only religious or God-based worldview *where God's actions on a macro level can be shown to have a logical, loving, and worthy reasoning behind them.*

When the Bible is translated and interpreted accurately and we return to the beliefs of the early church and the early native Greek speaking church fathers without the leftover influence of Middle Ages Catholicism muddying the waters, suddenly we realize that the only “holy book” that has proof it was inspired by God, *also reveals a God who has a good plan for all His creation*. Suddenly many dilemmas about God and the Bible that seemed to have no logical answer *are solved logically and with astounding simplicity*. And suddenly we see that there will be an eventual **solution** to mankind’s two biggest problems, **death and corruption**.

Everyone knows why death is a problem. That doesn’t take much explaining. But death is the result of corruption (Rom. 6:23). Corruption is anything that is contrary to design. It is taking a Porsche 911 offroading. On a practical human level, it is humanity’s propensity to hurt each other to gain an advantage, and/or to hurt themselves out of ignorance, what the Bible calls “sin”. Humanity on its own is unable to fix these problems. God must fix them, and He will. Before these problems even came into existence, God had a plan to fix them. Before He even created us, God had a plan to heal us from the negative consequences (death and corruption) of our own experimentation with methods of operating that are contrary to His design. He is purposefully allowing humanity to be stuck for awhile in this experimentation stage, so that we will a longing to be set free from it and appreciate it greatly (rather than doubting it or despising it) when we are eventually set free from it. (See Rom. 8:20-22, 11:32-36.)

This worldview has a **logical** explanation for the sufferings of this age, which is something the “traditional religious” worldviews don’t have. According to this worldview, we are in the most difficult age right now when mankind is being allowed to try every alternate way apart from how we were designed to operate, and see the consequences in living color – but thankfully, this age will not last forever, and death will not last forever either (1 Cor. 15:20-28). With this perspective, the sufferings and problems of this age pale in comparison to the “happily ever after” in much the same way that an 8-year-old’s misbehavior and resulting punishment (for example, she disobeys by playing with a hot stove and burns herself and therefore is not able or allowed to go to a party that weekend) pales in comparison to the rewards reaped by the lessons learned when that girl is a successful, wise 30-year-old who through *painful experience* has learned not to touch a hot stove.

Some may point out that many people suffer in this age through no fault of their own. That is part of the lesson that mankind must learn – we must be so careful about our actions because they have the potential to not only hurt ourselves, but others too, and the ramifications can multiply for years and be passed down for generations. What about sickness, disease, etc. – things that seem to be no one’s fault? Well, the Bible says that the first time humanity operated incorrectly and rejected God’s wisdom and design (when Adam and Eve sinned), the door was opened for all sorts of negative circumstances to enter the earth which never had power to affect humans before. Why would God allow this?

Again, it is all part of the lesson that *doing things the way God designed us to do them, in complete reliance on His instructions, works well, while sin (ignoring His operating manual) has devastating consequences. Some consequences are immediate and direct upon the person who operates contrary to how he was designed to operate, while some consequences are less immediate and may only affect others, or our descendants.*

(And if you're wondering why God allows natural disasters like earthquakes or hurricanes, Lord willing I plan to come out with a message on that, so sign up for my newsletter to stay informed on every new resource I release.)

So according to the accurately translated Bible there is a logical reason in God's mind for the sufferings of this age. It is the primary painful "learning from experience" age of human history, that causes us to long for freedom from corruption. Paul explains it succinctly in Romans 8:20-22, 11:32-36, and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. God's plan for the ages (Greek "eons") really is going to work. Pain is often the best teacher. On a macro level, God is allowing pain – sometimes strong pain – during this age so mankind will never forget the lesson and will always appreciate the lack of pain later on after it is eliminated. By the time God is done with us, none of us will be tempted to "sin" (to operate in a way contrary to God's operating manual, or to hurt ourselves or another person) any more than you or I today are tempted to place our hand on a hot stovetop burner and let it rest there for five minutes – we know from experience that such an action would be stupid because it hurts!

The Bible also makes it clear that after two difficult and painful periods of human history (this age and the very end of the next age) where Satan is allowed to accelerate mankind's descent into stupidity (or to put it more kindly, experimentation with a bunch of things that are different than God's ideal way), God will eliminate Satan's tempting influence permanently. And by the time the "consummation" of the ages occurs (1 Cor. 15:20-28) at which point all humans will have received immortal bodies, everyone will have been personally judged/corrected by God (at the white throne judgment – Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11). My point is that after God uses a several thousand years of history as an object lesson and then personally corrects and teaches every human being who has ever lived, there will be much less temptation to sin or hurt others or operate incorrectly than there is now, not just because of the lessons each human has learned from their own experience and from the testimony of history, but also because the negative influence of Satan will be removed.

A worldview based on the accurately translated Bible reveals that God has *simple, logical reasons for everything He does, which can be understood by any parent.*

This worldview also eliminates the tendency toward pride that often plagues the members of traditional religions. Religious people are not always prideful, and some can be very humble, but a worldview that teaches "God has a great plan for a smart few and a horrible plan for everybody else" can often produce pride in them unconsciously. For

example, most modern Christians would say they have a relationship with God because they *chose* to. They are essentially saying (though they would never put it this way) that they are *better* than a nice man in China who never even heard the word “Jesus” in his whole life. They are saying *they made a better choice* than the Chinese man – therefore they deserve eternal bliss while the Chinese man deserves eternal suffering.

This is obviously ridiculous. The Chinese man never had a chance to make the choice the Western Christian made! Many Christians have no explanation for why God would send this nice Chinese man to hell when he never even had a chance to hear the name of Jesus. (The Bible says the testimony of nature is enough to make a person realize God exists, and removes excuse for sin, but in order to “be saved” one must hear a preacher or read the Bible explaining it. See Romans 1:18-32, 10:9-10, 14.)

The worldview I’m presenting to you in this book also eliminates the classic “predestination” dilemma many Christians are faced with when reading the Bible (trying to explain why the Bible says God chooses who gets saved – see Eph. 1:4 for example). It makes perfect sense in that it recognizes *God does indeed choose who gets saved* (not from hell, but *from death earlier than others* – Rom. 3:23) *in this age*, but *this choice on God’s part is no big deal* – God is *not* choosing who gets to party forever and who gets to burn forever, He is *merely* choosing His leadership team to *serve* mankind in the next age. It’s basically like a father with ten children choosing his two eldest to help lead the other eight kids in an educational project.

My point is that this worldview *completely eliminates religious pride*. Proponents of this worldview (like me) recognize that if we are truly among the minority of “God’s chosen ones” in this age, it is *not* because we are better than anyone else. Rather, we recognize that we were chosen because of *God’s grace* and out of His necessity to choose *someone* to fulfill the particular role of Christians in His plan for the ages (mankind’s educational stages), and also because we were *weak* and *foolish* (1 Cor. 1:26-28), which makes it easier for Him to show off *His* work in us to the rest of mankind and to spirit beings. **In this worldview all religious pride is eliminated.** The “chosen ones” are chosen by God’s grace out of necessity not because we’re anything great but because we were weak and foolish! And we’re not chosen so we can lord it over others, we’re chosen so we can *serve* others – the rest of humanity – now and in the next age. **In this worldview, *religious pride is replaced with humility.***

So, in closing,

This 3rd option, this 3rd worldview, has never even been thought of or considered by the vast majority of the world’s population. It has been *hidden* from the eyes of most of humanity through the propagation of the Catholic version of the afterlife which clings on due to *the tendency of Christians to ignore the many Scriptural statements that blatantly contradict it* and *mistranslation of key Greek and Hebrew words in many English Bibles.*

In my opinion, this worldview makes more sense than any other. It is by far the most logical worldview I have come across. In my view, it is the worldview that has the least holes in it. And it ticks off all the boxes – it has logical proof that it was inspired by God (many specific prophecies fulfilled without a single miss so far), it eliminates religious pride, it teaches that all mankind’s problems will eventually be solved through a fundamental change in human nature brought about by God’s judgment and education, it logically explains why God allows so much suffering in the world on a macro level, and it explains certain things evolution & atheism can’t explain (such as how the language of DNA/life came into being, etc.).

I have personally tested this worldview in every way and from every angle I know how, and so far it has held up to every test of facts or logic I have given it. I expect you to *test it for yourself and not just take my word for it*, because I’m a fallible human being, just like you. One of my favorite things about this worldview is that it is largely based on a book that *commands* us to test everything – to use the scientific method on everything – including its own writings (1 Thess. 5:21)! To me, there’s nothing to be afraid of there. Because this worldview *commands testing*, I, as a proponent of this worldview, also encourage you to test it. I’m not afraid of you testing or analyzing anything I’m saying. There’s so much freedom in that. Most proponents of every other worldview I know of – including atheism & evolution, which are supposedly all about testing – are often very skittish about people testing or challenging what they say. Often they don’t like it. I don’t like the thought that I might be wrong any more than the next guy, but **my worldview demands that testing be done. The Bible demands testing of everything including its own writings and claims!**

So I leave you with that. **I encourage you to think about, consider and test this 3rd worldview that has never even been thought of or considered by most of the world’s population.**

Some of you might have trouble wrapping your heads around why God has allowed this worldview that solves the mystery of life to be hidden for so long, shrouded by the fog of Middle Ages Catholic leftovers. Well, as I mentioned earlier, according to this worldview (according to the accurately translated, accurately interpreted Bible), God has two goals for this age. The first is to let the world get “harmful operating procedures” out of their system and see the consequences of it in full living color as a lesson for posterity, and the second is to choose and train His leadership team to serve mankind in the next age. The “happily ever after stuff” doesn’t happen in this age; that starts in the next age and is not finished until the consummation of the ages (1 Cor. 15). God’s goal in this age is not to convince everyone of the truth. But you can be among the minority who learn the truth now, and your life will be infinitely better because of it.

I’ll close by listing the twelve unique characteristics of this worldview, which together set it apart from all others.

10 Unique Characteristics of a Worldview Based On the Accurately Translated Bible, Which Separate It From Every Other Worldview:

1. It is based on the only “holy book” or claimed God-inspired writing which has *proof that it was inspired by God* in the form of many specific prophecies that have come true without a single miss so far.
2. It commands the scientific method be used on *everything* including its own claims.
3. It says God has a great plan for *all* humanity, not just a select few.
4. It provides an eventually *permanent solution for humanity’s two biggest problems – death and corruption*, and provides a *logical* explanation for why God is allowing the temporary sufferings of this age.
5. It says that death is a *temporary merciful* consequence (unconsciousness) for operating incorrectly, not an *eternal torturous* one. In other words, this worldview says that God is humane, not a torturing monster.
6. It gives humans a *good reason to behave wisely* (because it is the way we were designed to operate, it brings good results, minimizes pain, and pleases our worthy Creator) *and believe* (because it makes logical sense). (As opposed to the Catholic version of the afterlife and other pagan religions which tell people to believe and behave “or else you’ll burn forever” or suffer some other tragic fate in the afterlife, in an attempt to bring faith and obedience from fear of a monster God or gods.)
7. It *successfully marries God and rationality*. It removes one of the primary stumbling blocks that keeps many thinking people and scientists from entertaining or exploring the possibility that God exists. (The only versions of God offered by the major religions have a great plan for a tiny few and a tragic plan for most, and many thinking people understandably do not want to even imagine that such a God might exist.)
8. It *eliminates religious pride* in its proponents/believers.
9. It *acknowledges the historically proven reality that mankind is incapable of fixing its own problems* without outside help or a change in human nature, and *puts its hope in the only logical source that could ever fix human nature – God*, mankind’s original creator.
10. It *fulfills the deepest built-in desires of mankind*: for immortality, eventual loving unity amongst all people, and hope/meaning amidst so many current problems worldwide today. (Any God-based worldview that does not teach that God will eventually fulfill these good, natural and uncontrollable human desires, finds itself in the uncomfortable position of trying to explain why God would build these desires into humanity only to ultimately frustrate us.)

Chapter 13

More Frequently Asked Questions

In this chapter I'm going to answer a few additional questions you may wonder about or that may cross your mind as you're reading Scripture. If you have skipped the rest of the book to come to this chapter, please go back and finish the rest of the book, for it contains the Scriptural answers to most of the major questions you might have on the subject of what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for mankind according to the (accurately translated) Bible.

What About Visions, Dreams, or Claimed Experiences of Hell?

If a subjective vision, dream, or claimed "afterlife experience" contradicts accurately translated and interpreted Scripture, I care about it precisely as much as I care what the Kardashians did last week. These types of experiences could have their source in the imagination or evil spirits, even if the person is well-intentioned or a good Christian. People will often accept anything that lines up with their belief system, and if their belief system is unscriptural, they do not have the necessary discernment to identify a false/lying spirit, or a product of their imagination that matches a lie they believe, for what it is.

The apostle Paul addressed this in 2nd Corinthians 11:14 when he said:

"...Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."

And in Colossians 2:18 he warns against taking a stand on visions that contradict Scripture:

"Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind..."

We do not take our stand on visions, we take our stand on Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). 1 John 4:1 also tells us the importance of testing everything, especially anything of a prophetic nature:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

In Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus told His followers to actively defend against being deceived by people who come in His name but bring false teachings. I realize some people interpret those two verses as a warning against people who claim they themselves are the Christ, but it could also be interpreted the way I just mentioned (depending on where you put the punctuation, there is no punctuation in the Greek). And there is no doubt that the greatest threat to the truth of Christianity throughout church history has not been from direct attacks against it, but from those who combine its truth with lies. Jesus commanded His followers to *actively defend* against deception. The only way to do this is to *carefully study Scripture for yourself and test everything* in obedience to 2nd Timothy 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and Acts 17:11 rather than lazily assuming that if an idea is popular it must be true and if it is new to you or less popular it must be untrue.

Belief in the Catholic version of the afterlife has become so commonplace since the Middle Ages that modern Christians who do not carefully obey the Scriptural commands I just quoted could easily find themselves duped by well-meaning but deceived people who have subjective visions, dreams, or “afterlife experiences” that match up with the Catholic version of the afterlife. I know it is hard for us to wrap our heads around the fact that well-meaning, generally Godly Christians could be used to propagate falsehoods and lies, but it is not only possible, it is commonplace. Why? Because none of us is perfect yet. I think back to the days when I told people they would go to hell if they did not believe in Jesus; and I shudder. (“God loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you; you are infinitely valuable to Him. But if you don’t believe it soon enough, you will suddenly become worthless and He will torture you for eternity.” What a message!) Yet I was well-intentioned, I truly loved God, and the amazing thing is, *God was using me powerfully to touch many people with His Word, His love, and His power despite a couple of areas in which I was yet deceived.*

If God waited until we were perfect before using us, none of us could be used in this age! In Scripture we often see God powerfully using people despite the fact that they were flawed, imperfect, and did not have full understanding in every area yet. For example, Jesus sent out His disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons even though they did not yet understand He would have to die, and tried to discourage Him from it when He told them! What comfort to know that God will use us for His glory even if we have not yet reached perfect doctrinal understanding in every area!

So please do not think that I’m saying Christians who have subjective visions, dreams, or “afterlife experiences” that match up with the Catholic version of the afterlife are evil people. They’re not. The vast majority of them are probably well-intentioned, and I wouldn’t hesitate to say that many of them are being used powerfully by God *in other areas of ministry*. We must remember that just because God is using a person powerfully doesn’t mean they are perfect. God used Peter to do mighty miracles, and then had to tell him in one particular area where Peter was deceived, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matt. 16:23; The word “satan” means “adversary”.) God later made Peter the primary leader of the very first Christians after Jesus’ resurrection, and used him powerfully, but a while after that, the apostle Paul had to stand up to him and correct him because he was afraid of the “party of

the circumcision” (Jews who were saying new Gentile converts had to obey the Law of Moses – Gal. 2:11). The apostle Peter is a classic example of how it is entirely possible for a person to be used mightily by God, yet not have full or proper understanding and action in one or two specific areas.

Folks, we have to get past this mindset that Christians and Christian ministers are either “all good” or “all bad”, and the idea that if a Christian or Christian minister believes something we don’t agree with, they are “all bad”.

Another thing I should mention, some people might point to supposed “proof” that a vision, dream, or “afterlife experience” that matches up with the Catholic version of the afterlife is “of God”. In every such case I have examined, the supposed “proof” could have just as easily been supplied by demons. Usually the supposed “proof” is in the form of the person who had the vision/dream/experience knowing something about someone or a situation on earth that they had no way of knowing in the natural realm. But just because the information was supplied supernaturally does not mean it was from God! Demons know about situations on earth too! Let’s go back to 2nd Corinthians 11:14 (“*Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*”) and 1 John 4:1 (“*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”)

I know it is hard for us to imagine that Satan’s minions could use well-meaning Christians to propagate a massive and horrific lie (in this case, the hell doctrine), but let us remember that Jesus called Peter “adversary” in an area where Peter was deceived and did not have proper understanding. And let us also remember that Jesus then went right back to using Peter powerfully for His purposes!

It is Satan’s job description during this age to lie, and he often does this by “disguising himself as an angel (messenger) of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Satan and his minions know that they are not going to deceive Christians who know and love God by saying, “Jesus is dumb!” or some such thing. They know they’re going to have to *mix lies with truth* in order to dupe a well-meaning Christian.

And folks, put yourself in Satan’s shoes for a moment. If you were Satan, what is the #1 lie about God that you’d spread to slander Him? What better way to attack God’s nature than to claim that He has an inner need to see billions of His precious creations tortured continuously for trillions of years? That way you keep many thinking people away from God (what thinking person would want to voluntarily love and serve a God who has an inner need to torture billions of people endlessly?), and you keep many of those who do believe in God in bondage to fear and confusion, never able to feel the full effect of God’s unconditional love (“If I don’t behave well enough this God who supposedly loves me will sentence me to eternal torture”).

So you have to understand that Satan loves the hell lie. It helps him greatly in his attempts to “*blind the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory*”

of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Cor. 4:4). The reason Scripture contains so many warnings such as “take heed that you are not deceived”, “test everything and hold on to what is good”, and “test the spirits” is because it is possible for believers to be deceived in certain areas if they are not careful! These warnings were spoken and written to *believers*! Not to unbelievers! These commands in Scripture make it very clear that without active effort to carefully test and study, a believer is very likely to fall into some form of deception in this Satan-ruled age (2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 4:5-6). Because not every believer makes this active effort to test everything, it should be no surprise that believers sometimes believe and propagate lies while simultaneously believing and propagating much truth.

Friends, Scripture has objective proof that it was inspired by God – it has foretold the future accurately and in detail many, many times without a single miss so far. Are you going to get your information about what happens after death from a source that has zero objective proof that it is from God (someone’s subjective dream, vision, or claimed afterlife experience)? Or are you going to get it from a source (the Bible) that has accurately predicted future events many times with astounding accuracy and detail, often hundreds of years in advance (something only God could do)?

So, as with anything else, when it comes to visions, dreams, or “afterlife experiences” that match up with the Catholic version of the afterlife, let’s “*test everything and hold on to what is good*” (1 Thess. 5:21).

If the Bible teaches that death is unconscious, why did Jesus tell the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with Me in paradise”?

This statement Jesus made to the thief on the cross is only confusing to modern Christians because most modern Christians have been trained by Middle Ages Catholicism to make a completely different assumption about the terminology “going to be with God in heaven/paradise at death” and “the kingdom” than Godly people in Bible days did. Let’s interpret this statement Jesus made to the thief the way Godly people in Bible days would have naturally done, informed by the entire testimony of Scripture about death, without Middle Ages Catholicism inventing new ideas that contradict the Bible.

Let’s start with an accurate translation. The Concordant Version translates it: “*Verily, to you am I saying today, with Me shall you be in paradise.*” The placement of the comma after the word “today” instead of before, shows us that it is entirely possible that Jesus was not promising the thief that they’d be together in paradise that very day, but simply at some unspecified time in the future (the rapture). Of course there are no commas in the Greek so it is impossible to prove exactly where the comma should go. The comma could easily be placed in either location, completely changing the timing of when they will be in paradise. This means that Jesus’ statement in Luke 23:43 cannot be used to prove a “conscious death” doctrine.

However, for the sake of argument, let us pretend for a moment that the comma is before the word “today”: “Surely I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.” Even if this was the case, Godly people in Bible days (who were much more familiar with the entire testimony of Scripture about death than modern Christians are, because they weren’t affected by Catholic afterlife ideas as modern Christians often are) would never have assumed Jesus was talking about conscious death with this statement. Let me explain.

First of all, if you haven’t already read Chapter 4 of this book, go do so now. (Really. If you don’t, you’ll be missing too much vital information to understand the rest of this explanation.) Now that you’ve read Chapter 4 (or re-read it to refresh yourself), let’s explain Luke 23:43 (assuming the comma before “today”) in light of the immediate context and the rest of the testimony of Scripture.

Let’s start with another accuracy-focused English Bible version’s translation of Jesus’ statement. Young’s Literal Translation translates Jesus’ statement to the thief as, “*Verily I say to thee, To-day with me thou shalt be in the paradise.*” (Lk. 23:42) Interesting – “the paradise”. I point this out because it is important to realize that to Godly people in Bible days paradise was simply another word for heaven. This translation seems to bring that out – “the paradise” where God lives. In other words, to Godly people in Bible days, Jesus’ use of the word “paradise” here would not necessarily have brought to mind pictures of consciously enjoying heaven, plucking harps or relaxing on an easy chair enjoying some heavenly beach; rather, it may very well have simply brought to mind a very simple and unadorned thought: heaven where God lives, where *human beings’ spirits go to be with God at death unconsciously.*

For confirmation of this, let’s now look at the immediate context of this statement Jesus made to the thief – another statement Jesus made just a few moments later, right before He died: “*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.*” (vs. 46)

If you’ve read Chapter 4 of this book, you know that this is a confirmation of everything else the Bible says about the death of a human being: in short, a human’s spirit “returns to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7) unconsciously (like a hard drive containing the human’s personality, thoughts and memories), while the human’s soul (consciousness, ability to experience life) goes to “the unseen”/sheol/hades where “there is no activity or planning or knowledge” (Ecc. 9:10), “the dead know nothing” (Ecc. 9:5), there is “silence” and “the dead do not praise the Lord” (Ps. 6:5, 115:17), as confirmed by the New Testament’s quotation of David regarding Jesus’ soul’ and spirit at death (Lk. 23:46, Acts 2:27) and multiple statements throughout the Old and New Testaments (e.g. Dan. 12:13, Heb. 11:35, 1 Cor. 15:13-19, 30-32, 1 Tim. 6:14-16, etc.)

