

Does the Bible teach there is a Second Chance to be saved by Jesus?

written by Alfred Persson | July 16, 2023



Postmortem Opportunity in Biblical Perspective: A New Argument Universal Opportunity for Salvation in Jesus Spans Life and the Afterlife

The Fate of those who die unevangelized has been debated ever since the Apostles departed to be with Christ. Did God create knowing the opportunity for salvation would exist only for those born in the right time and place? As Christ alone is the Way to Salvation, what is the fate of all born before that time, or in places where Christ remained unknown for centuries? Where and when is their opportunity for salvation in Jesus?

Until now, four different theories have been proposed to answer this question: *Restrictivism* which denies universal opportunity exists;

Universal Opportunity exists despite appearances, no one dies without a special revelation of Christ; *Inclusivism* where opportunity exists apart from faith in Christ; *Universalism* where all are ultimately reconciled to God in Jesus, opportunity unnecessary.

Universal Opportunity Exclusive to Christ is preached in this life and the Afterlife

This essay argues universal opportunity for salvation in Jesus Christ spans both life and the afterlife, via the timeless sacrifice of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) who was “offered once” “at the end of the ages” (Heb. 9:26) so the gospel is preached “also” to them who are dead (1 Pt. 4:6) and during their judgment (Heb. 9:27) “according to men in the flesh” the opportunity to be saved in Jesus is offered “to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28). Those who grasp the opportunity to be saved then “live according to God in the Spirit” protected from all torment (1 Pt. 4:6 cp. 1 Pt. 3:18-22). About them, it is written: “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9:28 NKJ) during the resurrection gathering/rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:5, 15:51-54; Rev. 14:12-16; 7:9, 14).

“Implication” is the interpretive key opening the door to a mass of evidence for postmortem opportunity (Mt. 22:40). In Jesus’ day Rabbinic argument often pivoted upon an implied premise: Jesus asked the Pharisees “if David calls Christ ‘my Lord’ how can he be David’s son? (Mt. 22:41-45); ” I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” proves Sadducees twice wrong, not only about the afterlife but the resurrection of the body for daily God is reminded He promised they and their offspring would inhabit the land physically forever (Gen. 17:7-8; 26:3; 28:13). James quotes Amos 9:11-12 to prove Gentiles were always participants in God’s salvation (Acts. 15:15-18); Paul argues “This, ‘He ascended’— what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?’” (Eph. 4:9).

18 You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there.

19 Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah

20 Our God is the God of salvation; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death. (Ps. 68:18-20 NKJ)

Today scholars believe Paul’s application is “contextually problematic.” Not to the School of Hillel where Paul learned exegesis at the feet of Gamaliel (Ac. 22:1-3). Both the translators of the Greek Septuagint and Aramaic Targums of this verse parallel Paul’s Holy Spirit-inspired application. They conclude similar premises from the implication of David’s prophecy.

The prophet David speaks of Christ's descent into hell and preaching to the formerly disobedient "spirits in prison" (1 Pt. 3:18-22) who gladly give gifts for being shown the LORD could dwell among them. Like the Church, they responded to Christ's preaching "with the answer of a good conscience towards God". That is the "like figure" Peter saw in Baptism, not referring to water at all. Having believed Christ's preaching the formerly dead were raised to a newness of life (Rom. 6:4. Col. 2:12. Eph. 2:3-7) "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pt. 3:21-22). Upon learning Christ is the only way to Salvation; the formerly rebellious become God's gift to the church of apostles prophets evangelists pastors teachers "for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:7-16). Without postmortem opportunity, none of these connections can be made.

Postmortem Opportunity does not exist for those who deliberately and in full knowledge reject the gospel of Christ (Heb. 6:4-8). Ignorance of God is the only ground for divine mercy. Christ made this clear: "He who is not with me is against me", which implies Christ's identity is fully known. However, if "anyone speaks a word against the Son of Man" (incarnation veiling Jesus' identity) "it will be forgiven" "in the age to come" (Mt. 12:30, 32) for he spoke in ignorance of God.

Explanation of how postmortem opportunity fits into the larger Christian theology of salvation.

This theory of Universal Opportunity is Exclusive to Christ: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6 NKJ). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NKJ). It does not require temporal or geographical luck, everyone from Adam and Eve hears the gospel of Christ preached when their appointed deaths occur. Then is the "Judgment/trial" if Christ's sacrifice "to bear the sins of many" includes them. To finite creatures living in spacetime this "is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mk. 10:27 NKJ).

"And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"-Jesus Christ (Lk. 5:39-6:1 NKJ)

Some say we have only one life on earth to make our decision for or against God, that a "postmortem opportunity" to repent and be saved doesn't exist. Two main texts are cited for this view: Hebrews 9:27 "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" which suggests the judgment concerns acts performed while alive; and the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), which seems to rule out a "postmortem opportunity" when the Rich Man is told "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." (Lk. 16:26 NKJ).

The scriptures cited against the "postmortem opportunity" have been taken

out of context:

For example, the Rich Man is in Hades, which in the context of the New Testament is a temporary residence. Hades will be emptied out on Judgment Day (Rev. 20:13), it then “dies the second death” which symbolically means it will never return (Rev. 20:14). *As the Rich Man is raised up out of Hades with everyone else (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13), the “great gulf” is not an impassible barrier “to the resurrection of life, and ...the resurrection of condemnation.” (Jn. 5:29 NKJ)*

As for Hebrews 9:27, Christ said Christians “shall not come into judgment (2920 κρίσις krisis), but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24 NKJ) [2]. ***That means the “judgment” (2920 κρίσις krisis) in Hebrews 9:27 is deciding what happens to non-Christians after they die, not Christians who have been saved by grace (Eph. 2:5-10).***

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and **shall not come into judgment (2920 κρίσις krisis)**, but has passed from death into life. (Jn. 5:24 NKJ)*

Therefore, the “judgment” in Hebrews 9:27 is “the postmortem opportunity for salvation”, because after this judgment Christ will appear: “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time...for salvation.” (Heb. 9:28 NKJ).

*27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (2920 κρίσις krisis),
28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.** (Heb. 9:27-28 NKJ)*

That fits the meaning of the Greek *krisis*, it denotes a “trial, contest, selection” where an “opinion or decision” is given one way or the other.- *Strong’s Concordance.*

Some claim the Judgment in Hebrews 9:27 is the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15. However, the following incompatibilities make that impossible:

- 1.) Christ’s “second appearance” is His Second coming, well before the Judgment of all the earth in Revelation 20:11-15.
- 2.) The Great White Throne Judgement judges sin, therefore Jesus’ appearance there cannot be “apart from sin”.
- 3.) Christ appears a second time to rapture/raise all the dead in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:5, 15:51-54; Rev. 14:12-16; 7:9, 14).
- 4.) The only judgment Christians face evaluates their service to Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; John 5:24-25).
- 5.) If no judgment occurs after men “die once”, how is it anyone ends up in hell? Shouldn’t everyone be in the same place?

6.) If Christians are among those being judged then they must wait for Christ's second appearance, "for salvation". That contradicts Christians are saved "to the uttermost" when they believed, by grace through faith in His Name(John 3:15-16, 36; 5:24-25; 20:31; Eph. 2:5-8; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 7:25.)

These incompatible properties prove beyond all reasonable doubt the judgment in Hebrews 9:27 cannot be the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 10:11-15. Everything is different about them.

Christians must be excluded because they were saved by grace through faith in Jesus while alive, and do not come under a *krisis* judgment, whether immediately after death or sometime in the future at the Great White Throne Judgment (John 5:24-25).

The exclusion of believing Christians implies what is judged is belief or non-belief in Christ, that alone exempted Christians from judgment. The "Judgment" in Hebrews 9:27 is a "*krisis* trial" to decide whether someone will become one of "the many" "believers" Christ died for. Christ "was offered once" "at the end of the ages" (Heb. 9:26) so all who died without Christ, including the generations who lived and died " since "the foundation of the world", would be eligible for His sacrifice for sin. As John put it, Christ is the sacrificial "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8) so all born into it are covered by His Sacrifice. Christ was offered once "at the end of the ages...to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself...to bear the sins of many". [Having chosen life in Christ] they now "eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time...for salvation (Heb. 9:26, 28 NKJ).

Read it for yourself. When Paul says He "would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world" he is saying Christ's sacrifice applies from that time, therefore it screams "postmortem opportunity for those who never heard while alive. This is a judgment of all who died without Christ. After judgment, some of them eagerly wait for Christ's salvation.

