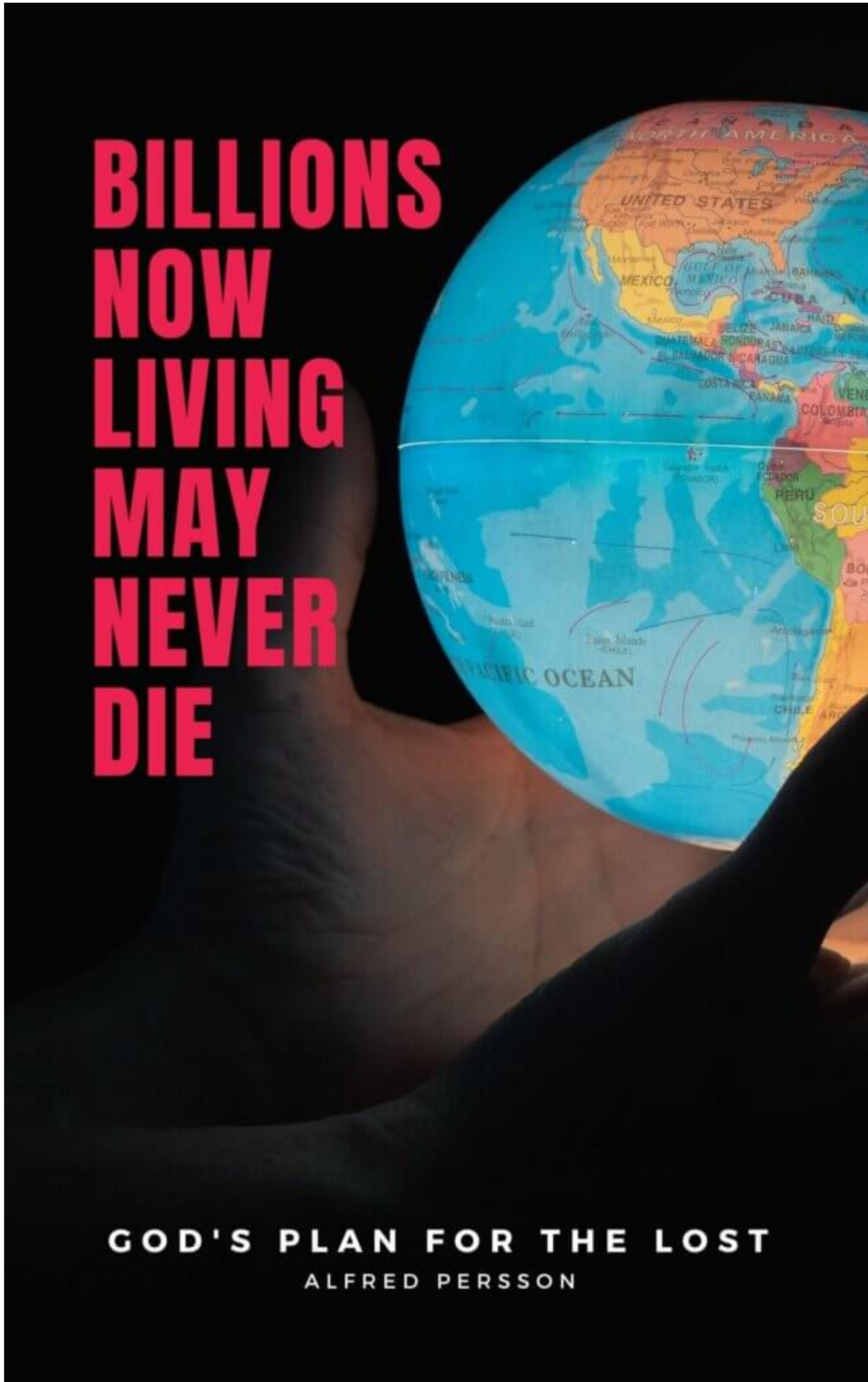


Unlocking the Gates of Immortality: Billions Poised for a Resurrection to Eternity!

written by Alfred Persson | February 10, 2024



As a Christian apologist, my purpose is to defend the truth of the Bible. In this article we will delve into specific passages of the Bible that, upon careful examination, present an alternative perspective on

postmortem opportunity. By analyzing these verses in their historical and cultural context, to gain fresh insights that will glorify our God.