To confirm exactly what Jesus meant when He said, “*Into Your hands I commit My spirit*”, let’s look at another New Testament Christian who said the same thing, where there is additional information in the immediate context. Stephen said the moment before he died, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*” (Acts 7:59) The next verse says, “*Having said this, he fell asleep.*”

He fell asleep! Notice, it does not say, “He went to heaven and immediately began enjoying his reward there, praising God and enjoying chatting with Jesus.” That would be a blatant violation and contradiction of Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:13-19, 30-32, etc., not to mention Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, 12:7, Psalm 6:5 and 115:17, etc. Instead it says that when Stephen’s spirit went to be with God in heaven/paradise at death, *he fell asleep*. Again, you need to read Chapter 4 of this book to fully understand the significance of this terminology that the Bible uses over and over again (much more often, it should be noted, than it uses the terminology of “being with God in heaven/paradise at death”).

So we see that Stephen fell asleep when his spirit went to be with God at death, and just like Daniel and all the other Godly men of old and all other Christians, he will have to wait for the rapture/resurrection to get his reward (Dan. 12:13, Heb. 11:35, 1 Cor. 15:32, etc.). (I cannot overestimate the importance of reading Chapter 4 of this book if you haven’t already done so, so you can understand this fully.)

We have no indication anywhere in Scripture that anything else other than what happened to Stephen happened to Jesus when He died. Jesus fell asleep and became unconscious when He died, just like Stephen, and just like every other human being that has ever lived and died. Jesus certainly knew the Old Testament Scriptures like the back of His hand (the OT contains nothing remotely resembling a conscious death teaching or the Catholic version of the afterlife, but clearly teaches unconscious death). And He quoted David (in perfect agreement with Solomon) when He said, “Into Your hands I commit My spirit” (see Ps. 31:5 & Ecc. 12:7). Peter later quoted David (in perfect agreement with Solomon) about exactly what happened to Jesus’ soul at death (see Acts 2:27 & Ps. 16:10). David and Solomon clearly taught unconscious death (Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17). It is unthinkable that the New Testament, including Jesus Himself, would quote David and Solomon about the specifics of what happened to Jesus’ spirit and soul at death if Solomon and David didn’t know exactly what they were talking about concerning death.

So we see that Godly people in Bible days, in agreement with the entire testimony of Scripture about death, would have simply taken Jesus’ statement to the thief, “Today you will be with Me in paradise (in heaven where God is, where all human spirits go at death)” as nothing more than a repetition of what they already knew about death: a human’s spirit “returns to God who gave it” and the person “falls asleep” (becomes unconscious in death). Any other interpretation requires invention from outside of Scripture. (Again, see Chapter 4 of this book for more detail on a handful of NT passages that are commonly misunderstood, but when carefully examined line up perfectly with all the other clear Biblical statements and passages about unconscious death.)

Let us also note that although the thief asked Jesus to remember him “when You come into Your kingdom”, Jesus did not tell the thief that they would enter the kingdom that very day. Rather He simply said that their spirits would go to be with God unconsciously that day. Scripturally, it is easy to prove that Jesus did not enter into His kingdom the moment He died. For one thing, when He died, He “fell asleep”. “Falling

asleep” can hardly be equated with “coming into Your kingdom”! For another thing, in Acts 1:6-7, after Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples asked Jesus, “Is now the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel (when You’ll begin to rule over the earth with Israel)?” Jesus answered that it was not for them to know the time when this would occur. So we see that *even after His resurrection, Jesus had not yet entered into His kingdom, and His kingdom has not yet come to earth – no one has yet entered into the kingdom, for this will not occur until after the rapture, in the millennium (also see 1 Cor. 15:46-55).* (Remember Chapter 3 and Chapter 9 of this book, that Scripturally “the kingdom” does not mean “going to heaven to hang out”, it means the reign of Christ over the earth.) At the moment He rose from the dead, Jesus had the legal right to enter into His kingdom, but He won’t enter into it (He won’t *use* this legal right) until the beginning of the millennium. (See also Rev. 11:15)

The only question left to answer is, why would Jesus say something to the thief about their spirits going unconsciously to God that very day, when the thief wanted to be remembered when Jesus comes into His kingdom in the future? *Because to Godly people in Israel in Bible days, a reminder that all human spirits go to God at death was a reminder of His sovereignty to raise them from the dead whenever He finds appropriate.* In other words, Jesus’ reminder to the thief that both their spirits would go to God that day, was a more detailed and poignant way of telling him, “Yes, of course My Father and I will remember you when I come into My kingdom – we’ll raise your spirit from the dead and you’ll get to enjoy it with us.”

Some might say, “Why didn’t Jesus just answer the thief, ‘Yes’? Why the extra detail?” Well, for the same reason a Christian might not just say “Yes” when asked by a person who just prayed the sinner’s prayer for the first time, “Am I saved now?” In response to this question from a brand-new believer, a seasoned Christian might see it as an opportunity to bring a little bit of teaching/reminder-of-truth to the new believer while being a bit more poignant and emphatic at the same time. So a veteran Christian might answer the question from a brand-new believer who asks “Am I saved now?” by saying, “Well, you confessed Jesus as Lord and believed that He rose from the dead, didn’t you?” Or it could be phrased as a statement: “Well, there’s certainly no doubt that you that you just confessed Jesus as Lord and said that you believe He rose from the dead!” It’s a more detailed way of saying “Yes”. Why bother with the extra detail? Because it’s a more instructive, poignant and emphatic an answer than just, “Yes.” It becomes a teachable moment in addition to an affirmation. It becomes a reminder of additional truth. A simple, “Yes” does not accomplish that. That’s why Jesus said “Yes” in a more detailed and poignant way than just using the word “Yes”.

(If you pay attention in everyday conversation we do this with each other frequently, especially when wanting to place emphasis on something important. Instead of answering with a simple “Yes” we often emphasise our “Yes” by saying it in a more detailed and roundabout way with more detail that all told amounts to a “Yes”. “Honey, did you take out the trash like I asked you?” “Look in the trash can. Is there garbage in there?” It’s a “yes” with additional detail for emphasis and teaching purposes: the additional messages are “Before you assume the worst, why don’t you look in the trash since you’re standing right

next to it, instead of asking me – please give me the benefit of the doubt next time”, and “I’m emphasizing my slight displeasure at you suspecting that I didn’t do it, by not answering you with a straight ‘yes’.” We use this form of “emphasis with extra detail” to emphasise in both positive and negative ways. “Dad, can we go to the game on Saturday like you said?” “The tickets are on the counter!”)

So, whether you want to go with the explanation I just gave, or the “comma after the word ‘today’” explanation, either way it is very easy to explain Jesus’ statement to the thief on the cross in a way that matches up perfectly with the rest of the testimony of Scripture regarding what happens to humans at death, what happened to Jesus specifically at death, and other topics such as when Jesus will come into His rightful kingdom (still in the future), etc. Once again the key is to crawl into the mind of a Godly person in Bible days and make the same assumptions they would have made, in line with the entire testimony of Scripture, rather than doing the dirty Catholic afterlife trick of discarding most of the testimony of Scripture in favor of cherry-picked verses with Catholic assumptions placed on top of them.

What about Revelation 14:9-11?

On first glance many people assume these verses refer to eternal punishment. But these verses are a classic example of why we must strictly follow common sense rules of communication when interpreting Scripture. The three common sense rules we must follow in this case are The Rule of Grammar (making sure we have an accurate translation before attempting to interpret), The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture (taking into account the entire testimony of Scripture, while allowing clear passages in Scripture to interpret unclear passages), and The Rule of Silence (refusing to add ideas into Scripture that it does not actually state).

Let’s apply each of these three common sense rules to interpret this passage.

Before we quote these verses, let’s first review The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture. Every statement and passage in Scripture on the subject of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for mankind must fit into either the “Catholic version of the afterlife” jigsaw puzzle, or the “Biblical universalism” jigsaw puzzle I’ve presented to you in this book. We must keep in mind that we are not just interpreting Revelation 14:9-11, we are interpreting *every statement and passage in the Bible on this topic, together*.

Some people make the mistake of cherry-picking one verse or statement in Scripture, putting “blindness” on and refusing to look at any other Biblical statements/passages that might bring additional information or clarity to an aspect of a verse/statement/passage that is not perfectly clear in and of itself. Anytime you do that to a communicator (in this case, God) you risk misunderstanding them by “filling in the blanks” with your own assumptions or preconceived ideas. That’s why it’s important to carefully examine *all* their statements on

a subject to let *them* fill in the blanks for you with their own words. So we are going to look at how Revelation 14:9-11 might fit into the “Catholic afterlife” jigsaw puzzle, and how it might fit into the “Biblical universalism” jigsaw puzzle, and you must decide not only what you think about these particular verses but which *entire jigsaw puzzle* makes most sense to you.

Here is Revelation 14:9-10 (we’ll look at verse 11 in a moment):

“Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.’” – Rev. 14:9-10, NASB (Note: The Concordant Version translates the word “brimstone” as “sulfur”).

If we hit the “pause” button right here on the angel’s statement, this seems to be a clear parallel passage to Revelation 16:1-11, which tells us exactly what the first 5 Bowls of the Wrath of God will entail when they are poured out upon everyone left on earth for a few days at the very end of this age. (The Bowls of Wrath will take place after the rapture has already occurred and there are no believers left on earth. See my book *End Times Explained* for more details.) In particular it seems to be a direct parallel to Revelation 16:8-9, the 4th Bowl of God’s wrath. Let us look at the strong similarities between these two passages:

“wrath of God” (14:9)...“wrath of God” (16:1)

“mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger” (14:9)...“bowls of the wrath of God”/“The fourth angel poured his bowl” (16:1, 8)

“tormented with fire and brimstone/sulfur” (14:10)...“The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given it to scorch men with fire; men were scorched with fierce heat” (16:8-9)

“in the presence of the holy angels” (14:10)... “and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright” (15:6)

At this point it’s looking like a slam dunk – a clear parallel passage. So let’s keep reading to verse 11. Verse 11 is where things get confusing for people who are reading mistranslated Bibles and have been trained to think of everything in terms of the Catholic version of the afterlife instead of thinking like Godly people in Bible days who never would have dreamed that the Catholic version of the afterlife was found anywhere in Scripture. Let’s look at verse 11 in the NASB, and then in The Concordant Version.

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Rev. 14:11, NASB)

This is where the Catholic version of the afterlife tries to rear its ugly pagan head through a blatant and ridiculous translation error. As you learned earlier in his book, “forever and ever” is a laughably absurd mistranslation of “to/into/for the eons of the eons”. The Concordant Version translates it correctly as “the eons of the eons”. Young’s Literal Translation also translates it fairly accurately as “to ages of ages”.

Remember that “the eons of the eons” or “eons of eons” is a speech convention exactly like “the King of kings”, denoting the greatest of a group – in this case, the greatest two ages of human history that God has planned, the millennium age and the New Jerusalem age. And remember that the Greek word often translated “for” could also be translated “to” or “into”. In other words it’s not necessarily talking about something that is going to occur throughout the entire eons of the eons and only during the eons of the eons of the eons (as the word “for” would seem to imply), but could just as easily be talking about something that is going to occur for part of the eons of the eons, perhaps at the beginning of the eons but not the entire time. And let us also remember that this phrase “for/to/into the eons of the eons” does not say *anything at all* about *after* the two ages being referred to.

But needless to say, a person whose brain is in “Catholic afterlife mode”, who reads “forever and ever, they have no rest day and night” in their English Bible that they bought at the bookstore, is going to immediately see an image in their head of people screaming in hell continuously for eternity. Thankfully, that is not what (accurately translated) Scripture says. Remember The Rule of Grammar: We must translate accurately before attempting to interpret. And remember The Rule of Silence: We must refuse to artificially add ideas into Scripture that Scripture itself does not actually state. This passage says zero, nothing, nada about conscious death or hell.

So when we translate verse 11 accurately, we see that the people at the end of this age who take the mark of the beast “have no rest day or night” (it doesn’t say exactly how long this will be the case), and “the *smoke* of their torment goes up for/to/into” the millennium and New Jerusalem age. Before we talk about the smoke, let’s be sure to point out two more clear similarities with our parallel passage Revelation 16:1-11.

“those worshipping the wild beast and its image, and...the emblem of its name” (14:11 Concordant)...“those who have the emblem of the wild beast, and worship its image” (16:2 Concordant)

Both passages use the exact same terminology to describe the people this is affecting: those who take the antichrist’s mark and worship him and his image. And looking at the entire sentence in the Concordant Version, we see that with the verb tense somewhat accurately conveyed it is clear that the apostle John (who had the vision which became the book of Revelation) saw these people “having no rest day and night” *at the same time as* or *during the same period of time as* they “are worshipping the beast and its image”.

“They are having no rest day and night, those worshiping the wild beast and its image.” (Rev. 14:11 Concordant)

When we read the sentence as translated accurately above, it seems clear that the “worshiping” and the “having no rest day and night” are happening at the same time. If we were to put it in more normal and natural English sentence structure instead of slavishly following the Greek structure as the Concordant does, yet keeping the verb tense more accurately conveyed by the Concordant, it would read as such:

“Those worshiping the wild beast and its image are having no rest day and night.”

Do we have any evidence in our parallel passage that the “worshiping” and the “having no rest” are happening at the same time? Absolutely. First of all, Revelation 16 tells us *exactly why* these people are unable to rest. It says that the 1st Bowl of God’s wrath results in a “loathsome and malignant sore” on the people, the 2nd and 3rd Bowls result in all the water on earth becoming undrinkable and unsuitable for washing, the 4th Bowl results in the sun scorching men with great heat and fire, causing all sorts of fires and sulphurous fumes on earth in addition to great heat directly on their skin, and after the 5th Bowl (the kingdom of the antichrist becoming darkened) we are told that people are gnawing their tongues because of pain.

Just take a moment to imagine how much sleep you’d be getting if you and your family had painful sores on your bodies, the whole world is the temperature of the Death Valley in midsummer, fires are breaking out all over the place making much of the air in cities and forested areas toxic and making it hard to find a safe place from the fire and smoke, you can’t go outside for 5 minutes without getting severe sunburn, you are gnawing your tongue because of constant pain, *and the supply of water suitable to drink or bathe in is rapidly dwindling, eventually disappearing after a couple days.* (How long do you think the water supply of a major city would last when they are not able to draw fresh water from reservoirs, etc., and there is absolutely no source of suitable water anywhere on earth? A day or two at most.) *And these conditions go on for days on end.*

(See my book *End Times Explained* to see exactly how long the Bowls of Wrath conditions will last on earth, as revealed by a little-known Old Testament prophetic timetable. For our purposes here simply realize it will go on for days.)

Folks, there’s not going to be much sleeping going on in such conditions. Not only is everybody gnawing their tongues from constant pain and sores, not only are there are fires and smoke breaking out all over the place, but everybody’s running water soon stops and the realization dawns that they must desperately fight each other for the last bottles of water in the grocery store. Those who dare to go outside in the searing heat come back with painful sunburn on top of their painful sores. Those lucky enough to have air conditioning thank their lucky stars until their air conditioning units go kaput because they weren’t

designed to deal with Death Valley heat on steroids continually for days. Before long there simply is no drinking or bathing water left. Everybody is sweating profusely, thirsty, no water to wash the painful infected sores on their bodies, constantly gnawing their teeth in pain. Wondering if it will ever end, or if they will die this way. Not exactly conducive conditions for a siesta.

Now, not only does our Revelation 16:1-11 parallel passage clearly describe the exact conditions that will result in people not being able to rest, it also tells us that *during these events these people will refuse to repent and will continue worshiping the antichrist*. In the midst of all this, after the 4th and 5th Bowls of God's wrath are poured out, we are told that

"...they blaspheme the name of God...and they do not repent" and "...they...blaspheme the God of heaven...and they do not repent of their acts." (Rev. 16:9, 11 Concordant)

So here is yet another clear parallel between our two passages. In Revelation 14:9-11 "those worshiping the wild beast are having no rest day and night" (Concordant Version with more natural English sentence structure), and in the latter passage we get the details of exactly why they can't rest, and we are told "they do not repent of their acts" (they don't stop sinning, they don't regret taking the antichrist's mark, and they continue worshiping the antichrist and his image).

Friends, at this point we have multiple clear parallels between Revelation 14:9-11 and Revelation 16:1-11. Let's also keep in mind that these two passages are really just part of one longer passage; they are only separated by one related chapter, a total of about 15 verses. Revelation 16:1-11 makes it absolutely clear that these events will occur *on earth*; for example, it talks about the sun scorching men with extreme heat. Does the sun shine in hell? These events have nothing to do with a supposed "afterlife" or hell.

So now let's talk about smoke. Let's look at the first part of Revelation 14:11 again, this time focusing on the smoke:

"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." (Rev. 14:11a NASB)

If you've read Chapter 3 of this book, you already know that "forever and ever" should go down in the annals of history as possibly the most ridiculous translation work of all time. Here we have two instances of a plural word, "eons". If a translator thinks the Greek word "eon" refers to eternity (2 Cor. 4:4 proves that it does not, but just for the sake of illustration), in order to be consistent he should translate it as "the forevers of the forevers". But he can't do that, because, you know, that sounds ridiculous, absurd, and laugh-out-loud stupid. But since the translator thinks the Catholic version of the afterlife *must* be right and everything in the Bible *must* be all about eternity, well, there's got to be a way to get the idea of eternity in here somehow! I know! "Forever and ever!" That sounds...spiritual! Majestic! Grand!

Lord, save us from translators who'll do anything to get their preconceived Catholic-inherited doctrinal ideas into their translation! As you know, the correct translation is “for/to/into the ages of the ages” – in other words, for/to/into the millennium age and the New Jerusalem age.

Next let's notice another massively important detail that people often overlook in their rush to bring images of Dante's *Inferno* to mind. This verse does not say the people's torment lasts for/to/into the millennium and New Jerusalem ages; instead it says that “*the smoke of their torment goes up (or rises)*” for/to/into the millennium and New Jerusalem ages.

There are two possible ways to interpret this. Let's look at the two possible interpretations, and then apply common sense Bible interpretation rules to see which interpretation makes the most sense.

The first way to interpret “the smoke of their torment rising for/to/into the ages of the ages” is the Catholic afterlife way – to assume that the smoke will be continually rising off of continually burning dead (but conscious) people in hell. To make this hell interpretation work we would also have to creatively mistranslate “the ages of the ages” as “forever and ever”. But let's bypass that problem for now. To a person in a Catholic afterlife mindset, the hell interpretation of this smoke thing might seem to match up with the classic “unquenched fire, worms that don't die” Scripture! (We'd also have to ignore the clear physical earth context of that statement in Isaiah 66:23-24 to think it has to do with hell, but let's not mention that!) This hell interpretation would seem to match up nicely with all the other assumptions the Catholic version of the afterlife makes.

The other way to interpret “the smoke of their torment rising for/to/into the millennium age and New Jerusalem age” is as a figurative statement telling us that these people's suffering for several days at the end of this current age will be remembered for/to/into the next two ages. Remember, the Bowls of Wrath will be poured out at the very end of this current age, immediately after which Jesus will physically defeat the earth's armies and take over rulership of the earth, thus beginning the next age, the millennium. (See Rev. 19:11-20:6, and see my book *End Times Explained* for more information.) When Jesus takes over rulership of earth in the millennium He is going to sentence particularly evil people to capital punishment and throw their corpses in a fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem. (See chapter 2 of this book and this chapter's section on Gehenna for more info.) There will be no doubt that a new game is in town. The millennium and New Jerusalem age will be marked for their peace and prosperity, to a level the earth has never experienced. And during these two ages *people will look back and remember those stubborn people at the end of “Satan's age”, and the wrath of God that was poured out on them for several days as a result of their stubbornness in continuing to worship the antichrist even after seeing Jesus appear in the sky and watching the rapture occur with their own two eyes (Matt. 24:29-31).*

You have to realize that the people upon whom God is going to inflict the first 5 Bowls of Wrath will be those who miss the rapture and *watch it happen with their own two eyes,*

seeing Jesus appear in the sky as it occurs, and still don't repent of worshiping the antichrist. (See Matt. 24:29-31.) The 5 Bowls of Wrath will occur immediately after the rapture (see my book *End Times Explained* for more details). They will be poured out for several days on all of mankind who missed the rapture and yet still stubbornly worship the antichrist despite seeing Christ and watching the rapture occur. This will be a just and fair punishment for people who saw the rapture happen with their own two eyes, saw Jesus Christ appear in the sky with their own two eyes, and still insisted on worshiping the antichrist. It is completely appropriate, then, for humanity to look back during the next two ages and remember “the smoke of their torment”, the consequences these people received for rebelling against God even after seeing absolute proof of His power and truth (the rapture, and Jesus appearing in the sky). So Revelation 14:11 points this out, saying figuratively, “the smoke of their torment goes up for/to/into the ages of the ages.” The memory and remembrance of the 5 Bowls of Wrath poured out at the end of this age will be a potent reminder during the next two ages of the consequences of willful rebellion against the God of the universe. (All the more shocking that humanity will run again after Satan's deceptions after the thousand years of the millennium is over! See Revelation 20:7-9.)

On the other hand, if we try to stick with the “eternal torture in hell” interpretation of the smoke rising for/to/into the ages of the ages, we have to jump into a pool of ridiculousness, absurdity, and self-contradiction. For one thing, we have to absurdly and creatively mistranslate “the ages of the ages” as “forever and ever”. (Lord have mercy.) For another thing, the hell interpretation requires us to believe that God created these people knowing they would take the mark of the beast (He predicted it thousands of years in advance in Scripture!) and knowing that He would make their punishment eternal torture. Why would He even create them in the first place, if He knew their fate would be endless pain? And why couldn't He at least have enough mercy to stop their continuous torture? If hell is real, why can't God bring Himself to ever stop the torture of billions of people? Why does God have an inner need to see billions of people tortured continually without end? And how is trillions of years of (limitless, endless) torture a just/fair punishment for a few decades of (a limited amount of) sin? We are back in the same nonsensical Catholic afterlife rabbit hole.

(It is inconceivable that eternal torture would be a just punishment for any amount of sin it is possible to commit in a mere few decades. And it is inconceivable that a God who calls Himself “love” can have an inner need to see billions of people tortured continually for trillions of years. It is also inconceivable that billions of people who never even heard the gospel should get the exact same punishment – eternal torture – as people who did hear it and saw Jesus in the sky while watching the rapture occur with their own eyes. This pagan eternal torture nonsense is just that – nonsense; it makes no sense on any level. In contrast, a few days of uncomfortable pain at the end of this age is a fair/just punishment for the sin and open, knowing rebellion of these people who missed the rapture.)