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (2920 κρίσις krisis),

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb. 9:24-28 NKJ)

How can we be certain this trial is not a judgment whether one died a Christian? **Christ our Teacher (Mt. 23:10) said Christians have passed from death into life when they believed (John 5:24).** So did the apostles, Christians are saved by grace when they believe (Ac. 15:11; Eph. 2:5, 8), not by a *krisis* judgment after they die. Moreover, as the dead since the foundation of the world undergo the same “judgment”, if dying a non-Christian condemned them for what is not their fault, the trial would be a sick parody of justice. That cannot be.

Others claim it is a judgment or “completion” of their salvation by a “cleansing” of sin in the believer. They point to “purification” (Heb. 9:22) and interpret that is how Christ “put away sin” (Heb. 9:26). However, they misunderstand the analogy. Just as blood cleanses vessels to permit they appear in God’s presence in the Temple (Heb. 9:21-23), so Christ’s blood cleanses from sin so the “many” can appear in God’s presence. Hebrews 9:28 makes this clear; Christ will appear “a second time apart from sin, for salvation (4991 σωτηρία soteria). ” *The dead eagerly wait for their salvation at Christ’s second coming, not their cleansing.* As Christians are saved to the uttermost in this life (Heb. 7:25), they aren’t among these dead in hell.

The context implies what is being decided about the dead: It is written: “He...appeared...once at the end of the ages...to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” so He would not “have...to suffer often since the foundation of the world” (Heb. 9:24-26). *Therefore, the Judgment is whether Christ’s sacrifice applies to the one being judged, whether he is one of the “many” saved by it.* As belief or non-belief in Christ are the only grounds for salvation or condemnation (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; John 3:16-18; 5:24; 14:6; 20:31; Acts 4:11-12; Rom. 10:9; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 1 Peter 2:6-8; 1 John 5:11-12), it follows belief or non-belief in the gospel of Christ decides the outcome of this Trial. Therefore, regardless of when someone died, the Gospel is preached to them so they be judged according to men in the flesh, but choose to live according to God in the spirit (1 Pt. 4:6). [3]

That is “the trial”, those who believe Jesus is “the Christ the Son of God” are saved, live according to God in the spirit and eagerly wait for Christ’s second coming, for salvation, the resurrection to life. Having heard and obeyed Christ’s voice while in the grave they done good (John 5:28-29).

A Thought Experiment: Imagine the Elect aren’t the only ones saved. What shall we say then?

Paul names two Groups that will be saved: The ELECT and Israel.

Israel was blinded at first but “have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!”

Therefore, both Elect and Non-Elect (their fullness) will be saved.

7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

8 Just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.”

9 And David says: “Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them.

10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.”

11 **I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!** But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, **how much more their fullness!** (Rom. 11:7-12 NKJ)

God is not partial (Rom. 2:11-16; 11:12), what He did for non-Elect Israel He will extend to the Gentiles. ALL unsaved humanity goes through the same trial, from Adam and Eve forward. Therefore, all who repent and believe in Jesus during their trial have Jesus as the propitiation for their sins just as the scripture promises: **“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world [1]”** (1 Jn. 2:2). [4]

Jesus confirmed the dead will have a chance to obey His voice while still in the grave:

21 *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

22 *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

23 *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*

24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

25 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice (ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς) of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*

26 *For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;*

27 *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*

28 *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice (ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς),*

29 *And shall come forth; they that have done (ποιήσαντες aorist participle) good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done (πράξαντες aorist participle) evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (Jn. 5:21-29 KJV)*

In John 5:21-29, Jesus elucidates a profound spiritual truth about life,

death, and resurrection, presenting a compelling case for postmortem opportunity for salvation. This passage teaches that obedience to Jesus' voice, even in death, holds the promise of eternal life.

Jesus begins by asserting His divine authority, paralleling the power of the Father: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he will" (John 5:21). The Father has placed all judgment in the hands of the Son, requiring that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 5:22-23). This divine responsibility bestowed upon Jesus underscores His divinity and authority.

The argument gains momentum as Jesus reveals that the time is already upon us when the dead will hear His voice: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live" (John 5:25). This statement does not discriminate between the physically alive or dead; all will have the chance to listen and obey, promising an opportunity for eternal life even after physical death.

Judgment pivots on the Dead's response to Christ's voice: They "having done" (ποιήσαντες 4160 ποιέω poieo) good (obeying the voice) rise unto the resurrection of life, and they that "having accomplished" (πράξαντες 4238 πράσσω prasso) evil (not obeying the voice) rise unto a resurrection of damnation.

The aorist participles in John 5:29 are often translated as "have done," suggesting actions completed in the past. But context proves that is inaccurate as it narrows the scope of Jesus' proclamation excluding His audience whose time to respond to His voice "now is."

Many commentators minimize the subsequent (following) use of the aorist participle. Even such scholars as Robertson and Moulton, who recognize that the participle is not time-bound, resist this category of usage. But there are a number of examples in biblical and extra-biblical Greek where an aorist participle is used to refer to an action occurring after the action of the main verb. In virtually all of these examples, the aorist participle is placed after the main verb in syntactical order.- Porter, S. E. (1999). Idioms of the Greek New Testament (p. 189). JSOT.

Thus, these verses elucidate Jesus' profound promise of life and warning of judgment. It upholds the potential for salvation beyond the grave and underscores the importance of obeying the divine voice. God's enduring love for humanity shines through, offering hope and redemption even after death, affirming that it is never too late to respond to God's call.

What about Jesus' parable?

To begin with, it's more than a parable. The key difference Commentaries cite is the appearance of the personal name of Lazarus'. Rather than a parable, it seems like an "Old Testament prophetic warning" (2 Sam. 12:1-7) the mocking Pharisees would end up in Hades. Christ would send

the risen Lazarus and the Pharisees (Luke 16:14) will not listen to Lazarus (John 12:9-11) just as they don't heed Moses and the prophets and their testimony about Christ's authority, especially over their riches (Luke 16:29-31). Contrary to their tradition Abraham would prevent a circumcised Israelite descending into Torment, its people like Lazarus they despise who are saved and while they end up in Hades. As it can't be classified a "parable", the symbolism should be taken as genuine revelation about the Afterlife.

A "postmortem opportunity" doesn't require crossing over from hell to heaven. Rather, the repentant spirit is saved in the "Day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5) when the Death and Hell are emptied out and those who "done good" upon obediently hearing Christ's voice (1 Peter 4:6) rise to a resurrection of life (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13-14). But we must factor in Christ has the keys to Death and Hades (Rev. 1:18) and the "day of our lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5) could be His second coming when He gathers/raptures/resurrects the church.

[Throughout this site I said the repentant dead in Hades rise during the Great White Throne Judgment when Hades is emptied out (Rev. 20:11-15). However, I now favor they rise after Christ sends out His angels to gather all the wicked and cast them into the furnace of fire (Mt. 13:41-43; Dan. 12:2-3) at His second appearing. I resisted the prompting of the Holy Spirit because of unwarranted weight given to Revelation 20:13, which actually begs the question completely. Not so Hebrews 9:28 , it identifies when Christ's salvation comes with precision—at His second "appearing" (3700 ὀπτάνομαι optanomai).

Hades as a place of eternal torment is "a self-contradiction" [5]. Hades is emptied on Judgment Day (Rev. 20:13-14) therefore, the Rich Man was only temporarily in Hades and could not be suffering eternal punishment.

Other facts indicate the Rich Man was not irredeemable, that the gifts and calling of God were not revoked in his case (Romans 11:26-32).

1.) Rather than a self-absorbed man who curses both Abraham and God for his plight, the Rich Man shows selfless concern for his family (Luke 16:27).

2.) Abraham affectionately calls the Rich Man "son" (Luke 16:25). It is impossible Abraham would speak affectionately if the Rich Man were an irredeemable enemy of God: "Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?" (Psalm 139:21).

3.) Abraham and others wanted to comfort the Rich Man, but an impassible chasm prevented them (Luke 16:26). It is impossible the redeemed would rebelliously want to subvert God's punishment of the wicked (Rev. 15:3-4). Therefore, the scene does not depict God's punishment.

4.) When the Rich Man cried "I am tormented (3600 ὁδυνάω odunao) in this flame (5395 φλόξ phlox)", the symbolism implies a process commentators

miss. The Rich Man is in “sorrow” (cp. Acts 20:38 3600 ὀδυνάω odunao) for his sins, for the first time he is 100% aware how badly he missed the mark of God’s perfection. The tormenting flame that brings truth to the surface, symbolizes God’s inspection. God is revealed in the “flame” (Ex. 3:2; Judges 13:20; Isa. 66:15 LXX; Acts 7:30; 2 Thess. 1:8). His “eyes like a flame of fire” are bringing every dark secret and sin to the light, all self-delusion is purged. Just as it is written: The Lord has washed away the filth... and purged the blood of Jerusalem...by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning” (Isa. 4:4 NKJ).