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 the Holy Spirit uses to open the door to a mass of evidence for everything Jesus or His apostles taught. All is explicitly or implicitly in the Old Testament (Mt. 22:40).

*37 Jesus said to him, “`You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
38 “This is the first and great commandment.
39 “And the second is like it: `You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
40 “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 22:37-40 NKJ)*

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.

When God's Plan is fully known, all Creation will praise God:

*3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; **just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.***

*4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: **for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*** (Rev. 15:3-4 KJV)

33 O 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 hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33-36 KJV)

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Rom. 8:28 KJV)

[Attention Readers: Scripture will "pop up" when mouse pointer hovers

over a reference. Click to see more context.]

The Magnitude of Grace: Grasping the Extent of God’s Offer of Redemption:

- 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)

John 3:16-18 delivers a powerful message of love and redemption: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 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.’

In these verses, the Greek term κόσμος (kosmos) appears four times, representing ‘the world.’ This context highlights a strong contrast between the heavenly origin of God’s Son and the *kosmos* of humanity, which He was sent to redeem.

The term κόσμος signifies the entirety of creation, including every person born into it. By extension, God’s love reaches out to every corner of the *kosmos*, offering salvation to all who believe in Him. This vast scope implies that God’s redemptive love is not limited by time, place, or circumstance. Therefore, the *kosmos* could not possibly exclude those born before Christ or those who did not hear the Gospel of Christ after the 1st century.

God sent His Son to save the entire *kosmos* (Jn. 1:9, 29; 4:42; Rm. 5:10; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:19) encompassing all of humanity whether living or dead (Jn. 5:24-25, 28-29; Heb. 9:27-28; 1 Pt. 4:6). This universal aspect of God’s plan is clearly taught in the following Scriptures (Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:24-26; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:9-10; 8:32).

[#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.

“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 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)

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.”

First, let’s clarify the context because it will identify whether Christ proclaimed doom to spirits who would have known that already, or victory over evil. The overarching theme is victory, from Christ’s crucifixion to His glorious ascension into heaven. The Conquering King “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” ” Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15 NKJ). How better to plunder Satan than seize captives, taking “captivity captive” (ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν) and triumphantly giving gifts of life to men and the Church? (Eph. 4:8-10)

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).

“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 Pt. 4:3-6 NKJ)

The passage from 1 Peter 4:3-6 poses the question: what becomes of those who, while alive, refused the gospel, ridiculed Christians, and continued in their life of excessive indulgence? Is there still an opportunity for them to turn their hearts towards God? In a powerful testament of God’s grace, the Apostle Peter confirms that there is indeed hope, even for those who rejected the gospel during their earthly lives. Context implies ignorance of the “account to Him” they must give led to their disbelief, hence the gospel is “preached also” when they are dead and no longer ignorant of the consequences of rejection (Compare Lev. 5:18; Ezek.

45:20; Matt. 12:30-32; Ac. 17:20).

Analyzing this passage, we see that Peter is addressing a community of believers who have abandoned their past lifestyles of sin, behaviors that were common among the Gentiles. They had previously partaken in “lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pt. 4:3). This radical change of lifestyle, naturally, perplexes their contemporaries, who view these changes as strange and speak ill of believers.

Peter assures these believers that the very people who deride them for their choices will ultimately answer to God, “who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pt. 4:5). He provides a comforting and groundbreaking revelation that even those who have died after rejecting the gospel will receive the message of Christ. This presents a picture of God’s Divine mercy, emphasizing His desire for all to be saved.

“The gospel was preached also to those who are dead,” Peter writes (1 Pt. 4:6). This is a profound theological assertion. Even though they faced human judgment in the flesh and died without accepting the gospel, God’s intention is that they might “live according to God in the spirit.” It implies an opportunity for posthumous redemption, one that affirms God’s enduring commitment to extending His love and grace to all of humanity.

“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)

To delve deeper into Matthew 12:30-32, we need to fully grasp the context in which Jesus made these statements. These verses address the dangers of conscious, informed opposition to the clear work of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 12:30-32, Jesus communicates an essential and profound truth about forgiveness. The future passive indicative of ἀφίημι, “will be forgiven,” denotes a certainty rather than a mere possibility. This language leaves no room for ambivalence; forgiveness is a definitive act, a divine response to human transgression, to occur in this life and even into the next.