Not only that, but the hell interpretation of Revelation 14:11 brings us back into the same rabbit hole of Scriptural self-contradictions caused by the idea of conscious death. Once again we are left trying to reconcile the Catholic afterlife idea of conscious death with John 3:13, 1 Corinthians 11:32, Daniel 12:13, Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, etc. If “the dead know nothing” as Solomon stated, then how could they experience torment? (And if Solomon and David didn’t know what they were talking about regarding death, then why does the New Testament quote David about what happens to the soul and spirit of a human being at death?) If dead people consciously experience the punishment for their deeds while they are dead, then why did the apostle Paul state in 1 Corinthians 15:32 that the reward or consequences for our deeds in this life will not be experienced until the resurrection?

So we see that which interpretation of the “smoke” phrase in Revelation 14:11 we choose to go with depends entirely upon *which jigsaw puzzle regarding what happens at death* we have bought into – the Catholic afterlife or the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days. Once again, a trusty common sense rule of communication comes in handy: The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture to the rescue! The entire testimony of Scripture is absolutely clear that death for a human being is unconscious. Thus the “hell” interpretation of the “smoke phrase” in Revelation 14:11 cannot possibly be correct. We are *forced* to go with interpretation #2: It is a figurative statement telling us that their torment for a few days at the end of this age will be a powerful reminder during the next two ages of the consequences of willfully defying God.

If you read my book *End Times Explained* you will see that I strictly follow The Rule of Literalness, in other words I am a stickler for only jumping to figurative interpretation when forced to do so (when a literal interpretation does not make sense). This is one of those cases when we are forced to do so; there is no way to make a literal interpretation work without blatantly violating many other plain statements in Scripture. Another classic example of this is how Hebrews 12:1 must be interpreted figuratively in light of Hebrews 11:35 & 39, so as to avoid obvious contradiction.

But just as the context of Hebrews 12:1 is often ignored, some people will latch on to the phrase “the smoke of their torment rises to the ages of the ages” like a bulldog, ignore the context (parallel passage in Rev. 16:1-11), ignore The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture, and insist that this phrase is talking about eternal punishment. The only reason they do this is because they have been taught the Catholic version of the afterlife, they have never been exposed to the many Scriptural statements that directly contradict it, and they are reading a Bible that (face-palm!) blatantly mistranslates “the ages of the ages” as “forever and ever”. Ask them to explain John 3:13, and they sit in stunned silence. Ask them to explain Daniel 12:13, or 1 Corinthians 15:32...uncomfortable, squeamish shifting in the chair. Hebrews 11:35...crickets. Ask them to explain Isaiah 45:23-24...“Ummmm, uhhhhh...But the Catholic version of the afterlife must be true, because...well...my pastor and all those other nice preachers said so!”

Look, I'm not saying your pastor and all those other preachers aren't nice, they are probably wonderful Godly Christians whose teachings are 99% correct on most subjects, but they have inherited a tradition regarding the afterlife that started in the Middle Ages, not with the early church or the early native Greek speaking church fathers. And that Catholic afterlife tradition depends on ignoring a big bucketful of Scriptural statements and passages that absolutely obliterate it (directly contradict it, over and over and over again). Christianity, it's time to get over our pride, admit we were wrong, and stop playing the tired old "Catholic afterlife" song. The world is sick of it. It provides no real, Scripturally accurate or hopeful answers. It offers nothing but unanswerable questions, impossible dilemmas, and an unthinkable, incomprehensible monster version of God.

Some people may also latch on to the word "sulfur" or "brimstone" in verse 10 and automatically jump to an assumption in their minds that this must have something to do with hell or a nebulous spirit-fire in the afterlife where dead people suffer. If you're going to take a word that scholars are often not exactly sure what to do with (the Greek word translated roughly as "sulfur" or "brimstone") and you're going to insist on using it as an excuse to catapult you back into the "Catholic afterlife" jigsaw puzzle with all its blatant self-contradictions and philosophical problems, be my guest. I just can't see any logical reason to do that. To me, it is just common sense to let the clear clarify the unclear, rather than using a pet preconceived idea about something unclear as an excuse to ignore the clear. There are far too many clear parallels between Revelation 14:9-11 and Revelation 16:1-11 to be ignored, and they are actually part of the same passage in Revelation. (Remember the chapter breaks are not part of the original manuscripts, they were added later.) The fuzzy Catholic-inspired idea that the not-perfectly-clear word "sulfur/brimstone" must have something to do with hell, is nothing more than creative invention from outside of Scripture.

Strong's Concordance, to choose a well-known source as an example, says this about the meaning of the Greek word "theion" translated "sulfur" or "brimstone": "Probably neuter of theios (in its original sense of flashing)." Notice the word "probably"! As far as I can tell in my study of this word so far, no one is really crystal clear on what this Greek word is supposed to refer to. Unlike the Greek word "eon" and its forms, there are not as many uses of this Greek word in Scripture, in enough various types of context, making it harder to get a firm grasp on what it really denotes. So we must be very careful not to make it mean whatever we want or add a meaning to it from outside of Scripture when we are not really sure that is what it means. We must let the rest of Scripture fill in the blanks for us, and refuse to get creative. And even if we could identify exactly what it's referring to, the question of whether it is talking about something in the spirit realm or in the natural realm (on earth) might still not be resolved, and we'd still have to look at the rest of Scripture for the answer.

So let's remember the Rule of Silence in addition to the Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture. We must refuse to artificially or creatively add ideas into Scripture that Scripture itself does not state, or that cannot be proven from Scripture. Throughout

this book I have proven to you that the only thing that props up the idea of hell is the preconceived (Catholic-learned) assumption that it exists. There is zero proof in (accurately translated) Scripture that any such place as “hell” exists. If you tried to talk to a Godly person in Bible days about “hell” they would have no clue what you were talking about; they had never heard the word “hell”, for there is no such word in the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. If you tried to explain that you were talking about a nebulous spirit fire where dead people suffer consciously in flames, they would ask you which pagan religion you had been listening to.

Revelation 14:9-11, like the rest of the Bible, contains zero proof of hell or eternal punishment. There is a clear parallel passage in Revelation 16:1-11 (really, they’re both part of the same passage). The parallel passage makes it absolutely clear that these events will occur on earth. (For example, the sun burning people with extreme heat.) I simply cannot bring myself to discard all the clear parallels between these two passages (really, two parts of the same long passage) in order to jump back into the pagan nonsense that is the Catholic version of the afterlife.

For the sake of illustration, let’s say I *wanted* to jump back into the Catholic version of the afterlife. I’d be stuck having to explain John 3:13. And Daniel 12:13. And Hebrews 11:35. And 1 Corinthians 11:32. And Ecclesiastes 9:5. And Ecclesiastes 9:10. And Psalm 6:5, 115:17, etc. (All David’s statements about death that match up perfectly with Solomon’s, and the places where the New Testament quotes David regarding exactly what happens to the spirit and soul of a human at death.) As if that weren’t enough, I’d also have to explain Isaiah 45:23. And Romans 8:20-21. And Romans 11:32-36. And Ephesians 1:10. And James 1:18. And 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. And Colossians 1:16-20. I’d be stuck having to explain where Enoch and Elijah went given what Jesus said in John 3:13. I’d be stuck having to explain why Jesus would supposedly teach the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian conception of the afterlife (in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man) in direct contradiction to the Old Testament’s clear teaching about death and in direct contradiction to His own words in John 3:13. I’d be stuck having to explain the predestination dilemma with my only choices being either “God is an incompetent monster” (Armenianism) or “God is an all-powerful monster” (Calvinism). I’d be stuck having to explain why I love and worship a God who has an inner need to sentence billions of precious people to trillions of years of torture.

Let’s be honest. If the jigsaw puzzle I’ve put together for you in this book (or something very similar, even if you’re not sure I’m 100% correct in every single detail) is not right, *then the Bible blatantly contradicts itself repeatedly on the subject of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity, and the vast majority of humanity is doomed to endless pain.* On the other hand, if what I’ve taught you in this book is correct, *then the Bible never contradicts itself on the subject of what happens at death and God’s ultimate plan for humanity, and all of humanity is going to eventually be freed from all pain and suffering.*

It is up to you to choose what you believe.

Let us continue to apply common sense rules such as the Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture as we look at a couple other Biblical statements that you may wonder about or come across in your Bible reading.

What about Matthew 7:13-14?

This is a well known statement by Jesus:

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

A person whose mental phonograph needle is accustomed to floating in a Catholic afterlife groove and playing a Catholic afterlife song will unconsciously make an unwarranted assumption about this statement: the assumption that it was meant as a statement of truth for all time. Yet Jesus could have just as easily meant it as a statement that was absolutely true when He said it (and in fact continues to be true throughout this current age), but would not necessarily be true forever.

You see, Jesus made this statement in the present tense. A present tense statement is not automatically a statement of truth for all time. People very often make present tense statements that are clearly not statements of truth for all time, and it could probably be argued that most present tense statements are *not* intended to be statements of truth for all time. For example, if I say to you, "I'm hungry", do I mean that I will be hungry for all time and my identity is that of a continually hungry person, forever and ever amen? Obviously not. I'm just making a statement that is true *at that moment*. Or, if I said to you in the year 2009, "The Los Angeles Lakers are a really good basketball team", that was a present tense statement. It was absolutely true when I said it. Five years later...not so much. The Lakers were lousy in 2014. If you tried to interpret my statement made in 2009 – "The Lakers are a really good basketball team" – as a blanket statement of truth for all time without checking their win-loss record in 2014, *you would be in error*. If you automatically assume that every present tense statement is a statement of truth for all time, you'll *frequently be in error*.

So it is important that we interpret Jesus' communication with the same common sense that we use when listening to other communicators. We don't automatically assume every present tense statement is a statement of truth for all time, so let's not do that to Jesus either. We could identify this as a common sense communication rule: *Not every present tense statement is a statement of truth for all time*.

Jesus' present-tense statement, made 2,000 years ago – "The way that leads to life is narrow and few find it, and the way that leads to destruction is wide and many go there" – was absolutely true when He said it. And in fact it is still true today, and will be true

throughout this current age. However, the rest of Scripture makes it clear that it will not be true for all time into the future. In Isaiah 45:23-24, for example, God swears by Himself that eventually *“To Me every knee will bow, and every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord is righteousness and strength.’”* In Philippians 2:10-11 the apostle Paul quotes this statement, replacing “swear allegiance to God” with “confess Jesus Christ as Lord”. And of course in Romans 10:9-10 Paul tells us that anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord will be saved.

So we are left with only two choices: either the Bible blatantly contradicts itself (if Matt. 7:13-14 is a blanket statement for all time, Is. 45:23-24 and Philippians 2:10-11 blatantly contradict it), or Matthew 7:13-14 was not a blanket statement for all time. The solution is obvious. Matthew 7:13-14 was absolutely true at the moment Jesus said it, but He did not intend it to be a blanket statement of truth for all time.

The Concordant Version often does a better job of communicating the nuance and sense of the Greek verb tense because it is more focused on conveying the meaning as accurately as possible rather than being easy to read. The Concordant Version translates Jesus’ statement like this:

“Broad is the gate and spacious is the way which is leading away into destruction, and many are those entering through it. Yet what a cramped gate and narrowed way is the one leading away into life, and few are those who are finding it.”

From The Concordant Version’s translation of the verb tenses we get more of a sense that these activities (many people “entering” the broad gate while few “are finding” the narrow gate) are happening at the present moment (at the moment when Jesus was speaking it). Unfortunately, the faster, simpler, easier-to-read but less accurate way most versions translate the verb tenses (“find”, “enter”) makes it easier for our brains (particularly the brain of a person who has been trained to believe in the Catholic afterlife) to snap into the idea that it was a blanket statement of truth for all time. But if we allow ourselves to make that unwarranted assumption, we make Scripture blatantly contradict itself. The only solution is to refuse to make an unwarranted assumption. In this way we obey The Rule of Silence (we refuse to artificially add a meaning or assumption that the communicator himself has not stated) and The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture (we let the communicator himself – in this case God, the author of Scripture – clarify for us any statement that is not perfectly clear in and of itself, via statements made at other times).

Once again we see that an unwarranted assumption made by the Catholic version of the afterlife would make Scripture blatantly contradict itself. Once again the solution to a possible Scriptural self-contradiction is to refuse to artificially add the assumptions of the Catholic afterlife on top of Scripture, and strictly follow common sense communication rules instead.

What about Hebrews 6:4-8?

People who have been trained to think with a Catholic afterlife mindset may automatically jump into that mindset when reading this passage in Hebrews. But there is no reason to do that. Let's look carefully at this passage, making sure to follow The Rule of Grammar, The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture, and The Rule of Context.

Let's start by looking at Hebrews 6:4-8 in the very literal and accuracy focused Concordant Version, and comparing it to a typical Bible version you'd find at the bookstore. We'll see that following The Rule of Grammar (making sure we have an accurate translation and that we fully understand any translation issues involved before attempting to interpret) once again makes all the difference.

Hebrews 6:4-8 talks about people who have "been enlightened" (have come to know God) but then turn away from Him. The key phrase is in verse 6. In the Concordant Version it says:

(Vs. 4) "It is impossible for those once enlightened..." (Vs 6) "...and falling aside, to be renewing them again to repentance while crucifying for themselves the Son of God again and holding Him up to infamy."

So we see that while a person is rebelling against God, they are crucifying Christ again in a sense, and are giving Him a bad name, and while they're doing that it's impossible to bring them to repentance for the simple reason that they're in a state of rebellion against God. Many of us know people like this, who have had an encounter with God, who previously gave their lives to the Lord, but then something happened (maybe they got hurt by church people, or just got tempted by the shiny apple of a sinful lifestyle), and they turned away from God. Such a person knows better, but they are rebelling anyway. Try convincing a person to repent of their sin while they are in this state of knowing, open rebellion – it doesn't work. While they are in this state they are not in listening mode. The very fact that they know better, but still refuse to repent, means that just talking to them is not going to produce results. They already know the truth. Telling them what they already know is not going to produce repentance. In order for them to repent they would first have to *get out* of open rebellion mode, stop crucifying Christ again for themselves, and stop holding Him up to infamy.

If you look at the *context* of this passage (The Rule of Context!), we see that the passage opens (starting around chapter 5 verse 11) by talking about Christians maturing and moving on from the basics to a deeper understanding of the things of God. Then, immediately before this section about people who knowingly rebel against God after coming to know Him, it says (vs. 3), "*And this we will do (move on from the basics), if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened...*"

The word “for” tells us that in Paul’s mind (Paul is the probable author of Hebrews), what he says about knowingly rebellious former Christians is connected to what he says about moving from basics to the deeper things of God. This whole passage is all one big thought in Paul’s mind, about his goal to successfully move Christians from the basics to deeper things without them getting stuck in one of two ruts – open knowing rebellion, or remaining immature. In other words Paul is saying (my paraphrase), “You can’t take someone deeper if they learn the basics but rebel against God”, which goes along with what he said a few sentences earlier in 5:11-14 (my paraphrase), “It’s hard for me to take you Hebrew Christians deeper because many of you don’t have the basics down yet even though you should have them down pat by now; you’re stuck in a cycle of immaturity.” Both of these ruts are dangerous.

When we put Paul’s statements about rebellious former Christians into context, we see that Paul’s overall point is about the importance and the difficulty of graduating from the “basics” phase into the “deeper” phase without rebelling or getting stuck in immaturity. Paul then warns *both* groups of people (those stuck in *either* rut, rebellion or immaturity), that God expects us to *do something* with what we’ve learned, to *grow* and produce *good fruit* as a result of what we learn, and if we don’t, there are severe consequences (vs. 7-8, which will talk about in a moment).

Paul’s point with this whole passage is that immature people need to come out of immaturity before they can produce the good fruit one would naturally expect from all they’ve been taught (5:11-6:3, 7), and openly rebellious people need to come out of open rebellion in order to produce the good fruit one would naturally expect from all they’ve been taught (6:4-7). It is impossible for both groups to produce the fruit God expects “while” they are in their current state.

So this passage does not say that it is impossible for an openly rebellious former Christian to repent (ever), it just says that it’s impossible to bring such a person to repentance “while” they’re in open rebellion. This is not rocket science.

But now let’s look at the way a typical Bible version in the bookstore translates it:

(Vs. 4) “For in the case of those who have been enlightened...” (Vs. 6) “...and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” (NASB)

The word “since” used by the NASB gives a completely different meaning to the statement than the word “while” used by The Concordant Version! The word “since” makes it sound like it’s impossible – ever! – for a such a person to repent! Thankfully, the NASB, to its credit, puts a note next to the word “since”, and in the liner note it says “Or *while*”. Thank you NASB for at least alerting us to this alternate translation!

Why did the translators of the NASB choose “since” rather than “while”? Because the meaning of the verse when it contains the word “since” matches up with their preconceived belief in eternal punishment. But as soon as you translate it “while” instead, the verse ceases to be a proof text for eternal punishment!

This is just another classic example of how Bible translators often make vitally important choices *based on their preconceived beliefs*. This is why it is so important to strictly obey The Rule of Grammar and make sure we properly understand all the pertinent translation issues before trying to interpret.

Unfortunately, most English Bibles you’ll find in the bookstore do not even provide an additional note like the NASB does. Reading it in those versions, this verse looks like a proof text for eternal punishment, when in reality it is nothing of the sort when a vital translation issue is taken into account.

It’s bad enough that most English Bible versions do not even provide a note to clarify the translation issue like the NASB does. But to make matters worse, people then continue reading to verses 7 and 8, which contrast ground that produces fruit with ground that produces thorns and ends up being burned. The Catholic afterlife mindset kicks in and people think, “Hell!” as soon as they see the word “burned”. But the passage says nothing about hell or conscious death. It simply talks about being burned. Taking The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture and what you’ve learned in this book into account, this is obviously talking about people’s corpses being destroyed in the physical Gehenna fire in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium, and/or the physical lake of fire after the white throne judgment (after the millennium). If a person who knows God falls away and enters a state of rebellion, and dies in that state of rebellion, they will be resurrected into a mortal body after the millennium to be judged at the white throne judgment, and they will then be given capital punishment and their corpse will be destroyed in the physical lake/pond of fire. Or, if such a person happens to live through the end of this current age into the beginning of the millennium (they will obviously miss the rapture), they will be sentenced to capital punishment and their corpse will be destroyed in the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem. Then, after the millennium, they will be resurrected into a mortal body to be judged at the white throne judgment of Christ in Jerusalem, and will be given capital punishment (again, this will obviously be their “second death”) and their corpse will be destroyed in the physical lake/pond of fire. (Probably in the same location as the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium, see Chapter 5 of this book.)

None of this is rocket science if you have the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days and assume death is unconscious and these fires will be physical fires that destroy corpses. It is easy to see how people with a Catholic afterlife mindset read the idea of hell and eternal punishment into this passage (especially when most English Bibles give the reader no clue as to the vital translation issue), but it is just as easy to see that when the key translation issue is taken into account, this passage has nothing to do with conscious death, hell, or eternal punishment. So the referee for us is the rest of the testimony of Scripture,

which clearly tells us death is unconscious and all mankind will eventually be reconciled to God (and this has already been accomplished in principle by the cross).

Some people might get hung up on the phrase in verse 8, “it is disqualified and near a curse, whose consummation is burning” (Concordant). First let’s talk about the fact that some versions (including the NASB) use the word “worthless” instead of “disqualified”. The reason some Bible translators use the less accurate word “worthless” here is because it matches up with their mindset. You see, in the “Catholic afterlife” version of Christianity, *people who don’t believe the right thing become worthless the moment they die*. It is amazing to me how “Catholic afterlife” Christianity treats people as infinitely valuable...until the moment they die without believing the right thing. (Even if they never heard the right thing! Even if they never heard the gospel!) As soon as a person dies without believing the right thing (even if they never heard it!), “Catholic afterlife” Christianity instantly changes their evaluation of that person’s worth from being infinitely valuable to being utterly worthless. How can a split second – the moment a person passes from life to death – make such a big change in a human being’s value? How can they be infinitely valuable one moment, and utterly worthless the next? How can a precious human being go in one split second from having infinite value to having no value except as kindling for God’s inner need to torture him/her by fire?

This is the same type of hypocrisy shown by the Pro-Choice movement when they claim that in the few moments it takes for a baby to pass from inside the womb to outside the womb, it suddenly goes from being a worthless entity whose death would not matter one iota, to a valuable human being who should not be killed. Folks, a human being’s value does not change within a few moments as something outside of their control occurs! Yet that is what the Pro-Choice movement and the Catholic version of the afterlife ask us to believe.

You see, “Catholic afterlife” Christianity loves people as long as they come to the knowledge of Christ in this lifetime, in this current age. If you tell a “Catholic afterlife” Christian that you led a dying person to the Lord 10 minutes before they passed away, they will rejoice with you exceedingly. But what if your car had broken down on the way to the hospital and the person died before you had a chance to share the gospel with them? Suddenly the person is utterly worthless and their only use is as kindling for God’s inner need to torture people by fire. What of all the people in foreign countries that missionaries failed to reach in time? What of the people in villages in Africa that died 2 days before the missionaries arrived? They are worthless, nothing but kindling for God’s inner need to torture people eternally. Yet those that hear the gospel *after* the missionaries arrive are infinitely valuable. The difference between utterly worthless and infinitely valuable is how fast the missionaries’ steam ship crossed the ocean. Folks, this is the kind of nonsense land the Catholic version of the afterlife asks us to live in.

You see, the amount of time a person has to live in this age before they die, and whether they hear the gospel or not, is usually *out of their control*. Romans 10:14 says, “*How*

then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?” Here Scripture tells us plainly that it is impossible for a person to call on Christ and be saved without hearing the gospel. (Romans 1:18-32 tells us that mankind is without excuse for sin because of the testimony of nature, and thus we are all deserving of the wages of sin, death. But that does not change the fact that it is necessary to hear the gospel in order to be saved. Observing nature is not enough to get saved. One must hear the gospel, see Romans 10:14.) Yet the Catholic version of the afterlife lumps those who never heard the gospel into the same category as those who have heard the gospel and rejected it; both supposedly get the same punishment – to be kindling for God’s inner need to torture people by fire eternally.

Thankfully, we don’t have to live in such nonsense land because the Catholic version of the afterlife is totally unscriptural and is nothing but pagan hogwash. Thankfully, the Bible tells us that eventually everyone *will* hear the gospel, swear allegiance to God, bow their knees in worship to Him, and confess Jesus as Lord (Is. 45:23-24, which we know will be fulfilled at the white throne judgment because in Rom. 14:10-11 Paul quotes it immediately after mentioning the judgment seat).

Young’s Literal Translation and The Concordant Version do not translate this word in Hebrews 6:8 as “worthless”. Young’s Literal translates it “is disapproved of”. The Concordant Version makes it clear that such a person will be “*disqualified*”. Disqualified from what? From inheriting the kingdom – from being alive during the millennium and New Jerusalem ages. Of course this has nothing to do with eternity, but merely those two ages (see Chapter 3 of this book). Such a person will not receive “eonian life” but rather “eonian chastisement”; they will be dead during the millennium (their first death), they will resurrected to be chastised and corrected at the white throne judgment (Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11), and they will die again and remain dead during the New Jerusalem age (their second death). Paul tells us what will happen after that in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (particularly verses 24-28).