Christ’s prophecy to the Pharisees revealed even the children of Abraham(Matthew 3:9-10) like the Rich Man, if they die enemies of the gospel rejecting His authority, they will be chastised in Hades contrary to their belief Abraham would not permit an Israelite enter Hades: “In the world to come Abraham sits at the gate of Gehenna, permitting none to enter who bears the seal of the covenant” (Genesis Rabbah xlviii). Paul touches on this subject declaring “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable”. All Israel will be saved even if they must suffer the torments of hell first (Romans 11:26-33).

Those who have not committed eternal sins will be purged of all that subverts their ability to make the free will confession Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and have life in His Name (John 20:28-31). All addiction to sin and self-delusion is burned away by the torment (931 βάσανος basano) of God’s inspection, revealing the truth of the individual, who he really is. Once liberated and fully able to make a free will choice the gospel of Christ is preached, for belief or non-belief in Christ are the only grounds for judgment (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; John 3:16-18; 5:24; 14:6; 20:31; Acts 4:11-12;1 Peter 2:6-8). Therefore, only after a definite and formal presentment of the Gospel of Christ is made to a soul fully capable of making an informed and free judgment will God judge the conscious and deliberate acceptance or rejection of Christ.

Other New Testament texts showing a postmortem opportunity for salvation exists in the Afterlife.

Sins done in ignorance of who Jesus is may be forgiven in the ‘age to come’, requiring the existence of a “postmortem opportunity” (Matthew 12:31-32).

30 “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

*31 “Therefore I say to you, **every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven (ἁφεθήσεται)** men , but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven (ἁφεθήσεται) men.*

32 “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven (ἁφεθήσεται) him ; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven (ἁφεθήσεται) him, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matt. 12:30-32 NKJ)

Understandably men might oppose the “Son of Man” because they do not appreciate Jesus is “God incarnate” and they are guilty of opposing God. But for those who do know God is working in Jesus either you are with Him or against God. There is no forgiveness for opposing the obvious work of God. Therefore, blaspheming the Holy Spirit doing the obvious work of God will not be forgiven , either in this age or the age to come.

“Will be forgiven” (ἄφεθήσεται)”. Although some render “The future passive indicative of ἀφίημι ...‘to be forgiven’ ...‘to be pardoned’ ...as indicating a possibility: ‘can be forgiven’ [CEV, NCV, NLT, REB, TEV], ‘may be forgiven’ [Abernathy, D. (2013). An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 1–16 (p. 444). SIL International]– its last appearance in this context rules that out. One is for or against Jesus/God, no forgiveness for those who know they are against God.

Sins done ignorantly against God “will be forgiven” in the “age to come”. That requires the existence of a “postmortem opportunity” for the unsaved.

Some will object, not charging the damned with all their sins wasn’t a postmortem opportunity. Context answers that, why contrast sins done ignorantly with those that are not, if they don’t produce different ends and for that a postmortem opportunity is required.

The sins of the “saved” were forgiven in this age, they do not need a “postmortem opportunity” (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7).

The apostle Peter reveals the postmortem opportunity when he says the dead have the gospel preached so they can choose to live “according to God in the spirit”:

For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Pet. 4:6 NKJ)

The “postmortem opportunity” is on display when Christ preached to the dead “spirits in prison” after He Himself was put to death.

Some believe ‘Christ proclaimed doom to the damned’. That is impossible, the antitype of baptism, being saved out of the water symbolizes how “we were buried...in death and then raised with Jesus” (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) when we gave the “answer of a good conscience toward God”. The theme of salvation contradicts completely any idea Christ is preaching damnation. The context implies these “spirits in prison” were among the “captives in His train” (ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν) (Eph. 4:8) when He ascended into heaven:

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

20 who formerly were disobedient (544 ἀπειθέω apeitheo), when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us— baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (1 Pet. 3:18-22 NKJ)

Human dead are “souls in hades”, not “spirits in prison.” Nor can they be the “sons of God fallen angels” of Noah’s Day (Gen. 6:2, 4) because they remain bound (Jude 1:6). These “spirits” were the hybrid angel-human “men of renown” dead who could not believe (544 ἀπειθέω apeitheo) Noah’s preaching God would forgive the abomination of their hybrid nature. It defiled the image of God in man with that of angels. This is why Christ made a “special trip”, to prove God would forgive and elicit the “answer of a good conscience towards God”. They went with Christ into heaven as part of Christ’s triumph over Satan.

9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be`from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’

11 “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. (Zech. 9:9-11 NKJ)

[#Y]

” And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life”

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone (εἴ τις) not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15 NKJ)

Postmortem opportunity for salvation on Judgment Day is implied by the opening of “the Book of Life”. That saved people rise on Judgment Day is explicitly stated by the prophet Daniel “some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2); Jesus Christ “to the resurrection of life, and...to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29); and His apostle Peter “there will be a resurrection...both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15).

There are three books according to the three classes of humans God foreknew before creation—before the fall corrupted their free will. He saw who were thoroughly righteous, thoroughly wicked, and the “Middling People”.

The “book of the living” (Ps. 69:28) is also called “the Book of Life” (Rev. 20:12, 15). From Rev. 17:8 we know the Book of Life was written from the foundation of the world and that it did not contain the names of the wicked (also Rev. 13:8). That implies the existence of the Book of the Wicked with their names and deeds (Rev. 20:12-13). Because the names of the Elect were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, they cannot be blotted out of the Book of Life (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4). Therefore, the existence of names that can be blotted out of the Book of Life implies the existence of the “Book of the Middling People” that record their names and deeds in this fallen realm and determine whether their names are blotted out or inscribed in the Book of Life (Ps. 69:28).

Therefore, the symbolism of the books used during the Great White Throne Judgment by Christ reveals Postmortem Opportunity for Salvation. Some of the dead rise to the “resurrection of life”, their names are in the book of life.

Moreover, the wording “And if anyone (εἴ τις) was not found in the Book of Life” implies some were found because “if anyone” cannot be a hypothetical “first-class condition” in an argument. John isn’t arguing a point, he is reporting what he saw.

For example, “if anyone didn’t have a ticket they didn’t get to see the movie” implies some had tickets.

In the days of Christ, the School of Hillel interpreted the Old Testament revealed a merciful God who forgave repentant sinners, even those in Sheol. Paul was a Pharisee (Ac. 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5) of this school so their teachings are relevant context when interpreting Paul’s eschatology. They believed three classes of People appear on Judgment Day: The Righteous, the Wicked, and the “Middling People”. This construct is evident in John’s vision of Judgment Day where multiple books are opened.”

[I.15 A] Said R. Kruspedai said R. Yohanan, “Three books are opened [by God] on the New Year: one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for middling [people].

[B] *“The thoroughly righteous immediately are inscribed and sealed for [continued] life.*

[C] *“The thoroughly wicked immediately are inscribed and sealed for death.*

[D] *“Middling [people] are left hanging from New Year until the Day of Atonement.*

[E] *“If they [are found to have] merit, they are inscribed for life.*

[F] *“If they [are found] not [to have] merit, they are inscribed for death.”*

[G] Said R. Abin, *“What is the Scriptural [foundation for this]? [Ps. 69:28 states]: ‘Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. Let them not be inscribed among the righteous.’ ‘Let them be blotted out of the book’-this refers to the book of the thoroughly wicked. ‘[... of the] living’-this refers to the book of the righteous. ‘Let them not be inscribed among the righteous’-this refers to the book of middling [people].”-Neusner, J. (2011). The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Vol. 6b, p. 83). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.*

Rabbi Abin relies on unstated implications: “Let them be blotted out” implies the Book of the Thoroughly Wicked because the action is ongoing, they will never repent. “Book of the Living” lists the names of the Thoroughly Righteous. “Inscribed among the righteous” implies the Book of the Middling People because they chose to be Righteous. Unlike the Thoroughly Righteous, or Wicked, they had a choice.