Yet some people might try to insist that if a person “ends up” being burned or if their “consummation” (the end result of their actions) is burning, then there can be nothing beyond that, no hope, no redemption.

The problem with this claim is that in both English and Greek, the words “end” and “consummation” (whichever way you want to translate it) are often used in such a way that *does not* refer to a *final* end, but simply refers to an end to a *phase or stage* or *the result of a particular action*. The most natural sounding way to say this, to a modern English speaker, is the way the NASB translates it, “ends up”. We talk this way all the time without referring to the *final* or *eternal* end of anything. For example, if you and I were watching a basketball game, I could turn and say to you, “Boy, if Bobby Ballplayer keeps throwing his body around recklessly like that trying to get every loose ball, he’s going to end up injured.” Do I mean that the *final end of his physical state, forevermore*, will be a state of injury? Of course not. I

simply mean that *the result of his actions* will be injury. It is an unstated assumption that his injury could possibly heal eventually and he could possibly play basketball again.

The New Testament uses this same Greek word (consistently translated “consummation” by The Concordant Version) a couple of other times that shed light on its meaning. One instance is in 1 Corinthians 15:24 when it refers to the consummation of God’s plan for the ages. It is obviously not referring to the end of everything or the end of humanity, but simply the consummation of a certain phase in God’s plan for humanity (His plan for five ages/eons). This “consummation” is actually the beginning of the best part of humanity’s experience, for at this point God will become “all in all” (vs. 28)! Another instance is in Hebrews 9:26 where Christ’s work on the cross is referred to as “the consummation of the ages”. (In this instance the NASB, like the Concordant Version, translates it “consummation”.) The cross was obviously not the final end of the ages. It is the “consummation” of the ages in the sense that it was the key moment at which God reconciled all humanity to Himself in principle. (Not just in principle, in reality, but it will take a while for all humanity to come to this knowledge and for it to play itself out in all mankind’s experience.)

How amazing that *both* the cross and the final moment of God’s plan for the ages are referred to as “the consummation” of the ages! The cross accomplished the reconciliation and salvation of all mankind *in principle* (in reality, but before mankind understood it, see also Col. 1:16-20), and at the final moment of God’s plan for the ages the reconciliation and salvation of all mankind will be accomplished in *full reality* (all mankind will by then understand and know that they are reconciled to God through the cross, because they will have heard the gospel at the white throne judgment – see Is. 45:23 & Rom. 14:10-11; and the culmination of God’s plan for the ages will occur when they are permanently saved not only from sin but also from its wages death as they are resurrected – “vivified” – out of their “second death” into immortal/incorruptible bodies so that death can be permanently abolished and God can be “all in all” – see 1 Cor. 15:20-28). Oh, it just makes me want to shout for joy!

So we see that this word “end” or “consummation”, both in Greek and English, does not necessarily refer to the final end, or the very end, or the eternal end of anything. Thus Hebrews 6:8 cannot at all be proven to refer to eternal punishment. This verse is simply saying the same thing the Bible says in many other places – people who rebel against God in this current age are going to be resurrected into mortal bodies to be judged at the white throne judgment, where they will swear allegiance to God (Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11) but (because the wages of sin is death) they will receive capital punishment and have their corpses thrown into the physical lake/pond of fire; they will remain dead during the New Jerusalem age, and at the consummation of God’s plan will be “vivified” into immortal/incorruptible bodies as death is abolished and God becomes “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Eph. 1:10, Rom. 8:20-21, 11:32-36, etc.)

So we see that when properly translated and interpreted (when we're careful to follow The Rule of Grammar and The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture), Hebrews 6:4-8 cannot be proven to have anything to do with hell or eternal punishment. Rather, it matches up with and reinforces/restates the same truths and warnings found elsewhere in Scripture about missing out on the millennium and New Jerusalem age by being dead during those two ages. (By getting capital punishment and having your corpse thrown in a physical fire in/near Jerusalem, after the white throne judgment – and at the beginning of the millennium too if you happen to live through the end of this current age in a state of rebellion against God.)

Now would be an appropriate time to bring a bit more clarity to a subject that frequently confuses Christians who have been taught the Catholic version of the afterlife – the transition of power that will occur at the end of this age when Jesus takes over physical rulership of the earth and begins His millennial reign, and how His warnings about the Gehenna fire fit into that.

Additional helpful information about the transition between this current age and the millennium, and the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium

You will notice that there are several areas of Scripture where the Catholic version of the afterlife causes modern Christians' thinking to be, for lack of a better word, fuzzy. Jesus' warnings to Israel about fire are a classic example of this. Many Christians read through the gospels in kind of a fog of confusion. For one thing, they don't understand anything that I taught you in Chapter 9 of this book about how Jesus' earthly ministry to Israel was still under the Law of Moses (because He hadn't died yet, see Matt. 23:1-3). So they try to lump every statement Jesus made into the same doctrinal soup as Paul's later statements after the cross, and get confused.

Then they read Jesus' warnings about fire, and they feel a vague sense of fear and dread creep over them because they've been taught these are warnings about hell. They never stop to figure out the Scriptural details of *exactly what fire Jesus was referring to (no one points out to them that Jesus was quoting Is. 66:23-24 about future events on earth)*. They never study it in enough detail to discover that *the "Gehenna fire event" Jesus was warning the Israelites about will occur after the rapture, on earth!*

Then they read about the "sheep and goats" event in Matthew 24:31-46 and the "Depart from Me!" event in Matthew 7:21-23, and they feel more vague fear and dread. They don't study the details enough to realize that both these passages refer to the same event that *will occur after the rapture, at the beginning of the millennium, on earth*, and that it has nothing to do with separating Christians from non-Christians (the rapture is going to do that, there will not be any conversations going on!), but rather is the event where those who missed the rapture will be divided into two groups – very evil non-Christians separated

from less evil non-Christians – at the beginning of the millennium. (The very evil people will be given capital punishment and their corpses thrown into the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem – see Is. 66:23-24. Everyone else will be allowed to live on into the millennium; they will have children and die, etc. These will be the people we will rule over in the millennium. I'll explain more about this in a moment.)

And of course many people are not aware of the verb tense in Matthew 24:35 (and a few other similar statements Jesus made) which reveals that Jesus was giving Israel a chance to see the kingdom come to earth in that generation 2,000 years ago. (They did not meet the conditions so it didn't happen back then, but that doesn't change the fact that Jesus was giving them a chance to see it come, and was giving them appropriate warnings about the beginning of the next age if it did come back then.) So many modern Christians cannot comprehend why Jesus would warn Israelites 2,000 years ago about a fire at the beginning of the millennium that hasn't even happened yet. A major knowledge gap (filled in by what I taught you in Chapter 9 of this book) prevents them from getting clarity about Jesus' warnings to Israel regarding fire, and keeps them in fuzzy thinking.

So we see that there are several gaps in the understanding of many modern Christians that prevent them from “solving” many things about Scripture and God that don't seem to make any sense. Unfortunately, most Christians think they know pretty much everything important there is to know about God and the Bible, just because they've sat in church for a while. (I know this, because I used to think that way too; but there were certain things I couldn't figure out, and I finally got around to asking God about them. Thankfully, He answered me and kept His promise in John 16:13 and 7:17.) Ask a typical modern Christian, “Are you very confident that you know exactly what happens to people when they die?” and they will confidently answer you with the Catholic version of the afterlife. But quote them John 3:13 (“No man has ascended into heaven”) and ask them what happened to Enoch and Elijah...confused silence. Quote them Daniel 12:13, or 1 Corinthians 11:32, or Hebrews 11:35, and ask them why these heroes of faith will not get their reward until the rapture, and why they placed their hope in the resurrection rather than reward/punishment immediately upon death, and you will get nothing but a furrowed brow for an answer. Ask them, “Why should I willingly love and serve a God who has an inner need to see billions of people tortured continually without end?” Watch them scratch their heads and fumble around for an answer. *Christianity does not know as much as they think they know about these vitally important subjects. The Catholic version of the afterlife has confused them and they don't even know it.*

You see, the Catholic version of the afterlife forces people into fuzzy thinking because it requires ignoring many plain statements of Scripture and repeatedly asks us to believe things that don't make any logical sense. You've seen many examples of this exposed throughout this book. The “sheep and goats”/“Depart from Me!” event is another classic example. Catholic afterlife Christians will read about the “sheep and goats” and “Depart from Me!” event as described by Jesus, and they will register in their minds that there is a significant amount of conversation going on at this event. But at the same time

they vaguely assume this event is about separating Christians from non-Christians. They never stop to do any specific, logical, common sense critical thinking. The Catholic version of the afterlife implanted in their brains prevents them from stopping to ask the simple, obvious question: *The rapture is the event that is going to separate the Christians from the non-Christians...so...is all this conversation going to be occurring at the rapture? Is the “sheep and goats”/ “Depart from Me!” event the same event as the rapture? If that was the case, then there would have to be a lot of conversation going on at the rapture! That doesn’t seem to make any sense...what am I missing here?*

If Christians would stop to ask this simple, obvious question, it would cause them to begin seeking more clarity. It would cause them to study to find out more specifics about exactly when the “sheep and goats” and “Depart from Me!” event will occur, and exactly what it will consist of. But the Catholic version of the afterlife keeps them in Fuzzy Land, without even attempting to find more clarity. The Catholic version of the afterlife silently yells in their brain, *“Even if something makes no sense (such as the idea of a bunch of conversation going on at the rapture), don’t think or study too hard, don’t question anything you’ve been taught. Better just to stay in Fuzzy Land. At least it’s comfortable, even if a whole bunch of things about it make no sense. After all, so many respectable Christian leaders can’t possibly have been so wrong about such an important subject for so many centuries. It just can’t be.* (Imagine if everyone affected by the Protestant Reformation in the 1600s would have thought this way. We’d still be praying to dead saints and paying money so our dead loved ones have a better time in purgatory.)

I’m not trying to insult Christians who are stuck in the Catholic afterlife mindset – after all, I was one of them for many years. What I’m trying to do is point out the vital importance of studying until you gain clarity rather than remaining in Fuzzy Land. If you have to stay in Fuzzy Land to hold on to your viewpoint, there’s a good chance your viewpoint is wrong, or that you don’t understand certain key aspects of the issue.

So let’s examine exactly when the “sheep and goats”/“Depart from Me!” event will occur, and exactly what it will consist of. Because you’ve already read the rest of this book, enough of the knowledge gaps in your brain have been filled in to where you can now fully understand this event, and experience no confusion or fuzzy thinking or vague dread whatsoever when reading Jesus’ warnings to Israel about fire.

The first thing to understand about these passages is that the people who “depart” from Jesus, and the “goats”, will simply be killed and their corpses thrown into a physical fire. As I explained in detail earlier in Chapter 2 of this book, Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 in reference to the fire that will burn in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of His earthly reign. This tells us that the fire at the beginning of the millennium will be a physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem into which dead corpses will be thrown. Every time you see a warning about fire in the Gospels, this the fire that is being referred to. Some might say there could be one or two instances when it’s referring to the physical fire that will destroy corpses after the white throne judgment (see Chapter 5 of this book). But either way, it is always a *physical fire on earth* being referred to.

These passages do not mention any such thing as spirit/nebulous fire, nor does any other passage in Scripture. In order to get the idea of a nebulous spirit-fire from this passage or from any other passage in Scripture, you would have to add something into the Bible that is not there at all, you'd have to blatantly discard the Bible's clear definition of death (unconsciousness), and you'd have to blatantly contradict Isaiah 66:23-24 (which clearly talks about physical events on this physical earth) and Jesus' quotation of it (Mk. 9:48) in reference to this physical earthly fire and the events surrounding it. The only reason modern Christians think the Bible refers to nebulous spirit-fire is because they are adding an assumption on top of the Bible's "physical fire passages" that a Godly person in Bible days would never have dreamed of making. Godly people in Bible days would never have dreamed of the idea that the Gehenna fire or the fire after the white throne judgment could be anything but physical fires. Such a thought would have never crossed their minds, for they assumed (correctly) that death was unconscious just as their Bible (what we now call the Old Testament) clearly teaches.

Nor is there any mention in these passages of anything happening forever or for eternity. If you see the phrase "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25:46, it is a blatant and ridiculous mistranslation of the Greek "eonian chastening" which means "chastening that has to do with an age or ages".

Also remember that in Matthew 13:40-42, another parallel passage to the ones we are examining, the Greek text does not say "*in that place* (in the fire) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" or "*where* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth". It only says "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Some translators creatively add the phrase "in that place" or the word "where" because it fits with their pagan/Catholic-inherited idea that this fire is somehow a nebulous spirit-fire and that the people in the fire will be conscious. But Scripture does not say that people will be crying and upset in the fire, it just says that people will be crying and upset...either before they are killed and their corpses are thrown in the fire, or this could refer to friends/relatives who are sad that their loved ones are going to be killed or have been killed. It is very important that we refuse to add ideas to Scripture that it does not state, and refuse to fill in details about a passage from our imaginations (or Catholic tradition), but instead let the rest of Scripture fill in the blanks for us. In this case, Jesus' quotation of Isaiah 66:23-24 fills in the blanks for us. This is a *physical fire on earth*. (If you want to argue that the moon shines in hell, that the Sabbath is observed in hell, and that "all flesh" – all physical mankind – can look upon "corpses" in hell, then go ahead, but I won't join you in Nonsense Land.)

Once we realize that the people who "depart" from Jesus and the goats will simply be killed (what we'd call physical death, what the Bible just calls death) and their corpses thrown into an "eonian" physical fire (a fire that "has to do with an age" - no such thing as eternal punishment mentioned in this passage), we can then begin to properly and fully understand this sheep/goats/"Depart-from-Me!" event (Matt. 7:21-23 and the various parallel passages that describe it found in Jesus' preaching to Israel as recorded in the

Gospel books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). When you see Jesus warning about fire, this is the event He is talking about.

The next thing we must understand about this "depart-from-Me"/sheep-goats-separation event is its timing. When exactly is it going to happen? *It is going to happen at the beginning of the millennium, when Jesus enters into His earthly kingdom* (immediately after He takes over rulership of the earth by force, see Rev. 19:11-18, 20:1-6). How do we know this?

Well, at the beginning of the sheep/goats passage, Jesus says, "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him...*" (Matt. 25:31-32)

The key words here are "comes", "sit on His throne", and "nations". "Comes" can only refer to Jesus coming from heaven to earth. When He comes to earth, He will "sit on His glorious throne" and all the "nations" will be gathered before Him. "Nations" seems to imply the nations of the earth. (Are there nations anywhere else?) And of course all this matches up perfectly with Acts 1:6 (which makes it clear Jesus and the disciples were expecting the kingdom to come to earth) and Matthew 6:10 ("Your kingdom come... *on earth* as it is in heaven"). This is not confusing. This is clearly referring to the very beginning of Jesus' reign over the earth, what we today call "the millennium".

Let's point out the obvious here: *The rapture will have already occurred by the time Jesus "comes" to earth and "sits on His glorious throne"*. The rapture is going to occur during (toward the end of) this current age (no one I know of argues that it will occur at the beginning of the millennium). And no one I know of specifically claims that Jesus is going to sit on His throne on earth at the rapture. The rapture is obviously not the same event as Jesus "coming" and "sitting on His glorious throne" so that "all the nations" can be "gathered before Him". None of the Bible's descriptions of the rapture event contain anything about Jesus sitting on His throne and gathering all the nations, but instead describe Jesus appearing in the sky (e.g. Matt. 24:29-31) and Christians being gathered to Him "in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). Obviously, Christians being gathered to Jesus "in the air" (both the Christians and Jesus being in the sky while everyone else is on earth!) cannot possibly be the same event as all nations being gathered before Jesus' throne! And are we to believe that this lengthy conversation between Jesus and the nations is going to occur at the rapture? The Bible's descriptions of the rapture say nothing about any conversation; how would the conversation occur – would the nations get a big megaphone so the sound can reach Jesus in the air, and vice-versa? But wait...at the sheep/goats event Jesus is sitting on His throne, not in the air! Folks, the details of the rapture event and the sheep/goats event do not match up at all; they cannot be the same event.

Yet many Christians fuzzily think of this sheep/goats passage as basically the same event as the rapture! They think of it as a separation of Christians from non-Christians! But this cannot be so! The *rapture* is going to separate the Christians from the non-Christians!

Why would the sheep/goats event need to separate the Christians from the non-Christians? That's what the rapture is for!

So why do modern Christians get confused and fuzzily equate the sheep/goats event with the rapture, when the details of those two events are clearly totally different from each other?

The first thing that confuses them is the fact that Jesus uses the term "sheep" in this passage. This might tend to automatically trigger the thought that Jesus is talking about Christians, because at a different time He used the analogy of sheep to describe His followers (John 10:27). But there is no rule of the universe that says you can't use the analogy of sheep in two different ways. In the sheep/goats passage Jesus was *not* using the term "sheep" to talk about His followers, but simply to refer to people who were relatively good compared to the goats. You see, in John 10:27 He called His followers "*My* sheep". In that passage, the word "My" makes it clear He's talking about His followers. *But in the sheep/goats passage He does not call these "sheep" His own!* Instead, He just calls them "*the* sheep", and contrasts them with "the goats". And we know for certain that these sheep and goats are *not* His followers because Jesus *asks them how they treated "My brethren"!*

So the sheep/goats event will not be a separation of Christians from non-Christians. (That's what the rapture is for!) Rather, it will be an event at the beginning of the millennium when Jesus separates the people who missed the rapture into two groups. Jesus calls these two groups "the sheep" and "the goats", using these two animals as an appropriate analogy to contrast their respective traits. The sheep will be those who treated His "brethren" (Christians) well; the goats will be those who treated His "brethren" (Christians) badly. Before we talk about exactly what will happen to each of these two groups, let's clarify another couple of things that tend to confuse modern Christians about this sheep/goats passage.

Another thing that sometimes confuses modern Christians about this passage and tricks them into fuzzily thinking of it as a separation of Christians from non-Christians, is the fact that "the sheep" get to enter "the kingdom". When a Catholic-afterlife trained Christian hears "the kingdom", they think "heaven". But as I demonstrated clearly in Chapters 3 and 9 of this book, that is *not* what Jesus and His disciples meant when they talked about "the kingdom". They used that term to refer to Jesus' reign over *the earth*. (See Acts 1:6, Matt. 6:10, etc.) So because many modern Christians are confused about the meaning of "the kingdom", and think of it mistakenly as "going to heaven", they read of "the sheep" getting to enjoy "the kingdom" and they assume it must be talking about Christians going to heaven! But this passage cannot be talking about Christians going to heaven, because that's what the rapture is for! (And remember, not long after the rapture we will return with Christ to rule over the earth with Him – see Rev. 19:11-20:6, Acts 1:6, etc.) Again, the details of this sheep/goats event *do not match up at all* with the details of the rapture event.

The simple solution here is to realize that when Jesus talked about “the kingdom” He was talking about His reign over the earth. These “sheep” that get to enjoy the kingdom will not be going to heaven. They missed the rapture! Instead, they will simply be *allowed to live on into the millennium*.

To say that "the sheep" in this event are believers is to take the unwarranted liberty of transplanting a similar analogy used at another time (where Jesus talked about His followers as His sheep) and superimposing it upon this passage. This sheep/goats event is obviously a different event than the rapture. At the rapture Jesus is not going to sit down and have a conversation with everybody, and divide them and tell them why, etc. - it's just going to be believers taken up and meeting Jesus “in the air”, “in the clouds”. The rapture will already have occurred by the time this Matthew 25:31-46 sheep/goats event (which lines up with Rev. 19:11-16) occurs.

There is also a translation issue in many English Bibles that adds to the confusion about this passage. The NASB, for example, translates Jesus’ statement to “the sheep” as “Inherit the kingdom.” But “inherit” is not an accurate translation; The Concordant Version translates it “*Enjoy* the allotment of the kingdom.” In normal English, Jesus is saying to “the sheep”, “Enjoy the fact that you get to take part in the kingdom.” There is a big difference between *inheriting* something and merely *enjoying it*. The word “inherit” implies a legal right to something. “Enjoy” just means you get to enjoy it. These people will *not* “inherit” the kingdom, they will simply get to enjoy it.

And just because Jesus said the kingdom was “made ready” for them “from the foundation of the world” doesn’t mean that these people are Christians! It doesn’t say it was made ready *only* for them; obviously Christians & Godly people of old (those who take part in the rapture) will get to enjoy the kingdom too. Remember that God knows beforehand exactly who is going to live through the end of this age, and exactly which of those people are going to be “the sheep” who are allowed to live into the millennium for awhile (before dying a natural death). God has prepared and planned Jesus’ earthly kingdom ahead of time, for Christians of course, but there are also some people who miss the rapture who will be allowed to continue living for a while into the millennium, and God has planned that these people will get to enjoy Jesus’ kingdom reign too. (Otherwise, who would Christians reign over during the millennium?) They won’t get to enjoy it for as long as Christians of course, because Christians will be in immortal bodies, whereas these “sheep” who live through the end of this age will still be in mortal bodies and will die a natural death during the millennium.

Also remember that although these “sheep” will have taken the mark of the antichrist, missed the rapture, rebelled openly against God during the 5 Bowls of Wrath, etc., Jesus says that they will be those who *treated Christians (His “brethren”) well*. This is why Jesus will allow them to continue to live in the millennium! Here we see that God has a very fair sense of justice. Even though these “sheep” were not Christians themselves, they obviously had enough of a sense of decency and good works to treat Christians well. Keep

in mind that at the end of this age Christians will be persecuted and hated worldwide (Matt. 24:9); so these “sheep” who treated Christians (Jesus’ “brethren”) well will be those who went against the grain to a certain extent and treated Christians well instead of hating them like most of the rest of the world. God recognizes this, gives credit where credit is due, and thus Jesus will allow them to continue to live in the millennium.

We see that Jesus uses common sense with these people - He treats them fairly. They will get to stay alive and live on for a while during the millennium under His earthly rulership. They will have children, and eventually die. (The Old Testament prophecies that the average lifespan will increase significantly during the millennium; but keep in mind that the "life span increasing during the millennium" prophecy obviously will not apply to raptured Christians, who will already be in immortal bodies.) These will be the people we rule over during the millennium, and of whom it is prophesied in the OT that a person who dies at the age of 100 will be considered to have died young (Is. 65:20).

So that’s what happens to “the sheep”. What about “the goats”?

The "goats" will be killed and their corpses thrown in a fire in the Valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem for all to see (Is. 66:23-24). I keep mentioning Isaiah 66:23-24 because it is the key Scripture that tells us exactly what fire Jesus frequently warned the Israelites about. If you ignore the fact that Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 (a prophecy about physical events on earth) in one of His warnings about fire, you might be tempted to artificially superimpose the Catholic idea of hell and conscious death on top of Jesus’ “fire warnings”. However, not only does the rest of the Bible clearly teach unconscious death (see Chapter 4 of this book), but Jesus directly quoted an OT prophecy about physical events on earth (Is. 66:23-24) as part of one of His fire warnings! So when we follow The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture (taking into account the fact that Jesus quoted Is. 66:23-24 in one of His fire warnings) and The Rule of Silence (refusing to creatively add our own ideas but letting Is. 66:23-24 fill in the blanks for us), we can come to no other conclusion but that there will be a physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium where the corpses of those given capital punishment by Jesus (“the goats”) will be thrown.

(I explained in Chapter 9 of this book why Jesus warned Israelites about a fire at the beginning of the next age; He was giving them a chance to see the next age begin in their lifetimes.)

Don’t be confused by blatant mistranslations of the Greek word “eonian” in Matthew 25:41, 46, that you’ll see in some English Bibles. The Greek does not say “eternal fire” and “eternal punishment”. The Concordant Version translates these accurately as “eonian fire” and “chastening eonian”. Young’s Literal Translation translates them fairly accurately as an “age-during” fire and “punishment age-during”. This fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem will burn during the millennium as well as the New Jerusalem age.

This is why Jesus refers to it as “the eonian fire (fire that has to do with an age or ages), made ready for the Adversary and his messengers” (vs. 41 Concordant Version). (Satan and his angels – the Greek word usually translated “angels” is messengers, and the word “Satan” means “adversary”.) As I explained in Chapter 5 of this book, the “lake/pond” of fire (Rev. 20:14-15) will be the same fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that will burn during the millennium. Gehenna is a valley and will be a natural place for a “lake” or “pond” of fire. (And don’t forget the clear contrast between what will happen to human beings thrown in the lake/pond of fire – they will die for the second time, their “second death” – and what will happen to the false prophet, antichrist, Satan, and his angels when thrown there – they will be thrown their “alive” as non-human or not fully human beings.)

And don’t be confused by the fact that at the end of His description of this sheep/goats event, Jesus contrasts “the righteous” who will get “eonian life” with “the goats” who will get “eonian chastening”. The passage makes it clear that these “sheep” people are only “righteous” in the sense that they treated Christians (Jesus’ “brethren”) well. They are “righteous” when compared to the goats, and in a limited sense as defined by the passage itself. And “eonian life” simply means “life that has to do with an age or ages” (see Chapter 3 of this book). These “sheep” will get to continue living for a while in the next age (before they die a natural death), so it is perfectly accurate to say that they will get “eonian life”. It is also perfectly accurate to say that raptured Christians will get “eonian life”; but of course we will be in immortal bodies and thus will get to enjoy the entire 1,000 years (as well as the entire New Jerusalem age). The goats’ “eonian chastening” is that they will be dead during the entire millennium, and wake up at the white throne judgment, at which point they will realize they missed out on an awesome time in Jesus’ kingdom, which will be a chastening lesson for them, and will form an integral part of Jesus judging them at the white throne (Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11).

If we try to force this sheep/goats event as if it refers to a separation of Christians from non-Christians, we run into all the problems I’ve already described. The details of this event do not match up with the rapture at all. So don’t be confused by “the sheep” (it’s not Jesus’ sheep, it’s just people that are gentle and mild compared to stubborn “goats”), “the kingdom” (it’s not going to heaven, it’s Jesus’ reign on earth), “the righteous” (it’s not people who are righteous like Christians are, it’s just people who are righteous compared to the goats and in a limited sense defined by the passage, in that they treated Jesus’ “brethren” well), or “eonian” (it’s not eternal, it’s “having something to do with an age or ages”).

Some people might wonder if this sheep/goats event might be a description of the white throne judgment. But at the beginning of His description of the event Jesus clearly stated that it will occur “*when the Son of Man comes.*” The white throne judgment will not occur when Jesus comes, but will occur after the millennium when Jesus has already been on earth for over a thousand years. Also keep in mind that Jesus’ description of the sheep/goats event is part of a series of parables in Matthew 24 and 25 about the kingdom, which contain frequent statements about being on the alert for His coming, etc.; this

obviously does not fit with a white throne judgment timing, but fits perfectly with a beginning of the millennium timing.

Another passage about wicked people being thrown into fire at the beginning of the millennium, Matthew 13:37-43 and 47-50, confirms for us that this event is not the rapture, nor is it the white throne judgment. In this passage Jesus twice says this event will occur at "the conclusion of the age" (Concordant Version). The rapture will occur towards the end of this current age, but it is definitely not the conclusion of it. The conclusion of this current age will only occur when Jesus returns to rule the earth and "sits on His glorious throne" as described in Matthew 25:31.

Another thing I want to point out here is that the separation of the sheep and the goats in front of Jesus' glorious throne will be based entirely on their *actions*. We Christians are not going to take part in the rapture based on having a greater ratio of good deeds as compared to bad deeds, but based on our *faith* (Rom. 10:9-10). So this sheep/goats event cannot possibly be the same event as the rapture. Treating the two events as the same event, fuzzily in our minds, is not good Bible interpretation work. The details of the events simply do not match up Scripturally.

The solution, once again, is an accurate translation. The more accurate Concordant Version translates Jesus' statement to the people with more good deeds, "Enjoy the allotment of the kingdom made ready for you from the disruption of the world." In other words these people will not be "inheriting" the kingdom, which would imply getting something that is rightfully theirs, but instead will merely be "enjoying" an "allotment" of the kingdom - they get to keep on living into the millennium and enjoying Jesus' reign over the earth (which will obviously be far more pleasant than life in this age). God knew long ago that these particular people would be living into the millennium, and He prepared the kingdom from the foundation/disruption of the world, so Jesus' statement to these unbelievers who missed the rapture is perfectly accurate and appropriate.

I also want to make sure you don't get confused by the term "sons of the kingdom" in Matthew 13:38. This term *does* refer to Christians, because later in verse 43 Jesus quotes Daniel 12:2-3 about those who will be resurrected to life (at the rapture). This passage in Matthew 13 contrasts those who will take part in the rapture with the evil people who will get capital punishment at the beginning of the millennium. On the other hand, the sheep/goats passage in Matthew 25 contrasts the not-so-horrible people who missed the rapture but will get to live on into the millennium for a while, with evil people who will be given capital punishment. So we must be careful to realize that this passage in Matthew 13 *is not a perfect parallel passage* to the sheep/goats passage in Matthew 25. *The only parts that are parallel are the mention of what will happen to the evil people.* In the Matthew 13:37-43 passage Jesus is contrasting the tares (evil people specifically "sown" by Satan to do evil works in this age) and the wheat (people specifically "sown" by God in this age to do His work).

So if we look at the various passages that speak of this "sheep/goats" event, in order to avoid contradictions and logical problems, we must analyze them as follows:

Matthew 25:31-46 (the sheep/goats event) will occur when Christ "sits on His glorious throne", which does not match up with the rapture (which will occur "in the air" and "in the clouds"), but matches up with Revelation 19:11-16, the beginning of the millennium when Jesus will take over physical rulership of earth by force and reign over it. Here Jesus describes the separation of those who missed the rapture into two groups, according to their deeds and how they treated "these brethren of Mine" (Christians). Those who treated Christians well and generally had more good than bad deeds overall, will get to "enjoy" an "allotment" of the kingdom. Those who treated Christians badly and generally had more evil deeds than good overall, will die and their corpses thrown in a fire in the Valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem (see parallel passage Is. 66:23-24).

Matthew 13:47-50 (good fish vs bad fish) will occur at "the conclusion of the age" and also describes the separation of two groups of people according to their actions, this time using the analogy of "good fish" vs "bad fish", similar to the use of the analogy of "sheep" and "goats" in Matthew 25:31-46. Here again we see that the "bad fish" will be thrown into fire. (Note it does not say, "*In that place* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The phrase "in that place" is an invention/addition of some translators! In the Greek the phrase "in that place" is not there! The Concordant translates it accurately, "And they shall be casting them into a furnace of fire. There shall be lamentation and gnashing of teeth." Since Isaiah 66:23-24 makes it ultra-clear that this is a physical fire, and all of Scripture makes it clear that death is unconscious, it would be absurd for the Bible to say that there is weeping and gnashing of teeth in the fire. The accurate translation makes it clear that the weeping and gnashing of teeth is occurring, but it does not state exactly who or where. It will obviously be these people weeping and gnashing their teeth before they die and their corpses are thrown into the fire, and/or their loved ones weeping and gnashing their teeth. But there will be no weeping or gnashing of teeth in the fire, for that would require inventing the idea of conscious death and ignoring Is. 66:23-24.)

Matthew 13:37-43 (the wheat and the tares) contrasts "wheat" (those chosen or "sown" by God - see Eph. 1:4 - to do His work in this age) and "tares" (those chosen or "sown" by Satan - see Luke 4:5-6 and 2 Cor. 4:4 - to do his work in this age). The subject and purpose of this passage is slightly different than the other two passages we just mentioned. The purpose of this passage is not to contrast people who treat "these brethren of mine" well with those who treat "these brethren of Mine" badly, but rather to contrast "these brethren of Mine" or as this passage calls them "the wheat" or "the sons of the kingdom", with the "sons of the evil one" or "the tares". This passage states that at "the conclusion of the age" the "tares" (people who serve Satan by doing particularly evil deeds in this age) will be thrown into the fire. (Again, the phrase "in that place" is not present in the Greek when speaking of the weeping and gnashing of teeth!) Jesus then quotes Daniel 12:2-3, which is a prophecy about resurrection of some people to life, to talk about the wheat shining forth like the sun in the kingdom. So we have a contrast between the wheat

(God's handpicked servants) and the tares (Satan's handpicked servants). (And if you go read Daniel 12:2-3, don't be confused by the fact that it also mentions the resurrection of some people to disgrace and contempt in addition to the rapture. Typical of OT prophecies, this prophecy does not put things in chronological order or specific timing. Daniel 12:3 predicts the rapture and the resurrection of everybody else later at the white throne judgment, but because it's a typical OT prophecy it's not clear about the chronology or the timing.)

So, bottom line, we see that there are **three groups of people** mentioned in these three passages we just looked at:

1) The “wheat”, those chosen or "sown" by God in this age to do His work (also called "these brethren of Mine"), who will partake in the rapture and then shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God on earth

2) The “tares”/“goats”/“bad fish”, those chosen or "sown" by Satan in this age to do his work, whose actions are particularly evil and who do not treat "these brethren of Mine" well, who will be given capital punishment and their corpses thrown into a physical fire in the physical valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem (Is. 66:23-24)

3) The “sheep” or “good fish”, people who live through the end of this age whose actions are overall more good than bad (as contrasted to “goats” or “bad fish”), who treat "these brethren of Mine" relatively well, who will be permitted to live on into the millennium and will get to "enjoy" an "allotment" of the reign of Christ on earth.

I want to point out that a correct understanding of the “sheep/goats” “good fish/bad fish” event tells us something important: *God does look at unbelievers' actions, and their good actions do count for something and make a difference in God's eyes.* We also see this in the white throne judgment passage where it says people will be judged “according to their deeds”. Obviously good deeds are not enough to make up for sin or make us right with God, but at the same time it is not as though good deeds are worth nothing at all in God's eyes. This matches up with common sense - we all naturally think that a person's actions make a difference, and that a person should largely be judged by their actions. The actions of these unbelievers who live through the end of this age will make a difference as to whether they get to keep living into the millennium or not. I mention this because the false hell doctrine makes it seem as though all unbelievers are absolutely worthless and useless (worth nothing but to burn forever), as if a person's worth and value in God's eyes is based entirely on a person's beliefs, as though anyone who does not believe the right thing has no value or good qualities whatsoever, as if actions count for nothing and beliefs count for everything. But these passages about the sheep/goats/good fish/bad fish, along with the white throne judgment passage and a correct understanding of the rest of God's plan for unbelievers, show us that actions do matter, not in terms of making up for sin, but in the sense that God sees a person's actions and evaluates the person accordingly.

In other words, **God sees people through three filters**, in a sense. The first filter is **the blood of Jesus and His work on the cross**. God sees all humanity through this filter, through the knowledge that He has a good plan for them all eventually and has already accomplished this plan in principle through the cross, just as any good father sees his kids through the filter of love and "I would do anything for these kids and I will always love them no matter what, even if they make me mad sometimes because of their actions in a particular moment." (And God, as not just a loving Father but a sovereign powerful God as well, knows that He has the ability to eventually convince all mankind of His wisdom at the white throne judgment using the testimony of history and humanity's experience.) See Colossians 2:16-20 to see this filter in Scripture. The second filter is **whether a particular person has received knowledge of and has placed their faith in what Christ did on the cross yet, or not**. The third filter is **a person's actions**. God evaluates the actions of those who have already received knowledge of and faith for salvation in this age, in order to give them an appropriate level of reward after the rapture (1 Cor. 3:12-15). He evaluates the actions of those who have not received knowledge of and faith for salvation yet, in order to judge them appropriately later at the white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-13), and in the case of those unbelievers who will live through the end of this age, in order to decide whether to let them live into the millennium or not (Matt. 25:31-46).

So we see that these "sheep" or "good fish" people and their descendants are the people that Christians and Israelites are going to rule over during the millennium (Rev. 20:4-6).

The "goats" or "bad fish" or "tares", on the other hand, will not be allowed to continue to live. These will be people who did not treat Christians well, and evil people (not your regular basically decent person who would be merely classified as a "sinner", but people who are corrupt and evil more than the norm according to Jesus' determination). These "goats" or "bad fish" will be killed and their corpses will be thrown into the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem (Is. 66:23-24). In other words, they'll get capital punishment.

This is the same event that Jesus talked about when He said in Matthew 7:22-23, *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord'...and then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"* What day is Jesus talking about, exactly? Well, it can't be the rapture. At the rapture there will be no time for any conversation or arguing with Jesus. Jesus is going to appear in the sky, in the clouds, and Christians are going to be caught up with Him there. Go read all the passages in Scripture that describe the rapture and you will see no record of any conversation taking place, and the circumstances and details of the event make it clear that there is no time or opportunity for any conversation or argument. This "many will say to Me Lord Lord" event cannot be the rapture!

So when will it occur? "On that day" refers to the same event as the "sheep/goats" or "good-fish/bad-fish" event. Scripture refers to Jesus' return to rule the earth and His

decision to throw evil people into the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium as “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (see Malachi 4:1-5). Some of these “goats” or “bad fish” will be people who formerly called themselves Christians or played church even though they really were not true Christians as evidenced by their actions. In reality they were corrupt, blatant hypocrites living an unrepentant lifestyle of dedication to sin (“practicing” sin). Some of these people will even have performed miracles by the grace and power of God! In other words they were good at playing church and even understood the things of God to some extent, gaining enough knowledge to operate in the gifts of the Spirit at times! But they will have missed the rapture because they were not truly saved. (Remember, being “saved” is not necessarily a requirement for doing miracles; the OT prophets did miracles before Jesus died on the cross, as did Jesus’ disciples.) When He sits on His throne at the beginning of the millennium to make decisions about the people that missed the rapture, Jesus will say to them, “Depart from Me” because in His determination and perfect wisdom, these people did more harm than good during the previous age, treated “these brethren of Mine” badly, and overall served Satan’s purposes blatantly, and He doesn’t want them around as negative influences during the millennium.

Why wouldn’t Jesus want them around during His reign over the earth? Because His reign must be marked by the exact opposite leadership and living environment of this current age. The millennium will have strictly-enforced, zero-tolerance anti-corruption laws. These laws will be enforced by Christians in immortal bodies like Jesus’ that can walk through walls (see Lk. 24:36). Jesus’ reign must be absolutely free of corruption, manipulative tactics, and exploitation, in order for humanity to be able to look back later at the white throne judgment and see the stark contrast between Jesus’ millennium reign and Satan’s reign over this current age.

These fake Christians who evidently were able to trick some people into thinking they were sincere Christians, will try their manipulative tactics on Jesus at the beginning of His reign. (“But Jesus, we went to church and even operated in the gifts of the Spirit!”) It won’t work. These manipulative tactics are the precise reason Jesus will not allow them to live on in the millennium.

So we see that all various types of “goats” – those who treated Christians badly and did very evil works, regardless of whether they played church or not – will get capital punishment at the beginning of the millennium. They will be killed and their corpses will be thrown in the physical fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem (Is. 66:23-24). Those who are allowed to keep living (the “sheep” or “good fish”) will watch it happen and will have a strong lesson burned into their brains: *“Jesus doesn’t like blatantly corrupt manipulative exploitative evil hypocrites, especially those that pretend to be good when really they’re rotten, and acting like that under His reign will get me killed. A new game is in town. In the past age it often paid to be corrupt. Not in this age! Not with Jesus running things!”* (See Is. 66:23-24).

Jesus does not necessarily want to kill everyone who missed the rapture when He begins to rule over the earth. He is going to do the logical, common sense thing: let the

decent ones live, and remove the corrupt ones. It may seem strange to us that Jesus would let many non-churchgoer unbelievers live on into the millennium, but kill many churchgoing unbelievers! But it is not strange at all. It is common sense. Jesus will divide these people who live through the end times into two groups ("sheep" and "goats", "good fish" and "bad fish") according to the simple common sense criteria of whether they treated others – especially Christians – well. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian or a good person any more than standing in a donut shop makes you a cop.

It makes perfect sense for Jesus to use how a person treated Godly people as the simple determining factor in whether a person is designated a "sheep" or a "goat". A generally decent person with decent motives (even if they are a sinner like all of us - e.g. the many unbelievers who help the poor in Africa) will not have any problem with true Christians, their moral values, etc., and will almost feel a kindred spirit with us even if they don't share our religious beliefs. On the other hand, people who live selfish, corrupt, exploitative, manipulative lives do not like Christians. Our very existence, our very presence, what we stand for, etc. convicts them, bothers their conscience, annoys them, etc. So Jesus will be operating in simple common sense when He uses a person's treatment of His "brethren" as the main determining factor in whether that person will be designated a "sheep" who gets to continue living, or a "goat" who gets capital punishment at the beginning of His earthly reign.

In conclusion, we see that modern Christians often get confused about the sheep/goats and "Depart from Me!" Scriptures, and experience a vague fear or dread when reading them ("Maybe this applies to me!"), because they have the vague idea in their heads that those passages have to do with separating Christians from non-Christians. They are confused because *they do not take even one split second to think about the timing of when these events will take place*, or the fact that *the rapture cannot possibly be the same event spoken of in the sheep/goats/depart-from-Me Scriptures*. If they were to think about the timing and details of when Jesus comes into His kingdom (when He begins to forcibly rule over the earth, Revelation 19:11-20:6), and then compare it to the timing and details of the rapture (earlier, before the very end of this age), they would realize that

a) *the rapture will occur before the sheep/goats/depart-from-Me event happens*, and

b) the sheep/goats/depart-from-Me event is *not about separating Christians from non-Christians* and has nothing to do with Christians at all, but will only involve those who missed the rapture and lived through the end of this age into Jesus' reign.

Always remember that both fire events in Scripture (the Gehenna fire in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium, and the lake/pond of fire after the white throne judgment) will occur *after the rapture*. These fire events have *nothing to do with Christians*. Also remember that these fire events have *nothing to do with hell or conscious death*. They will be physical fires where the corpses of dead people are thrown (see Is. 66:23-24 and Chapters 2, 4 and 5 of this book). When Jesus warned the Israelites about fire, He was referring to the Gehenna

fire in Jerusalem at the beginning of His earthly reign. This is proven by the fact that He quoted Isaiah 66:23-24 (a prophecy about physical events on earth) when giving one of His fire warnings. There is no reason to bring hell or conscious death to mind when reading Jesus' fire warnings to the Israelites; that would require creative invention and artificial addition of ideas from outside of Scripture.

Also remember the reason Jesus warned the Israelites about the Gehenna fire at the beginning of His earthly reign, even though His reign has still not begun over 2,000 years later, was because He was giving them a chance to see it begin in their lifetimes – see Chapter 9 of this book. At that time it was a perfectly appropriate warning to give them.

What about Hebrews 10:26-31?

This is another passage that some might carelessly assume refers to eternal punishment when it is taken out of context. The key parts of this passage are verses 26-27 and 31:

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries...It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Some people latch on to the phrase “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” and they think this means that Jesus' sacrifice no longer applies to a person who backslides from serving God. But to come to this conclusion you'd have to disobey The Rule of Context and The Rule of Culture. The immediate context of this statement is a long passage about how Christ's sacrifice on the cross has replaced the daily sacrifices made by the priests under the Law of Moses. Verses 9-12 say,

“He takes away the first (the burnt offerings and sacrifices of the Law of Moses) in order to establish the second (Christ's sacrifice on the cross). By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest (of the Law of Moses) stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time...”

Then verse 18 says, “Now where there is forgiveness of these things (the sins referred to in vs. 17), there is no longer any offering for sin.”

So we see Paul (the probable author of Hebrews) use this same phrase “there is no longer any offering for sin” in both verse 18 and verse 26 to say that the offerings of the Law of Moses are no longer necessary. It would be more clear in English to add the word “needed” to the phrase: “There is no longer any offering *needed* for sin” (because Jesus'

offering on the cross is the only offering needed, the offerings of the Law of Moses are no longer necessary).

Paul states this in verse 18 and then repeats it in verse 26, saying that if a person continues a lifestyle of sin after coming to know the Lord, *going back to the offerings of the Law of Moses will not provide a solution*, but instead *the solution is God's judgment* which Paul then describes in verses 29-31, referring to the white throne judgment. The white throne judgment will certainly be terrifying for a while for evil people, but let us remember that it will also result in “every tongue” swearing “allegiance” to God and saying “Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength”. (See Is. 45:23-24 as quoted by Paul in Rom. 14:10-11 where he mentions the judgment seat and then immediately quotes Is. 45:23.)

So this passage, when read in light of its immediate context and the larger context of the entire testimony of Scripture, says nothing about hell or conscious death or eternal punishment (read the passage carefully, it says nothing about any such thing), but is explained perfectly by (and matches up perfectly with) both its immediate context and other specific statements in Scripture. It is simply saying that *the solution* for a person who keeps living a lifestyle of sin after coming to know the Lord is *not to go back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses* (which are ineffectual, unnecessary since Christ's death, and never did take away sin anyway) but instead *the only solution for such a person is God's judgment, which will result in the rebellious person being corrected so as to stop trampling on the only effectual sacrifice – Christ's work on the cross.*

Let me show you how this passage specifically refers to the white throne judgment, where rebellious people will receive corrective judgment. A modern hell-minded Christian will not get this from Hebrews 10:27 and 30-31, but that is only because they ignore the Old Testament prophetic passage quoted in verse 27 (Is. 26:11), and they ignore Isaiah 45:23-24 and Romans 14:10-11, which match up perfectly with the Isaiah 26 passage. Let me explain how Hebrews 10:26-31 clearly refers to the white throne judgment, and how the unstated assumption of the passage (made clear to us by the OT prophetic passage it quotes) is that God's judgment will be the solution for rebellious people (as opposed to going back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses, which is no solution at all).