Scholarship that ignores the Jewish context of the NT is unwise:

Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” (Matt. 13:52 NKJ)

Various Scriptures where Postmortem Opportunity is explicit or implicit:

Dt. 32:39 [#A]; 1Sam. 2:6 [#B]; 2Sam. 22:5-7 [#C]; Ps. 16:10-11 [#D]; Ps. 30:3-6 [#E]; Ps. 40:1-3 [#F]; Ps. 49:12-15 [#G]; Ps. 56:13 [#H]; Ps. 68:18-20 [#I]; Ps. 69:13-18 [#J]; Ps. 71:19-23 [#K]; Ps. 86:13 [#L]; Ps. 102:18-22 [#M]; Ps. 116:1-9 [#N]; Hos. 13:14 [#O]; Jon. 2:1-10 [#P]; Zec. 9:9-11 [#Q]; Mt. 12:30-32[#R]; John 5:28-29[#S]; Rm. 11:25-36[#T]; 1 Pt. 3:18-22[#U]; 1 Pt. 4:6[#V]; 1 Cor. 5:5[#W]; Eph. 4:8-10[#I]; Heb. 9:27-28[#X]; Rev. 20:11-15[#Y];[#Z]

[#B]

He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up

6 Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up.

7 Jehovah maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, he also lifteth up.

8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, To make them sit with princes, And inherit the throne of

glory: For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, And he hath set the world upon them. (1 Sam. 2:6-8 ASV)

Those who deny postmortem opportunity would argue the text is figurative, applying only to this life. However, the Rabbis of Jesus' day would disagree. The two major theological schools of Shammai and Hillel cite it to prove postmortem opportunity.

The House of Shammai says: There will be three classes of people on the Day of Judgment—the completely righteous, the completely wicked, and those in between. The judgment of the completely righteous is immediately written and sealed for the life of the World-to-Come and that of the completely wicked is immediately written and sealed for Gehinnom (hell), as it is said (Daniel 12:2): “And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace.” But those in between shall go down to Gehinnom, and when they tearfully pray they shall come up again, as it is said (Zechariah 13:9): “I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried, and he shall call on My name, and I will answer him.” It was concerning this last class of men that Hannah said (1 Samuel 2:6): “The Lord kills and gives life. He brings down to the grave and brings up again.”

But the House of Hillel says: When God revealed Himself to Moses and proclaimed before him His glory, He said [He is] “abundant in mercy (hesed)” (Exodus 34:7) – for He inclines the scale of judgment toward the side of mercy. And it was about this third class of men, who are neither completely righteous nor completely wicked, but in between, that David said (Psalm 116:1): “I love the Lord because he hears my voice in prayer”; and regarding them was the whole Psalm written, including (116:6): “I was brought low [through my sins] and He saved me [nonetheless]” (Rosh HaShanah 16b).

Hillel and Shammai did not differ concerning the eternal destinations of the completely righteous and the completely wicked: These would go to heaven and the others to hell. But they did differ about those in between, the great majority: Shammai said they would go to hell, be purified, pray, and then enter heaven; Hillel said they would pray and go directly to heaven. What was the basis for Hillel's position? He interpreted “abundant in mercy” in the Torah's description of God's attributes, as meaning “inclining to the side of mercy.” He taught that God always inclines the scale of judgment to the side of mercy, and so will He do on the Day of Judgment.-Buxbaum, Y. (2008). The Life and Teachings of Hillel. Jason Aronson, Inc.

[#A]

I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal

39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

40 For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. (Deut. 32:39-40 KJV)

Those who deny postmortem opportunity argue this is figurative: “These words do not refer to the immortality of the soul, but to the restoration of life of the people of Israel, which God had delivered up to death.” Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). Commentary on the Old Testament (Vol. 1, p. 1002). Hendrickson.

The Rabbis of Christ’s day disagree, not only did they apply this to the souls of individuals, they also cited it against the Sadducees who claimed ‘no resurrection is taught in the Torah’:

I.26 A. Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority: “I kill and I make alive” (Deut. 32:39).”

B. Is it possible to suppose that there is death for one person and life for the other, just as the world is accustomed [now]?

C. Scripture says, “I wound and I heal” (Deut. 32:39).

D. Just as wounding and healing happen to one person, so death and then resurrection happen to one person.

E. From this fact we derive an answer to those who say, “There is no evidence of the resurrection of the dead based on the teachings of the Torah.”-Neusner, J. (2011). The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Vol. 16, p. 486). Hendrickson Publishers.

[#C]

The cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of Death confronted me

*5 For the waves of Death compassed me. The floods of Belial assailed me.
6 The cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of Death confronted me.
7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, yea, I called unto my God; and out of His temple He heard my voice, and my cry did enter into His ears.
(2 Sam. 22:5-7 JPS)*

This is part of David’s song of deliverance, read in Synagogues during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. “Waves of Death” “floods of Belial” “cords of Sheol” “snares of Death” are figurative for various aspects of the “hell” King Saul put David through. Its impossible not to see Postmortem Opportunity is part of David’s belief.

[#D]

You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.

10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:9-11 NKJ)

The prophecy applies to both David and Christ, therefore verses 9-11 apply to David only while only Christ did not “see corruption.” Clearly there is postmortem opportunity to be saved.

29 “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

31 “he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. (Acts 2:29-31 NKJ)

[#E]

You have brought up my soul from Sheol

2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol (07585 שְׁאוֹל she’owl); you restored me to life (02421 חַיָּה chayah) from among those who go down to the pit (0953 בֹּרַח bowr).

4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. (Ps. 30:2-4 ESV)

David writes he experienced postmortem opportunity literally. God brought his soul up from Sheol after he cried for help, and he was “healed”. Restored to life “חַיָּה ... always means to restore to life that which has apparently or really succumbed to death.”-Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). Commentary on the Old Testament (Vol. 5, p. 240). Hendrickson.

Ancient interpreters would not miss the “particularization” in the synonymous parallelism “Sheol” and “pit”. The “pit” is where those without hope go (Is. 38:18; Ez. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 24, 29-32; Ps. 28:1 30:4; 88:5; 143:7).

“Said R. Joshua b. Levi, ‘Gehenna has seven names and these are they: Netherworld, destruction, pit, [Slotki:] tumultuous pit, miry clay, shadow of death, and underworld’.”-Erubin 19a, Neusner, J. (2011). The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Vol. 3, p. 94). Hendrickson Publishers.

Context also implies this is a literal event. God deals with His prophets differently than the general population. David began to see himself as “invincible” even though it was God who made him secure. God dispelled David’s delusion with a trip to hell:

5 For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.
6 As for me, **I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.”**
7 By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.
8 To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
9 “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?
10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”
11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever! (Ps. 30:5-12 ESV)

Some object it must be figurative because David argues “what profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit?” However, that is hypothetical. God sent David to hell and it terrified him. He doesn’t want that to happen again, so he argues: “what profit (for You God) if I go to the pit where no one can praise You?”

David’s descent into hell and back may have consumed only seconds of time. Time seems to slow down during extreme trauma, seconds can seem like hours. If this happened while everyone was asleep, causing no disruption in the performance of his duties, its not surprising we don’t read more about it in scripture.

Another reason David’s deliverance likely literal and not figurative, as a prophet of God (Ac. 2:29-30) David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak truth. Wording this event literally would cause many to conclude postmortem opportunity exists, and it did. In the Days of our Lord Jesus the two major theological schools of Shammai and Hillel believed Scripture taught postmortem opportunity, and their views were very influential with all the people.

[#F]

He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry.
2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps.
3 He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD. (Ps. 40:1-3 NKJ)

Postmortem opportunity is taught in this context, that is how the Jews of Christ’s day would have interpreted the metaphor.

The *bôr šā’ôn* (desolate pit) and *ṭîṭ hayyāwēn* (wet clay) both refer poetically to the place of the dead, a place of separation from God (cf. Ps. 30:3; 69:2, etc.). The image, which was characteristic not only

within Israel but also among Israel's neighbors, evokes the image of a body being buried.”-Jacobson, R. A., & Tanner, B. (2014). Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1–41. In E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, & R. L. Hubbard Jr. (Eds.), The Book of Psalms (p. 375). William B. Eerdmans Publishing

The two major religious schools of Jesus' Day taught postmortem opportunity (See [B] above). They gleaned two additional names for Gehenna from David's metaphor:

I.19 A. Said R. Joshua b. Levi, “Gehenna has seven names and these are ... E. “ ‘tumultuous pit’: ‘He brought me up also out of the tumultuous pit, out of the miry clay’ (Ps. 40:3);

F. “ ‘miry clay’: ‘He brought me up also out of the tumultuous pit, out of the miry clay’ (Ps. 40:3). .”-Erubin 19a, Neusner, J. (2011). The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Vol. 3, p. 94). Hendrickson Publishers.

“He has put a new song in my mouth”

“The phrase “new song” occurs nine times in Scripture... In every instance, the reference is to a song of praise addressed to God, usually because of his salvation of people.

- Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy (Ps. 33:3).*
- He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God (Ps. 40:3).*
- Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth (Ps. 96:1).*
- Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things (Ps. 98:1).*
- I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you (Ps. 144:9).*
- Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints (Ps. 149:1).*
- Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth (Isa. 42:10).*
- And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).*
- And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth (Rev. 14:3).”-Easley, K. H. (1998). Revelation (Vol. 12, pp. 100–101). Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

Therefore, the Jews of Jesus' day would have understood the metaphor of deliverance applies to both life and the afterlife.

An interesting possibility. Prophet David by Holy Spirit may have spoken as someone delivered from Sheol after a long patient wait, by Christ

(John 5:24-29; 1 Pt. 4:6; Heb. 9:27-28). Jesus is Yahweh the Son and as the Word of God it is He who communicates God, in this case His deliverance. This is a “Messianic Psalm” (Heb. 10:5-9). Dying and rising to life and placed securely on the Rock of Christ singing a new song is reminiscent of the Christian experience symbolized by baptism. That may have inspired John to apply Ps. 40:5 to Christ (John 21:25).

5 O Lord my God, thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, and in thy thoughts there is none who shall be likened to thee: I declared and spoke of them: they exceeded number.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared me: whole-burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin thou didst not require.

7 Then I said, Behold, I come: in the volume of the book it is written concerning me,

8 I desired to do thy will, O my God, and thy law in the midst of mine heart.

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo! I will not refrain my lips; O Lord, thou knowest my righteousness.

10 I have not hid thy truth within my heart, and I have declared thy salvation; I have not hid thy mercy and thy truth from the great congregation. (Ps. 40:5-10 Septuagint, Brenton)

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’”

8 Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law),

9 then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. (Heb. 10:5-9 NKJ)

[#G]

God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol

13 This is the way of those who are foolish, And of those after them who approve their words. Selah.

14 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning, And their form shall be for Sheol to consume So that they have no habitation.

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah. (Ps. 49:13-15 NAU)

Postmortem repentance and salvation from hell is not in this “telescoped prophecy”.

God redeemed David apart from these. Although it is hard to suppose a

soul in hell would not be repentant for something, nothing in the context suggests repentance and forgiveness as a factor in David's redemption. Rather, he is expressing confidence God will redeem him.

Prophet David is describing the fate of those who do not consider their mortality. They act like they will live forever when in fact all die and others will inherit their wealth.

11 Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call their lands after their own names.

12 Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; He is like the beasts that perish.

13 This is the way of those who are foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah (Ps. 49:11-13 NKJ)

The prophecy telescopes from death to after Judgment Day. They die, the righteous rule over their wealth, and after being put in hideous "habitations" that Sheol consumes slowly, they pass into nonexistence. Their "habitation" are the abominable corpses reeking of corruption they were raised up in on Judgment Day. Unlike the "Walking Dead" TV show, these cannot walk or see, only weep and gnash teeth in utter darkness.

They died like sheep, unable to prevent it. Death became their shepherd, they do not rise to life and return to the land of the living (Is. 26:14), they are forever dead separated from the living. Shepherded by Death to the Great White Throne of God (Rev. 20:11-15) they will rise in abominable corpses reeking of corruption riddled with worms painfully feasting on the decay (Isa. 66:24; Dan. 12:2; Mk. 9:43-48; Gal. 6:8).

The oppressed upright rule over riches they left behind. "In the morning" is idiom for the way of the upright getting brighter (Prov. 4:18-19).

The prophecy telescopes past judgment to being tossed into the Lake of Fire, "their habitation" consumed by the flames until they become ashes (Mal. 4:3). Without a body souls weaken, become "shades" of their former selves until eventually they pass into nonexistence, all they were and planned eternally forgotten (Is. 26:14). God alone has immortality (1 Tm. 6:16).

But not all pass into nonexistence. Jesus revealed those guilty of eternal sin against children burn forever in unquenchable Gehenna (Lake of) Fire, in bodies whose worms die not. So will all who accept the mark of the beast (Rev. 14:9-11). Having defiled the "image of God in man" for immoral pleasure, its fitting our offended God use their defiled bodies to communicate His Holy Wrath (Isa. 66:24; Mk. 9:43-48; Is. 26:14-19).

43 'And if thy hand may cause thee to stumble, cut it off; it is better for thee maimed to enter into the life, than having the two hands, to go away to the gehenna, to the fire – the unquenchable –

44 where their worm is not dying, and the fire is not being quenched.

45 *'And if thy foot may cause thee to stumble, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into the life lame, than having the two feet to be cast to the gehenna, to the fire – the unquenchable –*
46 *where their worm is not dying, and the fire is not being quenched.*
47 *And if thine eye may cause thee to stumble, cast it out; it is better for thee one-eyed to enter into the reign of God, than having two eyes, to be cast to the gehenna of the fire –*
48 *where their worm is not dying, and the fire is not being quenched*
(Mk. 9:43-48 YLT)

[#H]

For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the light of the living?
(Ps. 56:13 NKJ)

Repentance and forgiveness or Postmortem opportunity may be in this context.

The Targums are Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible created and used within Jewish communities to make the Hebrew scriptures more accessible to the common people who primarily spoke Aramaic. They often include explanatory and interpretive elements with the translation. In Edward Cook's translation words in italic are not in the Hebrew represent how the Jews understood David's Psalm.

"For you have delivered my soul from the death that the sinful die, indeed, my feet from stumbling through sin, so that I will walk before the LORD in the Garden of Eden to behold the light of the righteous. "
(Ps. 56:14 Psalms Targum)

David is happy God delivered his soul from the second death, the death "the sinful die" never to return. That he will be resurrected to walk in land of the living in God's light.

[#I]

To GOD the Lord belong escapes from death

18 *You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there.*
19 *Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah*
20 *Our God is the God of salvation; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death. (Ps. 68:18-20 NKJ)*

Postmortem Opportunity implicitly taught. Paul supplied the interpretive key: "This, 'He ascended'— what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?'"-(Eph. 4:9) Implied Premises were used in Rabbinic argumentation. Jesus asked the Pharisees

“if David calls Christ ‘my Lord’ how can he be David’s son? (Mt 22:41-45) James quotes Amos 9:11-12 to prove Gentiles were always participants in God’s salvation (Acts. 15:15-18).

Descending into hell and ascending with captives implies they repented, and now dwell with God’s people in heaven. Postmortem opportunity.

The Prophet David is speaking of the Christ, not Moses. He “preached to the spirits in prison...who were formerly disobedient” (1 Peter 3:18-22), the dead had the gospel preached to them and now lived according to God in the Spirit (1 Peter 4:6).

Their response giving gifts to Christ implies they are grateful for learning the way of Salvation so they could dwell with the LORD of salvation, to whom belong escapes from eternal death. That is a figure for baptism, God gracing the church with apostles and prophets, people who have died and risen in Christ and now benefit the church teaching how to escape eternal death.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

8 Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”

9 (Now this, “He ascended “– what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head– Christ–

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:7-16 NKJ)

The Jewish translators of the Aramaic Targums and Greek Septuagint also reasoned from implied premises to explain what David was implying:

You ascended to the firmament, [O prophet Moses]; you captured captives, [you taught the words of Torah], you [gave] gifts to the sons of men, and even the stubborn [who are converted turn in repentance, and the

*glorious presence of] the LORD God abides [upon them] (Ps. 68:19 PST).
-The Psalms Targum: An English Translation by Edward M. Cook, 2001.
Words in [brackets] are in italics to show they are interpretation and
not the Hebrew.)*

*Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast
received gifts for man, yea, for they were rebellious, that thou
mightest dwell among them. (Ps. 68:18 Septuagint, Sir Lancelot Brenton,
1851)*

[#J]

And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

*15 Let not the floodwater overflow me, Nor let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.
16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me
according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.
17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble;
Hear me speedily.
18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; Deliver me because of my
enemies. (Ps. 69:15-18 NKJ)*

Postmortem opportunity not implied by the figures used, which describe
“something that has really taken place” (Keil). An event in this life
(Ps. 69:2), not the afterlife.