The phrase “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” in Hebrews 10:27 is a direct quote of Isaiah 26:11. When the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, the Old Testament passage often gives us vital information to “fill in the blanks”! So it's important to check the Old Testament passage being quoted, rather than “filling in the blanks” with creative ideas from outside of Scripture! The previous verse, Isaiah 26:10, says, “Though the wicked is shown favor, he does not learn righteousness”, and the verse before that, Isaiah 26:9 says, “For when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.”

This passage in Isaiah is saying that the solution for rebellious people is God's judgment! It underlines this point by telling us that without God's judgment rebellious

people continue to rebel. It's saying *God's judgment is absolutely vital for a rebellious person to learn righteousness*. And Hebrews 10:27 quotes this passage!

Folks, let's use Scripture to interpret Scripture! When Hebrews 10:27 quotes Isaiah, it is quoting a passage about how the people of the earth will learn righteousness! It is talking about a solution for rebellious people. It is saying the solution for a rebellious person is not to go back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses (which were never really a solution anyway), but rather the solution is the white throne judgment where the formerly rebellious people of earth will learn righteousness. (Of course, this judgment will be a terrifying experience for rebellious people, at least at first, but will eventually result in them swearing allegiance to God – see Is. 45:23-24 as quoted by Paul in Rom. 14:10-11.)

Let's look at another fascinating thing about the passage in Isaiah quoted by Hebrews 10:27. A few verses later, in the first verse of Isaiah 27, we get confirmation of exactly when this corrective judgment will happen: *"In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent...even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea."* If you know your Bible you know that Satan is referred to as a serpent and as a dragon in the sea (see Rev. 12:17, 13:1, 20:2 for example). Lo and behold, the book of Revelation tells us that immediately before the white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-13) Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 10:10)!

So this prophetic passage in Isaiah predicts that the people of earth will learn righteousness through God's judgment – when? – at the white throne judgment, at the same time as the serpent/dragon is punished! (Rev. 20:10-13, Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11)

So we see that Is. 26:9-11, 27:1 = Rev. 20:10-15 = Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11.

Isaiah 45:23-24 says that "every tongue will swear allegiance to God", and in Romans 14:10-11 the apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 immediately after mentioning the judgment seat. (Also see Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 10:9-10.) This tells us that the white throne judgment – the "judgment seat" as Paul puts it – will result in the reconciliation of all mankind to God. At the white throne judgment, "every tongue will swear allegiance to God", "confess Jesus as Lord", and say, "Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength." And as I explained earlier in this book, after the white throne judgment these people will die for the second time (their "second death"), their corpses will be thrown in the lake/pond of fire, and they'll remain dead during the New Jerusalem age before being "vivified" into immortal bodies at the consummation of God's plan for the ages, at which point death will be abolished and God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

So it is clear that **Hebrews 10:26-31**, by quoting the prophetic passage in **Isaiah 26:9-11, 27:1** (which matches up perfectly with **Revelation 20:10-15, Isaiah 45:23-24 and Romans 14:10-11**) *is referring to both the corrective white throne judgment and the "second death" in the lake of fire* (which as I explained earlier in this book will be an additional lesson for these formerly rebellious people). Folks, *the white throne judgment and the second death in the lake of fire*

are the corrective solution for rebellious people, not their eternal damnation or some such pagan idea!

Hebrews 10:26-31 is talking about the solution for rebellious people. It is contrasting this effective solution with an ineffective solution (going back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses). This perfectly matches up with and supports the point of the rest of this passage in Hebrews; the whole point of the passage is about how the Law of Moses is not an effective solution.

So when we let Scripture interpret Scripture we get a perfect jigsaw puzzle. Putting **Isaiah 26:9-11 and 27:1** together with **Hebrews 10:26-31** (vs. 27 quotes Is. 26:11) and **Revelation 20:10-15**, and then adding in **Isaiah 45:23-24** and **Romans 14:10-11**, we see a clear picture: Rebellious people will have a “terrifying” experience (including “severe punishment”) at the white throne judgment that will result in them “learning righteousness”, “swearing allegiance to God”, and saying “only in the Lord are righteousness and strength”; after which they will be killed (their “second death”) and their corpses will be thrown in the lake/pond of fire to be “consumed”. (And let us not forget to add in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, particularly verses 24-28, which explains what happens after that. We could also add in other puzzle pieces such as James 1:18, 1 Timothy 4:10, Romans 8:20-21 and 11:32-36, Ephesians 1:10, John 12:32, Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 10:9-10 etc. to fill out the picture of the end result.)

When we follow The Rule of Context and The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture, putting together the “puzzle pieces” I listed in the previous paragraph and letting them “fill in the blanks” for us rather than artificially superimposing ideas about conscious death or hell from outside of Scripture, Hebrews 10:26-31 clearly has nothing to do with hell or eternal punishment, but is a clear explanation to Hebrew Christians that the solution for a rebellious person is not to go back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses (which is ineffectual and was replaced by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross), but instead the solution is for them to learn righteousness at the white throne judgment so they will stop trampling on the cross.

It is also very important to keep in mind the cultural and historical context in which the book of Hebrews was written (The Rule of Culture). The book of Hebrews was written to Hebrews – Jewish people – and as such it contains a lot of explanation about why Christ’s death did away with the requirement to continue the daily sacrifices of the Law of Moses, etc. Remember that one of the biggest battles the early Christians taught by Paul faced was fighting the influence of Jewish Christians who kept trying to place a requirement on Christians to obey the Law of Moses (see the book of Galatians for example).

So when a Hebrew/Jewish Christian caught in the midst of this debate 2,000 years ago read Hebrews 10:26-31 as part of a long passage about how Christ’s sacrifice on the cross replaced the need for the daily sacrifices of the Law of Moses, they would not think of hell or conscious death or any such thing. (That was not part of their mindset anyway, they would have correctly considered such ideas as pagan.) They would immediately take the phrase “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” as saying the same thing the rest of the

passage says: going back to the daily sacrifices of the Law of Moses is not a necessary or effective solution for anything. Instead, the solution for sin is the cross of Christ, and for those who trample on it in this age, the solution to get them to stop trampling on it is God's judgment. Going back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses will accomplish nothing.

To us modern Christians it seems silly that a Christian might have to be told that going back to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses is not a solution for anything. But you have to understand that in the early church this was a raging debate. The apostle Paul even had to rebuke Peter and Barnabas for giving into "the party of the circumcision" (those who were saying Christians had to obey the Law of Moses – see Gal. 2:11-21). Peter was the strongest and primary leader of the first Christians before Paul came along, and Barnabas was Paul's companion in ministry. And *even they* were being influenced powerfully by these Jews who wanted to put the yoke of the Law of Moses on Christians! Paul was the only one who stood firm without a hint of giving in! This gives you an idea of how big and all-consuming an issue this was during this early period in church history. There was a very, very strong pull on the early church from many Jewish believers who could not wrap their head around Paul's teaching that the rituals and sacrifices of the Law of Moses were no longer necessary. Paul's teaching was new and radical (as I explained in Chapter 9 of this book), and it offended many Jews who held the Law of Moses very dear. (Also see 1 Cor. 1:23.)

So these early Jewish/Hebrew Christians were very focused on this Law of Moses debate. That was what consumed their mind at this stage in church history. And of course, they did not have anything remotely close to a "Catholic afterlife" mindset. The book of Hebrews was written to them and for them. Thus, when reading Hebrews 10:26-31 in the context of the rest of the book of Hebrews and the raging debate of the day, it would have never even remotely crossed their mind that this passage might be about hell or eternal punishment. The Catholic version of the afterlife was the furthest thing from their mind; hell, conscious death, and eternal punishment were not a part of their mindset at all, in any way shape or form. They assumed (correctly) that death was unconscious. (See Chapter 4 of this book.) The word "hell" was nowhere to be found in their Bible, and words referring to the abstract idea of eternity were not anywhere to be found in their Bible either. (See Chapters 2 and 3 of this book.)

So if you tried to talk to them about hell or conscious death or "eternal this, eternal that", they would have no idea what you were talking about. They would look at you like you had three heads. They would ask you what pagan religion you had been listening to. When they saw the word "fire" in Hebrews 10:27, they would immediately think of Old Testament prophecies like Malachi 4:1-5 and Isaiah 66:23-24. What would come automatically to their mind is a picture of evil people being killed and having their corpses thrown in a physical fire on earth. Because they had never been exposed to Middle Ages Catholic nonsense, and all they knew was Scriptures like Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, 12:7, Psalm 6:5, 115:17, Isaiah 66:23-24, Malachi 4:1-5, etc., a picture of "corpses of physically dead/unconscious people being thrown in a physical fire on earth" would automatically

come to their mind anytime they heard any warning about fire, including Jesus' warnings about fire and this warning about fire in Hebrews 10:27.

And of course the apostle Paul, the probable author of Hebrews (I can think of no one else at that time in history who would have the level of insight and understanding necessary to write it), understood perfectly that in Hebrews 10:27 he was quoting a prophetic passage in Isaiah. He understood the passage in Isaiah (26:9-11) perfectly, and he understood how it matches up perfectly with Isaiah 45:23-24 and the wonderful revelations about God's corrective/educational plan for all mankind that he so eloquently expressed in Romans 14:10-11, Philippians 2:10-11, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Timothy 4:10, Romans 8:20-21, 11:32-36, etc. All these things would have fired in the synapses of his brain automatically as he was writing Hebrews 10:26-31. In his mind, God's terrifying judgment of rebellious people at the white throne judgment and subsequent death in the lake/pond of fire was a solution, because it would result in them "learning righteousness" and "swearing allegiance to God", thus allowing God to "vivify" them later at the consummation of the ages (1 Cor. 15:20-28). Paul was contrasting this solution (God's judgment at the white throne judgment) with the sacrifices of the Law of Moses, which are no solution at all. In Paul's mind, Hebrews 10:26-31 fit in perfectly as a supporting point to the main point of its immediate context and the entire book of Hebrews – the Law of Moses is not the solution.

All the Scriptures I just mentioned were second nature to Paul, as they were a primary part of the revelations God gave him. But unfortunately, modern Christians have been taught to ignore them in favor of the Middle Ages Catholic version of the afterlife. (Find me a modern Christian that can quote the aforementioned Scriptures from memory. Not one in a thousand will be able to do so!) Thus some modern Christians read Hebrews 10:26-31 and their minds jump into "hell mode". Paul and the Jewish Christians to whom he was writing would roll over in their graves if they knew the silly Catholic ideas that people sometimes artificially superimpose upon this passage!

Bottom line, interpreting Hebrews 10:26-31 as having to do with the Catholic version of the afterlife (conscious death, hell, eternal punishment, etc.) would require blatantly violating The Rule of Context, The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture, The Rule of Silence ("We must refuse to creatively add ideas the passage itself does not state"), The Rule of Culture, and The Rule of the Entire Testimony of Scripture.

What about the "unforgivable sin"?

Just like the word "hell", the term "the unforgivable sin" needs to be completely eliminated from Christian vocabulary. The Bible does not say that the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is completely and totally unforgivable for all time. Here's what Jesus said about this sin:

“And whoever may speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven to him, but whoever may speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is coming.” (Matthew 12:32, Young’s Literal Translation)

First of all, I can’t help but point out that even most of the readability focused versions will translate this fairly accurately as something to the effect of “in this age, or the next”. *Even they must admit that the Bible clearly speaks of specific ages/ eons!*

Next, let’s understand the context of this statement Jesus made. The Pharisees were saying that he was performing miracles, healings, and exorcisms by the power of the devil, and Jesus was telling them that He was doing it by the power of the Holy Spirit. So when Jesus calls this sin “speaking against the Holy Spirit”, He specifically means ascribing the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit to the devil. In other words, He was saying to the Pharisees,

“Look, I can understand that you might not understand Who I Am – I realize that I don’t fit anybody in Israel’s preconceived notions about what the Messiah is supposed to do...” (see Chapter 9 of this book) “...so it’s quite forgivable that you might speak against Me or be confused about Me and Who I Am. But when you rotten Pharisees see these wonderful miracles, healings, and exorcisms I’m doing by the power of the Holy Spirit, when you see thousands of people being helped and relieved of pain, and you don’t care one iota about the people being helped, but all you care about is the fact that I’m threatening to your power base because the people are flocking to Me, so you reach so low as to say the wonderful healing works of the Holy Spirit are of the devil, well, that demonstrates an extreme level of hardheartedness to the point where I know you’re not going to repent in this age, so you’re not going to be forgiven in this age, or in the millennium.”

This brings us to the most important thing we must realize about Matthew 12:32. Jesus made a very specific statement here. He said that this sin will not be forgiven in this current age, or the next age (the millennium). He did not say anything about after the millennium! This obviously leaves open the possibility that this sin can be forgiven after the millennium. What comes right after the millennium? The white throne judgment. And of course we know from the rest of Scripture with absolute certainty that all sin (including this sin) *will* be repented of by all who committed it and it *will* be forgiven at the white throne judgment. (See Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11, Phil. 2:10-11, Rom. 10:9-10, Col. 1:16-20, Rom. 11:32, 36, etc.)

To claim otherwise is to claim that the cross did not pay the price for every sin. Obviously, the cross paid the price for all sin. If there is a sin that cannot be forgiven (ever), then Colossians 1:16-20, for example, would become a lie.

The reason the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (ascribing the miraculous, wonderful, helpful, healing works of God to the devil) cannot be forgiven during this

current age or the millennium is that it is a sign of extreme hardheartedness. A person who commits this sin obviously cares more about themselves and their pride than about seeing people helped. What kind of person would watch all sorts of hurting people be healed and helped, and say that it's of the devil? A person who is so wrapped up in their own ego, reputation, and station in life, that they feel threatened by wonderful miracles. A person like the Pharisees.

You see, the Pharisees had a doctrine of cessationism which said that God no longer did miracles. Then Jesus shows up and starts doing all sorts of wonderful miracles and healings. Well, if you're a Pharisee, you've got a reputation to uphold. You can't possibly admit you were wrong. You're the expert! You're the respected spiritual leader! Who's this upstart nobody carpenter's son from the backwaters of Nazareth? Who does he think he is? He didn't go to our Pharisee Seminary! *Who cares about all these people being helped. My reputation is being damaged! My job is being threatened! My expertise is being questioned! I might be forced to admit I was wrong about something! No! I refuse to admit I might've been wrong! This guy must be of the devil! Yeah, that's it!*

Jesus recognized that a person with such a thick crust of selfishness, hardheartedness, and pride was not going to repent in this age (despite any outward signs of religious ritual). Because they won't repent in this age, they won't be forgiven in this age. And in the next age (the millennium), they'll still be dead and unconscious, so they won't be forgiven then either. (And remember what I taught you in Chapter 9 of this book – if the kingdom had come 2,000 years ago, the Pharisees would have been killed by Jesus and their corpses thrown in the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium. So they would have been dead throughout the millennium either way.)

Jesus was absolutely correct and pinpoint accurate when He said that the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven in this current age, or the next age (what we now refer to as the millennium). Now, this is where The Rule of Silence comes in. Jesus did not say anything whatsoever about *after* the millennium. So we must be very careful not to put words in His mouth. When Jesus makes a pinpoint accurate statement, let's recognize its pinpoint accuracy. The problem many modern Christians have is that they see the words "the next age" and they think it means "hanging out in heaven or being stuck in hell forever". Sigh. (If you don't understand why I said "sigh", you need to go back and read the rest of this book from the beginning!)

Jesus' very specific statement in Matthew 12:32 says nothing, zero, nada about after the millennium and beyond, thus leaving open the possibility that this sin can be forgiven at some point after the millennium. And of course we know that this will occur at the white throne judgment after the millennium (Is. 45:23, Rom. 14:10-11, Phil. 2:10-11, Rom. 10:9-10, etc.)

There is no such thing as an "unforgivable sin" in Scripture. There is only a particular sin (blaspheming the Holy Spirit) that "will not be forgiven in this age or the next

(the millennium).” After the millennium, at the white throne judgment, it will be repented of and forgiven as “every tongue” “swears allegiance to God” and says, “Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.” (Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11)

There is one more thing I should mention about this. If you are afraid that you may have committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, don’t be. *The very fact that you care whether you might have committed it, and are willing to repent if you did, means that you didn’t.*

You see, the Pharisees did not care whether they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. They did not care about Jesus or the Holy Spirit or anything other than their own station in life and veneration of respectability. They were a million miles away from caring about the thousands of people being helped by the power of the Holy Spirit. They cared about one thing and one thing only: themselves and their station in life.

It is my personal opinion that the vast majority of sincere Christians in modern times are not in any real danger of committing this sin, simply because most modern Christians have never had the opportunity to observe the amount and degree of obvious undeniable miracles that Jesus performed. (The level of hardheartedness the Pharisees displayed in the face of such wondrous healing acts, while watching so many people being helped so wonderfully, is truly astounding. But we must remember they did not have the Holy Spirit living inside of them to convict them like we New Testament Christians do.) If one were to observe in modern times the amount and degree of undeniable healing miracles equivalent to that which Jesus performed in Israel 2,000 years ago, I’d be hard-pressed to think even the most die-hard modern doctrinal cessationist Christian would be so hard-hearted as the Pharisees were.

Also remember that the apostle Paul started out as a Pharisee who was going around killing Christians! And yet God got a hold of him and forgave him and used him to write two-thirds of the New Testament! So obviously not every Pharisee committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, probably just the most hard-hearted ones. There were varying degrees of hard-heartedness amongst the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. (For example remember Nicodemus who came to ask Jesus questions at night. He was afraid of his peers but curious enough to seek Jesus out and told Him, “It’s obvious You are from God because of the works You do.”) So, to be honest, I wouldn’t be surprised to find out when we meet the Lord face to face one day that the only people in history who truly committed the extreme sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit were a few of the most hard-hearted Pharisees and teachers of the Law back in Jesus’ day.

Perhaps I’m wrong about that, but regardless, I am confident in saying that if you care whether you might have committed this sin, and are willing to repent if you might have done so, that in itself proves that you didn’t. This sin is marked and defined by extreme hard-heartedness to the point of not caring about anything but your own pride and station in life, to the point of having no desire to even consider that one might have committed it or that one is wrong about it, even when confronted by undeniable proof in the form of

watching thousands of miracles performed right before your eyes. Jesus knew that such extreme hard-heartedness would not allow the person to repent in this age (when God is still allowing much deception to prevail, see Lk. 4:5-6, 2 Cor. 4:4). It will take the white throne judgment (where people will experience the full removal of all blinding influences including the influence of Satan) to fix such a person. Nothing in this age will fix them.

So if you're worried that you might have committed this sin, you didn't. Simply repent of anything your conscience convicts you of, and remember 1 John 1:9 – *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Matthew 12:32 is not an exception to 1 John 1:9. It was simply Jesus pointing out a certain sin of hardheartedness that when committed in the face of thousands of undeniable miracles, it was obviously so extreme that clearly the person would not be brought to confess or repent of it until the white throne judgment.

What about Judas?

Some people may be confused by Matthew 26:24, which in some translations seems to say that it would have been better if Judas had never been born. Before we talk about this statement, let us remember something about Judas. One day he will swear allegiance to God, confess Jesus as Lord, and say, "Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength." (See Is. 45:23-24, Rom. 14:10-11, Phil. 2:10-11, Rom. 10:9-10.) Isaiah 45:23-24 is still in the Bible folks. Let us also remember that the reason Judas killed himself is that he was full of remorse over what he had done to Jesus. He thought he had betrayed the Messiah, or if he wasn't sure about Jesus' identity as the Messiah, he obviously regretted that he had helped kill a great and Godly man. If he had stuck around for another couple of days he would have seen this man risen from the dead!

So because of Scriptures like Isaiah 45:23-24 we are stuck with a conundrum when we read Matthew 26:24 (in a less accurate, readability focused English Bible version). If it means that there is no future hope for Judas, then we have a self-contradiction in Scripture – we'd have to cut Isaiah 45:23-24, Romans 14:10-11, and Philippians 2:10-11 out of the Bible. (For starters; this is not even to mention 1 Tim. 4:10, John 12:32, James 1:18, Rom. 8:20-21, 11:32-36, Col. 1:16-20, Eph. 1:9-10, etc.) So what is the solution? Do we have to cut these Scriptures out of the Bible, or do we have to cut Matthew 26:24 out of the Bible?

Thankfully, we don't have to cut either of them out. Let's keep them both in the Bible where they belong. How? Once again The Rule of Grammar comes to the rescue. When we translate this verse accurately its meaning is clarified and we no longer have a Scriptural self-contradiction. Young's Literal Translation of this statement by Jesus reads:

"...The Son of Man doth indeed go, as it hath been written concerning him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is delivered up! Good it were for him if that man had not been born."

Bible translators who believe in hell automatically jump into Catholic afterlife “no hope for anyone but a tiny minority of people who ever lived” mode when figuring out how they want to translate the “him if that man” portion of this verse. So they are often very loose with the order of words when translating that phrase, and in their translation they make it sound as if it would be better for *Judas* if Judas had not been born. But as we see in Young’s Literal Translation, the Greek order of words could just as easily be understood as Jesus saying that (in an ideal world) it would be good for *Him (Jesus)* if Judas had not been born. Jesus is speaking about Himself in the third person in this statement, so let’s add caps to “Him” in Young’s Literal Translation for clarity:

“...The Son of Man doth indeed go, as it hath been written concerning Him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is delivered up! Good it were for Him if that man had not been born.”

If we take the third person speech convention out of it, and read it as if He’s talking about Himself normally in the first person, in normal English it would sound like this: “I’m going to My death, as predicted prophetically in Scripture. But woe to that man who is going to betray Me. It would’ve been better for Me if that man had never been born.”

We see that Jesus twice referred to Judas as “that man”, and twice referred to Himself in the third person as “Him”. He is being consistent within the two adjacent sentences so as not to confuse anyone. The only thing that causes confusion is translators who are so willing to throw precision on the ground and trample on it in order to bow down to the Catholic afterlife assumptions that have taken up residence in their brains.

Some people might say, “Wait a minute. How could Jesus say it would be better for Him if Judas had not been born? Judas was the mechanism, if you will, by which Jesus fulfilled His destiny on the cross! If it wasn’t for Judas being born, the cross never would have happened!”