[#K]

Revive me again...bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

*You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive (02421
חַיָּה chayah) me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the
earth. (Ps. 71:20 NKJ)*

Postmortem opportunity twice implied. David trusts God will raise him up
from the depths of Sheol “again”, confirming he experienced death and
revivification before (Ps. 30:2-4) [#E]. David trusts in the love and
mercy of God he will be redeemed and brought “up again from the depths of
the earth” (Ps. 30:2-4; 86:13).

[#L]

You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol

*For great is Your mercy toward me, And You have delivered my soul from
the depths of Sheol. (Ps. 86:13 NKJ)*

Postmortem opportunity, deliverance from Sheol literally happened to
David. He thanks God often for it. See Ps. 71:20 [#K]

[#M]

To release those appointed to death.

18 This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, To release those appointed to death,
21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem,
22 When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. (Ps. 102:18-22 NKJ)

Postmortem Opportunity. God will “create” in the future a people from “those appointed to death” so in Zion they declare the name of the God of their salvation. The church of the future, from the nations.

[#N]

The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me

1 I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications.
2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.
3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.
6 The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.
7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.
9 I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living. (Ps. 116:1-9 NKJ)

Postmortem opportunity, repentance and deliverance explicitly stated. David experienced literal death and revivification (Ps. 30:2-4; 71:20; 86:13) [#K]. Although “pains of death” “pangs of Sheol” can refer to earthly troubles nearly causing death (see 2 Sam. 22:5-18 [#C]), in this context it refers to troubles experienced in Sheol. After repentance, God delivered his soul from Death, the realm of eternal death (Ps.49:14; 55:15; 118:18). He will walk before the LORD in the land of the living in His kingdom.

The resurrection of the dead: see Ps 116:9: “I will walk before Yahweh in the lands of the living.” ... “(The Hallel is said) because it mentions the rescue of the souls of the righteous from gehenna; see Ps 116:4: ‘O, Yahweh, save my soul.’-Strack, H. L., & Billerbeck, P. (2022). A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash (J. N. Cerone,

Ed.; A. Bowden & J. Longarino, Trans.; Vol. 1, p. 969). Lexham Press.

saving, delivery. Pes. 118a מִן הַמָּוֶת מִן הַגֵּהֶנָּה the delivery of the souls of the righteous from Gehenna (ref. to Ps. 116:4).-Jastrow, M. (1903). In *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature and II* (Vol. 1, p. 774). Luzac & Co.; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

[#0]

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” (Hos. 13:14 NKJ)

I will deliver them out of the power of Hades, and will redeem them from death: where is thy penalty, O death? O Hades, where is thy sting? comfort is hidden from mine eyes. (Hos. 13:14 LXX)

Postmortem opportunity clearly taught, doubly implied by the context which is so gloomy and the change in tone so abrupt some believe Paul's application (1 Cor. 15:55) "contextually problematic". But that was the point, against the strong enemy of death God is victorious, in love He redeems the lost venting His rage at that which separates Him from them. He will show Death no pity.

As Keil points out:

*The questions, "Where are thy plagues, O death?" etc., are obviously meant to affirm the conquest or destruction of hell and death...To redeem or ransom from the hand (or power) of hell, i.e., of the under world, the realm of death, is equivalent to depriving hell of its prey, not only by not suffering the living to die, but by bringing back to life those who have fallen victims to hell, i.e., to the region of the dead... The Apostle Paul has therefore very properly quoted these words in 1 Cor. 15:55, in combination with the declaration in Isa. 25:8, "Death is swallowed up in victory," to confirm the truth, that at the resurrection of the last day, death will be annihilated, and that which is corruptible changed into immortality.-Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 10, p. 104). Hendrickson.*

Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 87B: R. Eleazar (ca. 270) said, "God exiled Israel to Babylon only because the latter is as deep as Sheol; as it says, 'From the power of Sheol I will free them; from death I will redeem them ...' (Hos 13:14)."... 'From the power of Sheol I will free them ...' (Hos 13:14; thus, there is a restoration from Sheol); but for its (Harpania's) illegitimate ones, there will be no restoration."-Strack,

H. L., & Billerbeck, P. (2021). *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash* (J. N. Cerone, Ed.; J. Longarino, Trans.; Vol. 3, pp. 558–559). Lexham Press.

[#P]

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.

1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly.
2 And he said: “I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.
3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.
4 Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.’
5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.
6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.
7 “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple.
8 “Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy.
9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”
10 So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.
(Jon. 2:1-10 NKJ)

Postmortem Opportunity is the point. As Jonah’s soul faints he remembers God implying repentance. God is not like the worthless gods of the nations, mere idols who have eyes to see but see not, ears to hear but hear not and would be of no help at all to Jonah. The LORD of Salvation is in His Holy Temple, ready to impose His will upon even the lowest Sheol.

The entire loses force if God doesn’t hear prayers of repentance in Sheol, forgiving trespass and redeeming the lost. The stated reason God is unlike idols is He reacts to prayer in Sheol. If there is connection to reality, the metaphor is incoherent and potentially disrespectful.

Jewish Tradition found another name for Gehenna in Jonah’s account:

I.19 A. Said R. Joshua b. Levi, “Gehenna has seven names and these are they: Netherworld, destruction, pit, [Slotki:] tumultuous pit, miry clay, shadow of death, and underworld.
B. “ ‘Netherworld’: ‘Out of the belly of the nether world I cried and you heard my voice’ (Jonah. 2:2).-Neusner, J. (2011). *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (Vol. 3, p. 94). Hendrickson Publishers.

[#Q]

Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

9 *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.*

10 *I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be`from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’*

11 *“As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.*

12 *Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.*

13 *For I have bent Judah, My bow, Fitted the bow with Ephraim, And raised up your sons, O Zion, Against your sons, O Greece, And made you like the sword of a mighty man.”*

14 *Then the LORD will be seen over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, And go with whirlwinds from the south.*

15 *The LORD of hosts will defend them; They shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine; They shall be filled with blood like basins, Like the corners of the altar.*

16 *The LORD their God will save them in that day, As the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, Lifted like a banner over His land—*

17 *For how great is its goodness And how great its beauty! Grain shall make the young men thrive, And new wine the young women. (Zech. 9:9-17 NKJ)*

Post Mortem Opportunity. This is Telescoped Messianic Prophecy of Christ’s First and Second Coming. Like the Quentin Tarantino movie “Pulp Fiction”, the scene flashes back to the resurrection rapture of all in Christ who eagerly wait his second coming for salvation (Heb. 9:27-28) because of the New Covenant in Christ’s Blood. The scene shifts to the prisoners of hope joining God’s forces for the Battle of Armageddon, when the sons of Zion will fight the sons of Greece. Adonikam the Antichrist is a Jewish descendent of the Greek Assyrian Antiochus Epiphanes and at mid-week or 3.5 years into his reign, will declare himself to be the literal seed of Satan (Gen. 3:15) “Son of Destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3-4) prophesied to come. He will revel in it. The Beast, False Prophet who united Britain and America to support the Beast, will be cast body and soul into the Lake of Fire. All their army with Satan’s Nephilim “mighty ones” will become food for the birds of heaven on the mountains of Israel, Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21).

Perhaps Paul had this prophecy in mind when he declared “The Deliverer will come out of Zion” and because of the blood of His covenant “all

Israel will be saved”:

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”
28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.
29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,
31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.
32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. (Rom. 11:26-32 NKJ)

[#R]

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men...in the age to come.”

30 “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.
31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.
32 “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matt. 12:30-32 NKJ)

Commentators miss Jesus’ logic and therefore the implication of postmortem opportunity. Christ is speaking to the Pharisees. They knew God alone could work the miracles the Holy Spirit did through Christ (John 15:22-24). Ignorance didn’t cause their opposition (John 10:24-26; Mk. 15:9). But, if someone speaks against “the Son of Man” (Christ’s identity veiled by human flesh) then every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven because ignorance permits divine mercy (1 Tim.. 1:13; Lev. 5:18; Ez. 45:20; Lk. 12:48). Context requires this forgiveness occurs in “this age and the age to come”.

The same principle explains why blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was NOT forgivable “this age or the age to come.” As teachers of Israel, the Pharisees knew demons cannot make the blind see (John 10:21), cannot feed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes (Lk. 9:12-17), or raise the dead (Dt. 32:39; Mk. 5:41; Lk. 7:14; John 12:9-10). Therefore, they were guilty of eternal sin. It wouldn’t be forgiven, in this age, or the age to come.

Forgiveness of sin in the age to come is Postmortem Opportunity.

[#S]

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men...in the age to come.”

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when **the dead shall hear the voice (ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς) of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.**

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; **so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;**

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all that are in the graves shall hear his voice (ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς),**

29 And shall come forth; they that **have done (ποιήσαντες aorist participle)** good (18 ἀγαθός agathos), unto the resurrection of life; and they that **have done (πράξαντες aorist participle)** evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (Jn. 5:21-29 KJV)

The Father gave Jesus' voice His authority, it kills or makes alive those He wants to so all honor the Son even as they honor the Father (John 5:21-23). If the Dead obediently hear Jesus' voice (John 5:24-25), even those in the grave (John 5:28-29) they will rise to the resurrection of life. That is postmortem opportunity plainly stated.

Judgment pivots on the Dead's response to Christ's voice: They "having done" (ποιήσαντες 4160 ποιέω poieo) good (18 ἀγαθός agathos, obeying the voice) rise unto the resurrection of life, and they "having accomplished" (πράξαντες 4238 πράσσω prasso) evil (not obeying the voice) rise unto a resurrection of damnation.

Many commentators minimize the subsequent (following) use of the aorist participle. Even such scholars as Robertson and Moulton, who recognize that the participle is not time-bound, resist this category of usage. But there are a number of examples in biblical and extra-biblical Greek where an aorist participle is used to refer to an action occurring after the action of the main verb. In virtually all of these examples, the aorist participle is placed after the main verb in syntactical order.- Porter, S. E. (1999). Idioms of the Greek New Testament (p. 189). JSOT.

Someone once asked: "How can the dead "do good" (18 ἀγαθός agathos)?" Baptism symbolizes they do it all the time, when we heard Christ's voice we did good by giving "the answer of a good (18 ἀγαθός agathos) conscience towards God" just like the "spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 1 Pet. 3:16), and passed from death into life (John 5:24).

[#T]

What will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Postmortem Opportunity is clearly taught in this context. God the Holy

Spirit, writing through Paul knew the “partial hardening” of Israel” would continue for centuries “until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in”. He knew the “enemies of the gospel” Paul speaks of, would long since have died before Christ the Deliverer came. “What will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” (Rom. 11:15)

I believe Paul’s doxology referencing God’s mercy and Judgment (Rom. 11:33-36) shows Paul understood this too.

7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded...

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

...

*15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, **what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?***

...

*25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, **that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.***

*26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “**The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;***

27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

30 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,

31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”

35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:7-36 NKJ)

[#U]

“He went and preached to the spirits in prison”

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that

*He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive (ζωοποιηθεῖς) by the Spirit,
19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,
20 who formerly were disobedient (544 ἀπειθέω apeitheo), when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.
21 There is also an antitype which now saves us— baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (1 Pet. 3:18-22 NKJ)*

What afflictions many and sore hast thou shewed me! yet thou didst turn and quicken (ἐζωοποίησάς) me, and broughtest me again from the depths of the earth. (Ps. 71:20 [70:20] Brenton Septuagint)

The themes of Triumph and Salvation span this context. 1 Peter 3:18-22 describes a Postmortem Salvation Event when Jesus “descended into the lower parts of the earth” (Eph. 4:8-10) to “proclaim (2784 κηρύσσω kerusso) liberty to the captives” and the “acceptable year of the LORD (Lk. 4:18-19) to the “spirits in prison.”

As this scene unfolded neither Noah, the eight souls with him or the Flood came to Peter’s mind, he saw the Antitype of Baptism. Both the Church and “spirits in prison” responded to Christ’s preaching with the “answer of a good conscience towards God”. “Buried with Christ they now rose with Christ to a newness of life” (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:4-7; Col. 2:12-14).

Christ was put to death in the flesh and his human soul went to Sheol (Ps. 16:10; Ac. 2:27), it did not die with the body. God the Holy Spirit gave it life (Job 33:4; Jn. 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6), reviving it (Ps. 70:20 Septuagint) as part of the process of being the “firstborn from the dead” (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). In the sphere of the Spirit Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison.

The prophet David speaks of Christ’s descent into hell and preaching to the formerly disobedient “spirits in prison” (1 Pt. 3:18-22) who gladly give gifts for being shown the LORD could dwell among them. Like the Church, they responded to Christ’s preaching “with the answer of a good conscience towards God”. That is the “like figure” Peter saw in Baptism, not referring to water at all. Having believed Christ’s preaching the formerly disobedient were raised to a newness of life (Rom. 6:4. Col. 2:12. Eph. 2:3-7) “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pt. 3:21-22). Upon learning Christ is the only way to Salvation; the formerly rebellious humans in like figure become God’s gift to the church of apostles prophets evangelists pastors teachers “for the edifying of the

body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:7-16).

This is postmortem opportunity for the “spirits in prison” plainly stated.

[#V]

For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead

3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles— when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.
4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.
5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Pet. 4:3-6 NKJ)

Postmortem opportunity plainly stated.

Evildoers “think it strange (3579 ξενίζω xenizo)”; “are surprised” (CSB); “cannot understand” (REB) why Christians stopped partying with them, so they react with anger speaking evil of them. “For this reason the gospel was preached ALSO to those who are dead”, when such ignorance is impossible: “That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.”

Just as in Matthew 12:30-32 [#R], those who knew not the master’s will are beaten with a few stripes (Lk. 12:48) and having been judged there is opportunity to repent (Heb. 9:27) and “live according to God in the Spirit” while they “eagerly wait for Him” to “appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” (Heb. 9:28).

[#W]

“that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.
4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5:3-5 NKJ) 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.
4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
(1 Cor. 5:3-5 NKJ)

Another post-mortem opportunity is where Paul “delivers” a man to “Satan for the destruction of the flesh”, which slowly ends in death. Once stripped of his sinful nature, his repentant soul or “spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:3-5). “May be saved” because it depends on his choice to repent and plead Christ’s sacrifice bear his sins (Heb. 9:29).

It is important to clarify the timeline here. The “day of the Lord Jesus” does not refer to any immediate event following the man’s demise. It pertains to Christ’s Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:5, 15:51-54; Rev. 14:12-16; 7:9, 14), which is set in the indefinite future. A less likely interpretation might associate it with Judgment Day (Rev. 20:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1), but that too is a future event.

In either interpretation, salvation occurs well beyond the man’s earthly demise, in the “day of the Lord Jesus,” not in the immediate aftermath of the physical destruction of his flesh. This understanding provides a strong argument that salvation can occur after death, supporting the concept of post-mortem evangelization and salvation.

[#X]

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment

In the book of Hebrews, we learn that God executed this comprehensive salvation plan through His only begotten Son, not within the confines of the earthly Jerusalem Temple, but in the celestial realm of the heavenly temple. Here’s where the distinction becomes significant: unlike the earthly High Priest’s yearly offering for the living, Christ’s sacrifice was once, at the “end of the ages,” to cleanse the sins of all humanity ever since the inception of the world or *kosmos* (Hebrews 9:24-26).

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—
26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos); but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. 9:24-26 NKJ)

From God’s timeless perspective, the metaphorical ‘slaying of the Lamb’ happened simultaneously with the creation of the world. The phrase “slain from the foundation of the world” underscores this pre-temporal nature of Christ’s sacrifice. As soon as God began creating, the Lamb of God, who is responsible for removing the sin of the world, was sacrificed, and the names of those saved were inscribed in the Book of Life (John 1:29, Revelation 13:8).

This assertion is further substantiated by the writer of Hebrews who says

all humans inevitably face death and then judgment. However, we read some among them then “eagerly wait” for Christ’s second coming, evidently because He appears for their salvation apart from their sins which had already been dealt with through His sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:27-28):

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb. 9:27-28 NKJ)

This expansive perspective of salvation underpins the all-encompassing nature of God’s love and His intent to extend redemption to the entire *kosmos* so it is not a matter of temporal and geographical luck. God’s merciful acts of sacrifice transcends the boundaries of time, offering salvation to all of humanity, past, present, and future.

[#Y]

” And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life”

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone (εἴ τις) not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15 NKJ)

Postmortem opportunity for salvation on Judgment Day is implied by the opening of “the Book of Life”. That people are saved on Judgment Day is explicitly stated by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 12:2) Jesus Christ (John 5:28-29) and His apostle Peter (Acts 24:15).

There are three books according to the three classes of humans God foreknew before creation—before the fall corrupted their free will. He saw who were thoroughly righteous, thoroughly wicked, and the “Middling People”.