But remember the context (including the situational context) of this statement Jesus made. He was getting ready to go to the cross. He was trying to prepare Himself emotionally for horrific pain. Remember the emotional agony He revealed a few hours later as He was trying to prepare Himself for the physical agony of the cross, how He pled with His Father, “Is there any way out of this dying on the cross thing?” (My paraphrase of Luke 22:42.) Remember that He was a man just like us, tempted in every way just like us (Heb 4:15). Imagine yourself in His position, knowing that within a few hours you would be betrayed by one of your confidants (your treasurer no less!) to be crucified, with huge nails pounded brutally through your hands/wrists and feet, propped up on a cross in a position where you’d be forced to pull yourself up by the nails in your hands/wrists just to take a breath, while dying a slow agonizing death.

In the context of Jesus’ emotionally wrenching preparation for the cross, when He knew His betrayal and crucifixion was fast approaching, it was completely natural for Jesus to say to His betrayer, “It would be better for Me if you’d never been born.” He was aware

of God's grand plan, because He said, "as it has been written concerning Him (Me)". But He was also thinking about what He was going to have to go through. It is naïve to think Jesus never thought about what was better for Him. He was tempted in every way like us. When He asked the Father, "Is there any other way?" He was thinking about what was better for Himself. He did not want to go through the cross. He was not happy with Judas for betraying Him. That is only natural. That is not sin. But because there was no other way to accomplish God's purpose except to go through the cross, He chose to act in love and do what was best for us, not what was better for Himself. Hallelujah. But let us not live in a dream world of fantasy as if Jesus never had any thoughts about what was better for Himself, as if He never made a single comment about what was better for Himself. Matthew 26:24 and Luke 22:42 are two such glimpses into His human frailty and potent reminders of His humanity (though He never crossed the line into sin). Jesus was human, let us not forget that. In His humanity, He was not happy with Judas, and He was not happy about having to endure the cross.

So when we take into account the situation Jesus was in at the moment He spoke the words recorded in Matthew 26:24, it makes perfect sense for Him to say that (ideally, in a perfect world, setting aside thoughts of the macro level plan of God for a brief moment to make an emotionally charged statement to a confidant and disciple who was about to betray Him) it would have been better for Him if Judas had not been born. And this is in fact the most natural reading of the two sentences when we take the Greek order of words into account and when we assume that He was being consistent in referring to Judas twice as "that man" and to Himself twice in the third person as "Him".

This is yet another case when there is a possible lack of clarity in a Scriptural statement, and we must look to the rest of Scripture as our referee. These two sentences spoken by Jesus in Matthew 26:24 could certainly be interpreted the way I just explained, when translated accurately. At the same time I can also see how some people might get the impression that He was saying it would have been better for Judas if Judas had never been born (if one is willing to say that Jesus was not being consistent with His third person use of "Him" to refer to Himself in the two sentences). How do we decide between these two possible interpretations? The only legitimate way is to let the rest of Scripture decide for us. And the rest of (accurately translated) Scripture – statements such as Isaiah 45:23-24, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, 11:32, 36, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Timothy 4:10, Colossians 1:16-20, etc. – make it clear that our only choice is to interpret Matthew 26:24 the way I've explained here, with Jesus being consistent in His use of "Him" to refer to Himself twice in the third person in these two sentences. Once again The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture is our referee.

So we see that Matthew 26:24 when accurately translated does not contradict Isaiah 45:23-24 or any of the other Scriptures about the eventual reconciliation of all mankind to God.

Hopefully by now you realize that it is vitally, vitally important to check the translation anytime you see something in a readability-focused English Bible that seems to speak of eternal punishment or some such thing. Translators of these less accurate versions have the Catholic version of the afterlife so ingrained in their minds (John 3:13, Dan. 12:13, 1 Cor. 15:32, Heb. 11:35, Is. 45:23-24 etc. notwithstanding) that it does not even cross their minds that they are causing massive confusion about God (and unnecessary emotional torment to people with loved ones who died without knowing the Lord) with their careless, imprecise translations of certain verses. In the case of Matthew 26:24 they cast aside precision in translating the Greek word order and ignore the natural reading of Jesus referring consistently to Judas twice as “that man” and Himself twice as “Him”, in favor of the Catholic-learned assumption that God only has a good plan for a tiny minority of humanity, and there is no hope for anyone else. They artificially insert this assumption into their translation through lack of precision. So this is yet another example of how you cannot afford to automatically trust the translation work in your English Bible (especially if it is not a version that puts accuracy above readability).

Another classic example I’ll mention again is the way some versions creatively add the phrase “in that place” when talking about the weeping and gnashing of teeth that will take place at the Gehenna fire judgment in Jerusalem (Lk. 13:28, Matt. 13:42, 25:30). To them it is natural to add “in that place” because they are ignoring Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah 66:23-24 (a prophecy about all physical events on earth), and thus they think of Gehenna as hell without the slightest shred of Scriptural evidence to support that assumption. But because they assume Gehenna must refer to hell, it makes sense for them to “help” the reader and “clarify” for the reader that the weeping and gnashing of teeth is happening “in that place”, in hell. But the Greek text says no such thing; it does not contain the phrase “in that place”. It is creatively added by the translators in some versions, giving a false meaning to the passage.

So you see how confusing translation errors can end up in an English Bible version (especially if accuracy is not its primary goal above readability) without the translators even being aware of what they’re doing; they just unthinkingly make massively important translation decisions, artificially adding phrases, discarding precision, etc. thinking that they are “helping” the reader by artificially superimposing their preconceived Catholic afterlife belief system into their translation.

It is frankly kind of annoying to have to watch out for this type of blatant error, lack of precision, and unwarranted creative license in translation, which is why I often do my Bible reading in The Concordant Version or Young’s Literal Translation even though they are not as smooth and easy to read. Young’s Literal is not as accurate in places as The Concordant Version but is easier to read. And even when reading those two accuracy-focused versions it is still sometimes helpful to consult the original Greek or Hebrew and look at how a particular Greek or Hebrew word is used in every place where it is found in Scripture, because sometimes when translating between languages there is no word in the new language that perfectly conveys the meaning or nuances of the word in the original

language. So the best way to wrap your head around a Greek or Hebrew word is to look at how it is used in all the places it is found in Scripture.

Did Jesus preach to people in hell?

There is no Scriptural evidence that Jesus preached to people in hell. Some people misinterpret 1 Peter 3:19 that way but it actually says that Jesus preached to a very specific group of "spirits in prison" after He was "made alive". Here's the whole verse with immediate context in the Young's Literal Translation:

"being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (keep in mind the Greek "in" can also be understood as "with" or "by", and "spirit" could just as easily be capitalized in English) in which also to the spirits in prison having gone he did preach, to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built."

The Greek word translated "made alive" ("vivified" in The Concordant Version) is the same Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to refer to Jesus' resurrection. After being "vivified" (resurrected to an immortal body) Jesus preached to "spirits in prison". Jesus didn't do anything while He was dead (much less preach to anyone), because He was dead. (According to Scripture the normal state of a human being in death is unconsciousness; see Chapter 4 of this book.)

Also, in the Bible human beings are not referred to as mere "spirits". We *have* spirits – our spirit is one of our components (see 1 Thess. 5:23) – but it can't accurately be said that we *are* spirits. (In the Bible a human being is not normally functional without our spirit being connected to a body producing a conscious soul. See Chapter 4 of this book.) On the other hand, angels and fallen angels, demons, etc. – spirit beings – are frequently referred to in Scripture as "spirits" (e.g. an "evil spirit" or referring to angels as "ministering spirits").

Nor is there any evidence in Scripture that human beings will be in "prison" during death. The passage does not say that Jesus went and preached to "all people who died before that time", but only to a very specific group of "spirits": "those who were disobedient...in the days of Noah". Genesis 6 tells us about these fallen angels that were disobedient during the days of Noah, and there is a clear parallel passage to 1 Peter 3:19 that talks about them as well: Jude 1:6. It speaks of "*messengers (angels) who keep not their own sovereignty, but leave their own habitation, He has kept in imperceptible bonds under gloom for the judging of the great day.*" (*The Concordant Version*)

The "spirits in prison" to whom Jesus preached after His vivification/resurrection were the fallen angels of Genesis 6 being kept "under bonds in darkness". The language in Jude 1:6 matches up very clearly with the "spirits in prison" language of 1 Peter 3:19, as well as the specific description in 1 Peter 3:19 of a group of "spirits" who "were disobedient in the days of Noah".

So 1 Peter 3:19 is not talking about Jesus preaching to all human beings who died before that time, because the passage simply doesn't say that. It says something very specific: after His resurrection/vivification Jesus preached to spirits (spirit beings, fallen angels) that had been disobedient in the days of Noah being kept in "prison/bonds". This very specific statement matches up perfectly with other Scriptures that give supporting and additional detail (e.g. Jude 1:6, Genesis 6).

The idea that Jesus might have preached to human beings in hell requires blatantly ignoring The Rule of Interpreting Scripture With Scripture.

It is also inherently absurd in several ways. Are we to believe that these people who heard the gospel in hell were suddenly transferred to heaven? There is no evidence of any such event in Scripture. (Surely no one who heard the gospel after being in hell would reject it. If they accepted the gospel, how could God leave them in hell?) And how could it be fair for those who died *before* the cross to hear the gospel in hell, while billions of people who lived *after* the cross but never heard the gospel will not get that chance? Are we to believe that Jesus will go a second time to hell to preach to them, sometime before the white throne judgment, so that they too can hear the gospel and be transferred to heaven? There is no evidence of any such event in Scripture. If there was, it would result in no one ending up in hell and everyone ending up in heaven! And why would God sentence people to torture for hundreds/thousands of years if all along He was planning to give them a second chance?

So we see that the idea of Jesus preaching to people in hell, taken to its logical conclusion, is self-contradictory, absurd, and would actually contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife.

Think about it...The idea of people getting a second chance after death is considered heresy by people who believe in hell. But these same people will trot out the idea that Jesus preached to people in hell! It is blatantly self-contradictory!

The only reason people who believe in hell sometimes put forth the idea that maybe Jesus preached to people in hell, is because they are desperately trying to come up with some sort of an answer to a massively important question left unanswered by the hell doctrine: *How could God justify sentencing people who never heard the gospel to unending torture, when Romans 10:14 ("How can they believe without hearing, and how can they hear without a preacher?") is in the Bible?*

When people who believe in hell put forth the idea that maybe Jesus preached to people in hell, they are essentially backtracking off of the hell doctrine by saying, "Maybe these people who lived before the cross were given a second chance." Of course, they fail to address the fact that there are billions of people who lived *after* the cross who never heard the gospel! What of them? (Watch the person who believes in hell scratch his head and say, "Uhhhh...") Again, it is blatantly self-contradictory for a person who says they

believe in hell and categorically denies that there is a second chance for anyone after death, to suddenly turn around and claim that Jesus preached to people in hell to give them a second chance! Which one is it?

This is just another one of those areas where believing in the Catholic version of the afterlife requires one to remain in fuzzy thinking, lest the obvious absurdity of pagan lies be exposed by common sense.

So when you think all the way through it and study it carefully, the idea of Jesus preaching to human beings in hell is not only unscriptural (a blatantly inaccurate misinterpretation of 1 Peter 3:19), it is also inherently absurd and self-contradictory.

Conclusion

In closing, there are five assumptions the Catholic version of the afterlife makes that Godly people in Bible days would never have made:

1. *"Hell is in the Bible."* Godly people in Bible days who were reading Scripture in their native language and (correctly) assumed the Old Testament's clear teachings about death were accurate, would never in their wildest dreams have imagined that anything remotely close to the Catholic version of the afterlife might be construed from Scripture. Reading the Bible in their native language they would never come across the word "hell" or anything remotely close to it. If you tried to talk to them about "hell" they would have no idea what you were talking about. If you tried to talk to them about dead people suffering consciously in afterlife flames, they would ask you what pagan religion you had been listening to.

See Chapter 2 of this book for a review.

2. *"Everything in the Bible is about eternity."* Reading Scripture in their native language, Godly people in Bible days did not see any words directly referring to the abstract concept of "eternity/forever", but instead found repeated references to God's plan for the eons/ages in the Greek New Testament.

See Chapter 3 of this book for a review.

3. *"Death is conscious and 'the kingdom' refers to hanging out in heaven consciously forever starting immediately upon death."* Godly people in Bible days never would have dreamed that death is conscious – they were familiar with pagan religions that taught such things, but they knew that their Scriptures (the Old Testament) clearly taught unconscious death, and they (correctly) assumed that David and Solomon knew exactly what they were talking about concerning what happens to a human being's spirit and soul at death. They knew that at

death the spirit of a human goes to be with God, unconscious apart from a body to operate through. (See Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, Genesis 2:7, etc.) They thought of death as the absence of life/experience/soul/consciousness, not as a second life. The idea of death as a second life would have seemed absurd to them and they rightly would have considered it a pagan idea.

They also understood that “the kingdom” refers to the future reign of Christ on earth (see Acts 1:6), not hanging out in heaven. They would have never dreamed of the idea that at death a Godly person goes consciously to be with God to immediately receive their reward! (See Dan. 12:13, John 3:13, Heb. 11:35, 1 Cor. 15:32, along with Ecc. 9:5, 10, 12:7, Ps. 6:5, 115:17, etc.) They would have naturally understood the idea of “going to be with the Lord” at death or being “in paradise” at death as the person’s spirit (unconscious apart from a working body) returning to be with God, so that the person would be “resting” or “sleeping”, awaiting resurrection (the rejoining of spirit with body to produce soul/consciousness again). They understood that there will be a future resurrection of Godly people, but they did not have a “hanging out in heaven forever” mindset, they had a “ruling over the earth with Christ in the future” mindset. For example, when they heard Jesus talk about “feasting with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom” (Matt. 8:11) their minds would have immediately pictured this happening on earth (see Acts 1:6), not in heaven. To them, “the kingdom of heaven” referred to the source of the kingdom, not its future permanent location. (Also see Matt. 6:10, Rev. 19:11-20:6, Rev. 21:1-3, 24.)

See Chapters 4 and 9 of this book for a review.

4. *“The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is a literal teaching about its afterlife setting.”* Godly people in Bible days would have immediately and automatically known that the fictional setting Jesus used in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man came from the Pharisees’ pagan Talmudian traditional version of the afterlife, and that there is nothing remotely resembling it in their Scriptures. John 3:13 proves that Jesus did not think of the fictional setting of this illustrative fictional story as “true to life”. It was merely a fictional story with a fictional setting designed to illustrate a few points about the same subject Jesus constantly preached about to Israel (the coming earthly kingdom), while not-so-subtly mocking the Pharisees’ ridiculous pagan Talmudian traditions (by including silly/absurd details as part of the story). Jesus’ Israelite audience would have understood this effortlessly, just as a modern Christian audience would effortlessly understand that a Christian pastor telling an illustrative story set in the Muslim conception of the afterlife does not consider it “true to life” and is not giving a literal teaching about it. Modern Christians are only confused upon reading the parable of Lazarus and the rich man because Catholicism has taught them to believe the same silly pagan afterlife nonsense that was part of the Pharisees’ Talmudian traditions.

Parables are never literal teachings about the setting and details of the fictional story. (The parable of the seed and the sower is not a literal teaching about farming!) If the parable of Lazarus and the rich man is a literal teaching about the afterlife, it is the only

parable in the history of the world that is a literal teaching about the setting and details of its fictional story. To treat any other parable as a literal teaching about the fictional setting of the fictional story would seem utterly absurd were it any other parable. (Imagine your pastor preaching that the parable of the seed and the sower is a literal instruction about farming techniques!) It would not have crossed Jesus' audience' minds to treat the parable of Lazarus and the rich man differently than all other parables. Modern Christians only do it because the Catholic version of the afterlife is so similar to the pagan Talmudian version of the afterlife that it tricks them into thinking the fictional pagan Talmudian afterlife setting of the parable is "true to life". Again, John 3:13 proves Jesus did not consider the fictional setting to be true to life. But modern Christians never quote or ponder John 3:13, because it cannot coexist with the Catholic version of the afterlife or the "literal teaching about the afterlife" interpretation of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

See Chapter 10 of this book for a review.

5. *"The lake of fire must be a nebulous spirit-fire."* Godly people in Bible days would never have dreamed of the idea that the "second death" could be conscious, because they assumed death is unconscious, due to David and Solomon's clear teaching on the subject. The definition of death in their mind was what we would call physical death resulting in unconsciousness, the absence of life/soul/consciousness, the inability to interact with one's environment. To them, death was the absence of life and the opposite of life, not a second life. Thus it would have never crossed their mind to think of the lake/pond of fire as anything but a physical fire on earth that will destroy physical corpses. Same with the fire in Gehenna in Jerusalem that Jesus spoke of several times, and any other warning in Scripture about future fire judgment. Godly people in Bible days would have automatically assumed these were warnings about being killed physically and having your corpse destroyed in a physical fire on earth, so that you'd be unable to enjoy life during a particular period of time (you'd "lose your soul/life/consciousness" and miss out on "eonian life" or life in the kingdom of God on earth during a particular age or ages). Their mindset that death was unconscious did not allow them to think of the lake/pond of fire or the Gehenna fire as anything but physical fires on earth.

See Chapters 4 and 5 of this book for a review.

In this book I have repeatedly and in myriad ways proven to you that when we translate and interpret Scripture accurately with strict reliance on common sense rules of communication, our conclusions match perfectly with the mindset of Godly people in Bible days who were reading the Bible in their native language, and dozens of logical and philosophical problems with God and the Bible are effortlessly solved. On other hand, the Catholic version of the afterlife would have been considered absurd and pagan by Godly people in Bible days, and reading the Bible in their native language with the mindset they had regarding death etc., they never would have imagined in their wildest dreams that such pagan nonsense as the Catholic version of the afterlife could somehow be magically and creatively pulled from the pages of Scripture. They would roll over in their graves if they

knew what Middle Ages Catholicism has done to mankind's understanding of the Bible and God! They would be extremely saddened to know all the confusion, artificial dilemmas, and unthinkable slandering of God's nature (He supposedly has an inner need to torture billions of people for trillions of years? – gasp!) that have been caused by the mixing of pagan ideas about the afterlife with Christianity.

I'll leave you with this. I received an email from a wonderful and Godly woman who had read this book. She wrote me a few months later, saying, in effect, "I know that what you teach on this subject must be correct because nothing else makes sense, but when I read my Bible I get confused." In other words, she was saying to me, "Sometimes in my Bible reading I come across something that makes my mind want to jump back into Catholic afterlife mode, and I don't immediately remember from your book how to explain it in a way that matches up with the mindset of Godly people in Bible days." (She didn't say it that way – if she could have, she would have known how to fix her problem, and wouldn't have needed to write me.)

This woman was making three simple mistakes. First, she was still reading a Bible she bought at the bookstore instead of replacing it with The Concordant Version and Young's Literal Translation. (Young's is a bit easier to read than the Concordant, though not quite as accurate in places, so I recommend getting both.) Even if she doesn't do her daily Bible reading in those translations, she should at least have them handy and immediately consult them any time she gets confused or anytime she sees those nasty, dirty, treacherous, deceptive words "hell" and "eternal/forever/everlasting" (sometimes you have to watch out for "never" too). (Please understand, it is technically correct to say things like, "Lord, I will worship You forever!" because the Bible says we will have immortality. So I'm not saying "forever" is a bad word. I'm just making a point that when you see it in an English Bible your mind should immediately raise a red flag that says: "Inaccurate translation!")

The second mistake she made was that she only read my book once. This book is chock-full of information, so you might not remember it all from one reading. And much of this information is brand new to many modern readers (although it would have been second nature to Godly people in Bible days). At the very least, anytime this sister came across anything in the Bible that confused her regarding what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for mankind, she should find the chapter in my book that deals with the specific topic she's confused about, and read it again. Back when I had time to answer people's questions by email, I would sometimes get questions from people who had read my book, the answers to which were clearly and thoroughly explained in the book, but they had simply forgotten it. There is a lot of information in this book. Read it a few times if you have to. Don't rush through it, absorb it. (It is about the most important subject in Scripture and the most important subject in the world! It's worth your time!) *If you absorb this book in and out, you will end up naturally thinking like a Godly person in Bible days reading the Bible in its original languages.* Your mind will form new grooves so that instead of getting confused when you come across a Scripture that you used to associate with the Catholic version of

the afterlife, you'll immediately remember how to explain it from the point of view of a Godly person in Bible days (or you'll be able to figure it out with a little bit of effort).

The third mistake this woman made was she hadn't memorized the specific statements in Scripture that obliterate the Catholic version of the afterlife. I'm referring to John 3:13, Daniel 12:13, Hebrews 11:35, 1 Corinthians 15:32, Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 115:17, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Psalm 31:5 (quoted by Jesus about His own death in Luke 23:46, also see Acts 7:59), Psalm 16:10 (quoted by Peter about Jesus' death in Acts 2:27), Isaiah 38:18, John 12:32, Isaiah 45:23 (quoted by Paul after referring to the white throne judgment in Romans 14:10-11, also see Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 10:9-10), 1 Timothy 4:10, James 1:18, Romans 8:20-21, 11:32, 36, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (memorize vs. 20-24 in an accurate version!), Ephesians 1:9-10, and Colossians 1:16-20, for starters. (You should also memorize Acts 1:6 which makes it clear that "the kingdom" does not refer to hanging out in heaven forever, but rather to Jesus' future reign over the earth.)

If your mind is permitted to continue to ignore the Scriptures I just listed, it may remain uncertain, clinging to a vague wondering, "Maybe, just maybe the Catholic version of the afterlife is right after all." But if you memorize the Scriptures I just listed, and if you meditate on them to the point where they are second nature to you, something amazing will happen. You will suddenly have no doubt that the Catholic version of the afterlife is utter pagan nonsense. Because the Catholic version of the afterlife cannot survive in a brain that memorizes and ponders the Scriptures I just listed, and understands the translation issues I explained in Chapters 2 and 3 of this book.

If you memorize all the Scriptures I listed above, your brain will teach itself to interpret Scripture from the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days. Every time you come across a Scripture that formerly popped your brain into a Catholic afterlife groove, your mind will automatically self-correct: "*Nope, that Catholic afterlife interpretation cannot possibly be right, because (insert one or more of the Scriptures listed above).*" Your brain will then naturally flow into the mindset of a Godly person in Bible days, and you will start your thinking and interpretation process with the correct assumptions (those of a Godly person in Bible days, in agreement with the Scriptures listed above).

When you combine memorization of the Scriptures listed above with reading through this book two or more times, the big picture of what happens at death and God's ultimate plan for mankind will gel in your mind the way it would have naturally existed in the mind of, say, one of Jesus' Israelite disciples who was later taught by the apostle Paul, reading the Bible in its original languages. You will have successfully bypassed and eliminated the confusing, absurd, and self-contradictory Middle Ages Catholic waste product called "conscious death, hell and eternal punishment", and you will have dialed your mind all the way back to the mindset of the early church as taught by Paul, reading Scripture in its original languages. And when you reach that point, boy, is it refreshing.

Please understand, I am not saying that you shouldn't question or test what I've taught you in this book. You should test it in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21. I am not trying to brainwash you. But I am forcefully and boldly pointing out that in order for it to be a fair fight in your mind (between the Catholic afterlife and what I've taught you here), in order for your mind to be properly equipped to make a decision on this extremely important matter, you must be **just as familiar** with the many Scriptures that directly contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife, as you used to be with the Catholic afterlife's assumptions. This is why I repeatedly quote and mention these Scriptures like a broken record, and ask you to memorize them, hopefully to the point where they are just as much second nature to you as the Catholic assumptions about the afterlife previously were.

I must be bold and aggressive about this because I am fighting the Catholic afterlife's ingrained assumptions that most modern Christians have heard since kindergarten Sunday school. (Cue Sunday school music: "And take us to heaven to be with Thee there." Nobody bothers to pull out John 3:13, or Acts 1:6, or Revelation 19:11-20:6, or Revelation 21:1-3, 24, or Hebrews 11:35, or Daniel 12:13, or Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, or Psalm 6:5, or Psalm 115:17, or 1 Corinthians 15:32, and read it to the kids. If you asked the Sunday School teacher to quote or explain any of these Scriptures, they would not be familiar with them and would be at a loss to explain them!) The Catholic afterlife's assumptions rely on you being ignorant of all the Scriptures I listed a few paragraphs back.

Therefore my job is to make sure you are **just as familiar** with the assumptions of a Godly person in Bible days and the many Scriptural statements that directly contradict the Catholic version of the afterlife, as you are with the Catholic afterlife's assumptions. Then, and only then, are you truly equipped to decide for yourself which is the true and correct teaching of Scripture on the most important subject in the world.

Additional Reading

Universalism: The Prevailing Doctrine of the Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years, **John Wesley Hanson** The title says it all. Hanson's classic book provides evidence that what I teach in this book is a return to the primary belief of the early church and the native Greek speaking church fathers about God's ultimate plan for mankind.

The History of Opinions on the Scriptural Doctrine of Retribution by **Dr. Edward Beecher** Also provides evidence that what I teach here is a return to the primary belief of the early church and the native Greek speaking church fathers about God's ultimate plan for mankind.

Whence Eternity? How Eternity Slipped In by **Alexander Thomson** A fairly detailed explanation of the translation issues surrounding Greek and Hebrew words that sometimes get translated as having to do with eternity in some English Bibles, by a scholar who spent decades studying the original languages of the Bible.

Note

You will notice that at various times in this book I've stated that all the people who are judged at the white throne judgment will die immediately after they are judged. But I would like to share with you another couple of possibilities for you to test and examine in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

I'm open to the idea that during the New Jerusalem age there may be mortal-bodied people living on the new earth for a while, along with the immortal-bodied Christians. The white throne judgment will take place on this present earth (at Jesus' throne in Jerusalem), and I think it's quite possible or even likely that some of the people who get judged at the white throne will be allowed to live on in their mortal bodies for a while into the New Jerusalem age (until they die – they will not be alive for all of the New Jerusalem age, but only part of it). Let me explain what I mean.

In chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation we see that in the New Jerusalem age, on the new earth, there will be trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and it says of the city of New Jerusalem, "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it" and "the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it." When we combine those statements with the statements that certain types of sinners will be thrown directly into the lake of fire to die after their judgment (Rev. 20:14-15), along with statements about the book of life that will be consulted at the white throne judgment (Rev.

20:11-13), and put 2 + 2 together, it seems quite possible that at the white throne judgment some people (those particular types of sinners listed in Rev. 22:14 & 21:8) will *not* have had their names written in the book of life and thus will go directly into the lake of fire to die right after they are judged, while on the other hand some of the previous unbelievers who get judged at the white throne *will* have their names written in the book of life and will be allowed to live on for a while into the New Jerusalem age until their mortal bodies die naturally. (If nobody but Christians have their name written in the book of life, why even consult the book? The Christians will be obvious because they will already be in raptured bodies at that point; no need to consult a book to figure out who the Christians are.)

So I think it's possible that some of the unbelievers who are judged at the white throne will be determined by Jesus not to be exceedingly evil (although they were unbelievers in the 3rd age, they were not exceptionally evil so as to fit the description of Rev. 22:14 & 21:8), and these will be allowed to live on for a while into the New Jerusalem age (in their mortal bodies which they got when they were resurrected to be judged, see Rev. 21:5). My guess is that these people will be the "nations" that will bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem, the "nations" who will be "healed", etc. Of course, after these people in mortal bodies live for a while in the New Jerusalem age, they would die a natural death, and later will be resurrected again – this time into immortal bodies, “vivified” – at the consummation of God’s plan, after the New Jerusalem age (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

This would be similar to the way some people in this current age who live through the end times into the millennium will be allowed by Jesus to continue living in the millennium, have children, etc. until they die a natural death (these will be the people Christians and Israel rule over in the millennium), while those who live through the end times who were exceedingly evil will get capital punishment at the very beginning of Jesus’ reign and their corpses will be thrown into the fire in the valley of Gehenna in Jerusalem. (See Is. 66:23-24, Matt. 25:31-46, Matt. 7:21-23, and the “Depart From Me!” article I mentioned on the Recommended Reading page for more information about the beginning of Jesus earthly millennium reign.)

Of course neither those who live for a while in mortal bodies during the millennium, or those who may live on for a while in mortal bodies for part of the New Jerusalem age, can be said to have "inherited the kingdom of God" – that term refers only to people who take part in the rapture and have a part in the entire 4th and 5th ages.

Bottom line, I think it's possible that some of the previous unbelievers who will be judged at the white throne (those who do not fit the description of very wicked people who dedicated themselves to certain sins listed in Rev. 22:14, 21:8) will be allowed to live on in their mortal bodies (until they die naturally) and maybe even continue going through a process of sanctification and learning during that time (they will not be allowed to enter the city of New Jerusalem until/unless they were no longer impure - see Rev. 21:27).

I used to think that all the people that were judged at the white throne would die in

the lake of fire immediately after they were judged, but three things have made me change my mind so that now my best guess is what I just described. The three things that made me change my mind are:

1) I couldn't figure out why the book of life would be consulted at the white throne judgment to see whose name was written there and whose was not, if nobody being judged at the white throne had their name written there anyway - what would be the point of pulling out the book? (Those who are Christians will already be obvious of course, because they will already be in immortal bodies - no need to consult a book to tell who they are.)

2) I couldn't figure out who "the nations" were in Revelation 21 and 22. At first I thought it could refer to nations made up of Christians only, but immortal-bodied Christians who have already had their immortal bodies for over 1,000 years will not need the healing that will come from the tree whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations".

3) Revelation 21 and 22 seem to go out of their way to differentiate between people who fit into the category of sinners listed in Revelation 22:14 and 21:8 (whose names are *not* written in the book of life due to their very evil deeds, and who will be thrown directly into the lake of fire to die immediately after being judged) vs. people that do not fit that description (whose names *could be* written in the book of life - not denoting that they got saved in the 3rd age of course, but rather denoting that their deeds were not extremely evil). It seems possible/probable that this second category of people will be allowed to live on in their mortal bodies for a while during the white throne judgment period – which will surely take hundreds of years – or perhaps even for a while into the New Jerusalem age and the new earth, before they die naturally). As far as I can tell, the pertinent Scriptures in Revelation 21 and 22 could be read that way, and it would explain the dilemmas presented by points #1 and #2 above.

Of course these people who are resurrected into mortal bodies to be judged at the white throne would not marry or have children (regardless of whether some of them live on into the New Jerusalem age for a while or not), because Jesus stated that in the resurrection people will not marry or have children (Matt. 22:30).

I'm definitely open to hearing insights I haven't thought of yet concerning the New Jerusalem age and whether some people from the white throne judgment will remain alive during part of it. If one of you, my dear readers, can give me greater Scriptural insight into this topic, I'd love to hear it.

One astute reader recently pointed out to me that Revelation 21:4 – particularly the statement that “there will no longer be death” – seems to contradict the scenario I described above (some people whose names are written in the book of life continuing to live for a while in the New Jerusalem age before dying a natural death). If he's right, we'd be left with this conundrum: how can there be a need for “the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2) when there will be “no more death, no more mourning, or crying, or pain”? How can

there be a need for healing when there is no mourning or crying or pain? Revelation 21:4 seems to blatantly contradict Revelation 22:2.

The only solution I have been able to come up with is that Revelation 21:3-6a is a *preview* of the consummation that will occur *after* the New Jerusalem age, as well as a statement of the *emotional healing process* that will happen for the nations on earth during the New Jerusalem age. This section (verses 3-6a) very clearly uses the *future* tense, repeatedly: "He *will* dwell among them (men), they *shall* be His people...and He *will* wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there *will* no longer be death; there *will* no longer be mourning, or crying, or pain." This is made even more evident in The Concordant Version:

*And I hear a loud voice out of the throne saying, "Lo! the tabernacle of God is with mankind, and He will be tabernacling with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them.
4 And He will be brushing away every tear from their eyes. And death will be no more, nor mourning, nor clamor, nor misery; they will be no more, for the former things passed away."
5 And He Who is sitting on the throne said, "Lo! New am I making all!" And He is saying, "Write, for these sayings are faithful and true."
6 And He said to me, "I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the Origin and the Consummation."*

If you compare this little mini-passage side-by-side with 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which also describes the "consummation", they are almost identical!

Then, in the second sentence of verse 6 (remember there are no chapter or verse divisions in the Greek), the voice from heaven (the voice of Christ?) switches gears and begins using language that seems to clearly refer to those who seek God now, in this current age, and our "eonian" reward:

*To him who is thirsting (now, in this current age) I shall be giving of the spring of the water of life gratuitously (eonian life, life during the greatest two ages – see John 4:14).
7 He who is conquering shall be enjoying this allotment, and I shall be a God to him and he shall be a son to Me.*

If we compare this with John 4:14 and Revelation 2:11, 26, they are almost identical! All these statements refer to those who currently believe being rewarded with eonian life, a special relationship with God like being a son to Him, and authority to rule over the nations with Christ during the greatest two eons, rather than being dead during those eons. In John 4:14 Jesus says, "Whoever may be drinking of the water which I shall be giving him, shall under no circumstances be thirsting for the eon, but the water which I shall be giving him will become in him a spring of water, welling up into life eonian." And in Revelation 2:11, 26 Jesus says, "The one who is conquering (in this current age) may under no circumstances be injured by the second death" and "To the one who is conquering and keeping My acts (now in this current age) until the consummation (of this current age), to him will I be giving authority over the nations."

Revelation 21:6b-7 matches up perfectly with John 4:14 and Revelation 2:11, 26, talking about believers in this age and their future eonian reward.

So we see that in Revelation 21:3-6a the voice out of the throne (Jesus' voice?) tells us about God's ultimate end goal, the consummation of the ages. Next, in verses 6b-7, the voice tells us about the special reward that those who believe in this age will get during the greatest two eons (millennium, New Jerusalem age). Then, in verse 8 the voice again switches gears to contrast the fate of those who believe in this age with those who are particularly wicked (death in the lake of fire during the final greatest age, the New Jerusalem age – vs. 8). At this point the voice from the throne stops speaking.

Then, in verse 9, John (the author of Revelation) sees an angel come and begin to tell him (through the rest of the book of Revelation, 21:9-22:15, with some final reiterations in 22:16-21) about circumstances in the New Jerusalem age, in which the circumstances of those who believe in this age are starkly contrasted with those who are particularly wicked in this age, while there are leaves for the healing of everyone else on earth during the New Jerusalem age (those who were not overly wicked in this age, but were not believers either).

All this makes perfect sense *as long as we realize that verses 3-6b of Revelation chapter 21 are a preview of the consummation, not a statement of circumstances throughout the New Jerusalem age.* In other words, this is my (I believe, fairly accurate) paraphrase of Revelation chapters 21 and 22:

Rev. 21:1-2 – The apostle John says, “I see a new heaven and a new earth! And I see the city of New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride adorned for her husband! WOW! WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?” (This is surely what John must have wondered immediately upon seeing these things.)

Rev. 21:3-6a – Voice out of the throne (probably Christ's voice?) to explain the meaning/ramifications of what John is seeing: “IT MEANS, FIRST OF ALL, that God's ultimate goal, THE CONSUMMATION of His plan, the eventual elimination of death along with all physical and emotional pain, IS GOING TO EVENTUALLY OCCUR IN THE FUTURE ON THE NEW EARTH YOU SEE.” (See repeated use of future tense in verses 3-6a, and how these verses match up perfectly with 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 24-28, Eph. 1:9-10, Rom. 8:20-21, 11:32-36, etc.) In other words, the voice is saying, “THE VERY FIRST THING I WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THE MEANING OF THIS NEW EARTH YOU SEE, IS THAT EVENTUALLY GOD'S ULTIMATE GOAL FOR MANKIND WILL BE FULFILLED HERE. Let's start by looking at the macro-level, long-term ramifications of the new earth you're seeing. Ok, now that I've explained that, let's move to the specifics of what's going to happen immediately after the new earth is created and the city of New Jerusalem comes down to earth...”

Rev. 21:6b-7 – The voice continues to explain: “IT ALSO MEANS that THOSE WHO BELIEVE NOW AND CONQUER IN THIS CURRENT AGE WILL ENJOY

EONIAN LIFE, WHICH INCLUDES LIFE ON THE NEW EARTH YOU SEE IN YOUR VISION, and THEY WILL RULE OVER THE NATIONS ON THE NEW EARTH, and WILL HAVE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ME LIKE A SON.” (See how these verses match up perfectly with John 4:14 and Revelation 2:11, 26, talking about believers in this age and their future eonian reward.)

Rev. 21:8 – The voice continues to explain: “BUT LET ME BE CLEAR THAT THOSE WHO ARE VERY WICKED IN THIS CURRENT AGE WILL DEFINITELY NOT EXPERIENCE ANY EONIAN REWARD, and THEY WILL NOT GET TO EXPERIENCE THE GREATEST EON ON THE NEW EARTH IN ANY WAY, for they will be dead during the greatest eon that begins with the new heaven and new earth and the city of New Jerusalem coming down from heaven onto the new earth.”

Rev. 21:9-22:15 – The voice from the throne is done talking. From here on out, until the last few verses of Revelation, an angel shows John THE SPECIFICS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE NEW JERUSALEM EON. These circumstances include the healing of the nations (those not overly wicked, but not unbelievers either), raptured believers ruling over these nations, these nations bringing their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem, etc. The angel also makes sure to reiterate that those whose lives were very wicked during this current age will not get to experience that greatest eon on the new earth due to having been sentenced to death and having their corpses thrown in the lake of fire.

Rev. 22:16 – Jesus confirms to John that He is the originator of everything John has seen and heard in the vision/experience (everything that eventually was written down as the book of Revelation).

Rev. 22:17 – Reiteration of invitation for people to believe in this current age and experience the rewards of doing so.

Rev. 22:18-19 – Warning that adding to or taking away from the book of Revelation is an evil enough act that its punishment is the same as the punishment for practicing the wicked lifestyles described in Rev. 21:8 & 22:15 – exclusion from the book of life which means exclusion from any ability to participate in the New Jerusalem eon/age.

Rev. 22:20 – Reiteration/reminder that Jesus is going to return to earth in the future, and when He comes, He’s going to do it quickly. (In other words, “Just because Jesus hasn’t come yet, don’t get lazy or think that He’s not going to ever come back. Live your life with the knowledge that He’s going to come, and all the things written in the book of Revelation are going to occur.”)

Rev. 22:21 – Prayer for (or statement of) God’s grace.

The main point I want you to see here is that Revelation 21:3-8 is a voice from the throne *explaining to John in broad strokes the meaning/ramifications* of what he just saw (new earth, city of New Jerusalem coming down onto it). And the first thing the voice explains, in verses 3-6a, is the *long-term, ultimate ramification* of what John just saw: the *consummation* of God's plan that will eventually occur on the new earth. (Revelation 21:3-6a matches up perfectly with 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, talking about *the consummation of God's plan for the ages*.) Then, the voice gives broad-strokes info about *the circumstances that will be in place on the new earth right away as soon as it comes into existence* (Revelation 21:6b-7 matches up perfectly with John 4:14 and Revelation 2:11, 26, talking about *believers in this age and their future eonian reward*.) Then verse 8 contrasts this with the *total inability of the wicked in this age to experience any future eonian reward*, particularly the fact that they'll be dead during the New Jerusalem eon. After giving its overview, the "broad strokes info about what this means" voice stops talking, and an angel spends the rest of the book showing John *more detail about the New Jerusalem eon that will be in place immediately as soon as the new earth comes into existence, before the consummation of God's plan which will occur on the new earth later when the New Jerusalem age is over*.

My point is, if we try to treat Revelation 21:3-6a as a description of the circumstances that will be in place throughout the New Jerusalem eon, we have a blatant contradiction between Revelation 21:4 (no more death, crying, or pain) and Revelation 22:2 (the need for the healing of the nations). The simple solution is to realize that Revelation 21:3-8 is a broad strokes overview of the meaning of the new earth, and within that broad strokes overview, verses 3-6a are a prediction of the eventual consummation of God's plan upon the new earth. The first thing the voice explains about the new earth is the most important thing to know about it – God's ultimate plan for it. The broad strokes overview then moves on to include the most important and basic info about the immediate circumstances that will be in place on the new earth as soon as it comes into existence (verses 6b-8). After the voice gives this broad strokes overview, an angel then (Revelation 21:9-22:15) shows John more details about the immediate circumstances that will be in place immediately as soon as the new earth comes into existence, and repeatedly contrasts the reward of believers during that greatest eon (ruling over the nations from the city of New Jerusalem) with the consequences for the wicked (failure to participate at all in that greatest eon), while also telling us that during this eon the nations (those that were not believers, but not so wicked as to be sentenced to death immediately after being judged) will receive healing.

With this explanation, Revelation 21:4 does not contradict Revelation 22:2, and we see that the voice from the throne (probably Jesus' voice) gives us the biggest message of the Bible in a nutshell – God's *ultimate* plan for the eventual immortality of all mankind and their eventual total unity with Himself, with a stark contrast between the *eonian* reward of those who believe in this age and the total lack of *eonian* reward for the very wicked. (Read Rev. 21:3-6a alongside 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 24-28, James 1:18, Rom. 8:20-21, 11:32-36, 1 Tim. 4:10, Eph. 1:9-10, John 12:32, John 3:17, etc. It's God's ultimate plan – the consummation. Then read Rev. 21:6b-7 alongside John 3:16, John 4:14 and Revelation 2:11, 26. It's talking about believers in this age and their future eonian reward. Then read Rev. 21:8 alongside

Rev. 22:15 and Gal. 5:19-21. These verses communicate loud and clear that the very wicked in this age will be totally unable to experience the future eonian kingdom of God on earth in any way, shape or form – either the millennium, or the New Jerusalem age.)

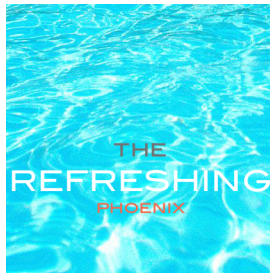
Of course, then the angel “fills in the blanks” for us in Revelation 21:24-22:2 regarding those people who were not overly wicked but not believers either. After being judged at the white throne, these people will be allowed to live on into the New Jerusalem eon for a while, being ruled over by those who believed in this current age, receiving healing from their emotional wounds (inflicted by the very evil people during their first lifetime), even being able to enter into the city of New Jerusalem to bring gifts and goods into it (though they won’t live in the city, that will be reserved for those who believed in this current age), and enjoying (not “inheriting” as a ruler, but allowed to enjoy) the New Jerusalem eon for a while before dying a natural death. Some time after this, of course, the consummation will occur, and everyone will live on the new earth, God being “all in all”.

You will also notice that this scenario ensures perfect fairness and justice for all. Those who were very wicked will get a corresponding complete lack of ability to enjoy any eonian reward, though they will eventually be brought into complete unity with God and given immortality by God’s grace and mercy. On the other side of the spectrum, those who believe in this age and go against the grain of evil (“overcome”) in this age, will be rewarded correspondingly with early immortality and immense eonian reward – ruling with Christ during the entirety of two fantastic ages, living in the city of New Jerusalem during the New Jerusalem age as the nations bring their glory (probably meaning nice stuff!) into it, judging angels (1 Cor. 6:3), etc., along with enjoying life in perfect unity with the rest of mankind and God after the consummation as well of course. In the middle of the spectrum, you have people that never heard the gospel or heard it and didn’t respond to it due to Satan’s influence (2 Cor. 4:4), but were not overly wicked; these will miss out on the millennium (except, obviously, for those who live for a while during – or were born during – the millennium before dying a natural death); but they will get to experience and enjoy the New Jerusalem age for at least a little while, before dying a natural death and later getting “vivified” to immortality and perfect unity with God and the rest of humanity at the consummation of God’s plan.

If you’re not 100% sure about what I just explained in this Note about the exact details of the New Jerusalem age, it’s not a big deal. None of what I just discussed in this Note changes any of the primary points of this book.



We invite you to join us weekly for The Refreshing Internet Church, pastored by John Lilley. You can watch live or replay at JohnLilley.org – just click on “Internet Church”. The Lord led Pastor John to start this international internet church service in response to the demand from people around the world for fellowship with like-minded Christians. At The Refreshing Internet Church we do not teach Middle Ages Catholic leftovers (tithing or hell – see John’s books *Why You Don’t Have To Tithe* and *Hell Is a Mistranslation*), and we encourage you to study and test important topics like the topic of this book, without fear of rejection or being treated like a troublemaker if you don’t happen to agree with Pastor John on every single point. Every service includes anointed worship, a powerful message from God’s Word, and an online chat function through which you can comment and interact, and via which Pastor John can take prayer requests and any questions you may have.



And if you live in the Phoenix, AZ area John Lilley would like to invite you to visit TheRefreshingPhx.com to learn more about The Refreshing Phoenix, a local congregation in the Phoenix area that John and his wife Simona are founding. At The Refreshing Phoenix we do not teach Middle Ages Catholic leftovers (tithing or hell – see John’s books *Why You Don’t Have To Tithe* and *Hell Is a Mistranslation*), and we encourage you to study and test important topics like the topic of this book, without fear of rejection or being treated like a troublemaker if you don’t happen to agree with Pastor John on every single point.

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