The “book of the living” (Ps. 69:28) is also called “the Book of Life” (Rev. 20:12, 15). From Rev. 17:8 we know the Book of Life was written from the foundation of the world and that it did not contain the names of the wicked (also Rev. 13:8). That implies the existence of the Book of the Wicked with their names and deeds (Rev. 20:12-13). Because the names

of the Elect were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, they cannot be blotted out of the Book of Life (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4). Therefore, the existence of names that can be blotted out of the Book of Life implies the existence of the “Book of the Middling People” that record their names and deeds in this fallen realm and determine if their names will be blotted out or inscribed in the Book of Life (Ps. 69:28).

Therefore, the symbolism of the books used during the Great White Throne Judgment by Christ reveals Postmortem Opportunity for Salvation.

Moreover, the wording “And if anyone (εἴ τις) was not found in the Book of Life” implies some were found because “if anyone” cannot be a hypothetical “first-class condition” in an argument. John isn’t arguing a point, he is reporting what he saw.

In the days of Christ, the School of Hillel interpreted the Old Testament revealed a merciful God who forgave repentant sinners, even those in Sheol. Paul was a Pharisee (Ac. 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5) of this school so their teachings are relevant context when interpreting Paul’s eschatology. They believed three classes of People appear on Judgment Day: The Righteous, the Wicked, and the “Middling People”. This construct is evident in John’s vision of Judgment Day where multiple books are opened.”

[I.15 A] Said R. Kruspedai said R. Yohanan, “Three books are opened [by God] on the New Year: one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for middling [people].

[B] “The thoroughly righteous immediately are inscribed and sealed for [continued] life.

[C] “The thoroughly wicked immediately are inscribed and sealed for death.

[D] “Middling [people] are left hanging from New Year until the Day of Atonement.

[E] “If they [are found to have] merit, they are inscribed for life.

[F] “If they [are found] not [to have] merit, they are inscribed for death.”

[G] Said R. Abin, “What is the Scriptural [foundation for this]? [Ps. 69:28 states]: ‘Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. Let them not be inscribed among the righteous.’ ‘Let them be blotted out of the book’-this refers to the book of the thoroughly wicked. ‘[... of the] living’-this refers to the book of the righteous. ‘Let them not be inscribed among the righteous’-this refers to the book of middling [people].”-Neusner, J. (2011). The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Vol. 6b, p. 83). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Rabbi Abin relies on unstated implications: “Let them be blotted out” implies the Book of the Thoroughly Wicked because the action is ongoing, they will never repent. “Book of the Living” lists the names of the Thoroughly Righteous. “Inscribed among the righteous” implies the Book of

the Middling People because they chose to be Righteous. Unlike the Thoroughly Righteous, or Wicked, they had a choice.

Scholarship that ignores the Jewish context of the NT is unwise:

Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old." (Matt. 13:52 NKJ)

END NOTES

[1]

Only a fool would deceive himself saying, "I'll sin now and be forgiven later."

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (Gal. 6:7 NKJ cp. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Jer. 23:19-32)

It is better to believe the gospel of Christ now while alive than take the chance God may deny a postmortem opportunity is needed, since you had sufficient knowledge and opportunity to believe while alive.

No enemy of God or willfully wicked will get a postmortem opportunity. Jesus explained this when He says "he who is not with Me is against Me" (Mt. 12:30). Only those ignorant of God in Christ will be forgiven sins against Him. There is no forgiveness for knowingly opposing God in this age or the age to come (Mt. 12:31-32).

Moreover, only a fool prefers a pointless life of vanity where nothing satisfies, than a life of Joy in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and God the Father and God the Son Jesus Christ.

28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30 NKJ)

This is worth more than life itself.

44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

46 "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:44-46 NKJ)

Nothing I wrote implies Christ was inaccurate when He said the Rich Man

was in “torments.”

23 “And being **in torments in Hades**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

25 “But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. (Lk. 16:23-25 NKJ)

Many who die will be in Hell from that time forward, until after the 1,000-year millennial kingdom of Christ. Not released until the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:7-15).

Do you really want to take that chance?

Remember, Hell is not paradise. That is among the biggest understatements a man has ever made.

[2]

The Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15 is a “krisis” Judgment Christians are exempt from. They already passed from death into life and given supernatural resurrection bodies like Christ. They reigned with Him as His Kings and Priests during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6).

However, they did appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rev. 20:4) to receive or not receive recompense for their deeds, good or worthless:

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? **For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

11 For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.”

12 So then **each of us shall give account of himself to God.** (Rom. 14:10-12 NKJ)

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.** (2 Cor. 5:9-10 NKJ)

14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:14-15 NKJ)

This last has been misunderstood as purgatory for believers. Its simile,

if anyone’s work is burned because it was worthless they will suffer the loss (of everything in the house), flee it carrying nothing escaping “as a man through fire” escapes emptyhanded.

4 For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

*5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. **Then each one’s praise will come from God.** (1 Cor. 4:4-5 NKJ)*

[3]

As for the repentant dead, they are in a sleep-like state unaware of the passage of time (John 11:11-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18); conscious enough to “patiently wait” (553 ἀπεκδέχομαι apekdechomai) for Christ (Heb. 9:27-28) and the resurrection to life (John 5:28-29).

Similar wording in 1 Peter 3:18 θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” implies the “trial/judgment/torment” in hades ends” when they repent and “live according to God in the Spirit” (ζῶσιν δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι). As their “spirit” is quickened, it is enveloped in the loving embrace of God the Holy Spirit. (Compare ἐν ᾧ καὶ “in which also” 1 Pet. 3:19) indicating He also shielded our LORD from any torments, as all suffering for our sin ended at the cross (John 19:30).

[4]

16 “For God so loved the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 “For God did not send His Son into the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos) to condemn the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos), but that the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos) through Him might be saved.

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18 NKJ)

In John 3:16-18 “world” (2889 κόσμος kosmos) appears four times, contrasting the *kosmos* from whence God’s Son came with “the *kosmos* of humanity.” Therefore, it is impossible His Son saved only some in the *kosmos* – excluding all born before Christ came or didn’t hear the Gospel of Christ after the 1st century.

Why? Because that is like saying God sent His Son to save the house, but He didn’t save the basement. The basement is part of the house just like the other rooms.

God sent His Son to save the entire kosmos (Jn. 1:9, 29; 4:42; Rm. 5:10;

8:32; 2 Cor. 5:19) whether living or dead (Jn. 5:24-25, 28-29; Heb. 9:27-28; 1 Pt. 4:6) , all born into it since the world began. (Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:24-26; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:9-10; 8:32)

*19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,
20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Col. 1:19-20 NKJ)*

“Things on earth” are humans, therefore “things in heaven” are humans in heaven waiting for resurrection. Not angels. All the patriarchs etc. in heaven, were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ.

Everyone saved since the foundation of the world owes their salvation to the blood of Christ. There is no salvation apart from Christ:

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NKJ)

[5]

Unlike pagan ideas later assimilated into Christendom, eternal punishment in Scripture involves both body and soul in a place called “Gehenna” (aka, “Lake of Fire”) (Mt. 5:29-30; 10:28; 18:9; Mk. 9:43-48; Rev. 19:20). The event where a “Legion” of demons were imprisoned in unclean swine flesh and compelled to drown in a lake prefigured Judgment Day when “souls” are imprisoned in abominable resurrection bodies and thrust into the Lake of Fire (Lk. 8:30-33).

[6]

And if any (εἴ τις) was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15 ASV)

James Boyer incorrectly includes Revelation 20:15 εἴ τις (if any) in his “Corpus of First Class Conditions in the NT” discussing its use in discourse:

If the first class condition states or implies the actual truth, then it could not possibly be used by Christ to say, “If [or according to this view, since] I by Beelzebub cast out demons...(Matt 12:27), nor “Since I do not do the deeds of my father...” (John 10:37), nor “Since I have spoken evil...” (John 18:23). Paul could not have written “Since there is no resurrection...” (1 Cor 15:13), nor “Since Christ is not raised...” (1 Cor 15:14). These are not isolated, peculiar examples; they represent 12% of all the first class conditions in the NT. It is simply not true that first conditions indicate the external objective truth or reality of the condition.-First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?”(Grace Theological Journal Vol 2, p.75)

Revelation 20:15 isn't making a point, John is reporting what he saw as a statement of fact. Therefore, when John notices "if any was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire" it implies some raised from Hades were written in the book of life and therefore not cast into the lake of fire. Why express it negatively? No doubt the horror of watching wicked souls imprisoned in contemptible resurrection bodies reeking of corruption and death (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 66:24; Mk. 9:42-48; Mt. 10:28; Gal. 6:8), standing before the throne and then cast into the lake of fire, made a lasting impression, overwhelming everything else.

END

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