Jesus teaches that “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men” (Matthew 12:31), indicating an expansive scope of divine forgiveness that extends beyond the present age into the “age to come.” This potential for forgiveness in the subsequent age suggests a possibility for postmortem salvation, a concept supported by the understanding of God as eternally

merciful.

Yet, Jesus adds a caveat: “blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matthew 12:31). In this context, Jesus refers to a willful, defiant repudiation of God’s manifest work through the Holy Spirit, a conscious rejection of God’s grace that transcends mere ignorance or misunderstanding of Jesus’ divine identity.

The nuanced structure of these verses indicates that sins committed out of a lack of understanding or recognition of Jesus as the divine “Son of Man” may be forgivable even in the subsequent age, pointing to a broader opportunity for salvation (comp. Lev. 4:1-4; 5:17-18; Ezek. 45:20; Lk. 12:47-48; Ac. 17:20; Jas. 4:17). However, it also underscores the profound spiritual danger of informed and deliberate opposition to the clear work of the Holy Spirit, which precludes forgiveness both in this life and the next.

Thus, Matthew 12:30-32 upholds the breadth and depth of God’s mercy while warning against the spiritual peril of obstinate resistance to the Holy Spirit’s work. It signals the potential for forgiveness beyond the grave, thereby underlining God’s enduring love for humanity and His desire for all to attain salvation. However, it also underscores the ultimate importance of recognizing and accepting God’s grace in our lives.

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)

This context teaches obedience to Jesus' voice even in death, results in eternal life.

The scribes and Pharisees objected to Christ healing on the Sabbath, rejecting His Divine authority to do so. In response Jesus reveals who they are resisting, the very one holding their life in His hand.

Jesus answers their rejection of His authority by revealing His authority over their life was equal to that of His 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, so that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father (John 5:22-23). Because Christ loves His enemies, He warns they are rejecting eternal life: "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).

Postmortem Opportunity is implicit in what Jesus said. He spoke to all the "[spiritually] Dead", who "now is" in His audience, or in the future would be in the grave.

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.

"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 clear proof post-mortem salvation is possible is seen when Paul
“delivers” a man to “Satan for the destruction of the flesh” which would
certainly result in his death. Paul does this that “his spirit may be
saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:3-5). “May be saved”
because it was still up to him to repent of serious sin.

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.

[#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, [0 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. 2:1-3:1 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 no connection to reality, the praise is incoherent and potentially insulting.

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.

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From here down the file is being edited and hopefully finished before July 31 2023:

Acceptance or rejection of the Gospel of Christ are the ONLY grounds for Judgment (Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Jo. 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 Jo. 5:11-12):

It logically follows from God creating such a big universe (cp. Rm. 1:20) that His plan is for many to inhabit it, not just a few:

*Then He brought him outside and said, “**Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.**” And He said to him, “**So shall your descendants be.**” (Gen. 15:5 NKJ)*

*9 After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;***

*10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, **Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.** (Rev. 7:9-10 KJV)*

Some object, “Didn’t Jesus say only a few would be saved?” Yes He did, but it is wrong to take His words out of context to teach a pretext. Only a few of that evil and wicked generation will be saved (Mt. 12:39; 16:4; Lk. 11:29), although they ate and drank in Jesus’ presence and witnessed the miracles He did, they wickedly demanded more. Jesus refused to dance to their tune (Mt. 11:16-30). Only a few of them would be saved compared to everyone not so unreasonable from the four corners of the earth:

23 Then one said to Him, **“Lord, are there few who are saved?”** And He said to them,

24 **“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

25 **“When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’**

26 **“then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’**

27 **“But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’**

28 **“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.**

29 **“They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. (Lk. 13:23-29 NKJ)**

Why don't more Christians preach this? Most interpret Christ's parable "the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats" is about them and unbelievers. Christians are "the Sheep", and unbelievers "the Goats". Therefore, "all the nations" must denote the entire human race and the parable is about the Final Judgment. When those premises are correct, only actions done while alive establish eternal destiny. One is either saved or not saved in this life, there is no place for repentance after death. Wherever scripture implies post-mortem evangelization or salvation, it is interpreted otherwise. 1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6 are good examples of this.

**Therefore, those who deny post-mortem salvation do so because they believe Christ's parable about the Sheep and the Goats forbids it. The following Catholic interpretation (also believed by most Protestants) does rule out post-mortem salvation:**

*§ f 25:31–46 The Last Judgement... Our Lord, speaking here of this second and final judgement, shows no trace of nationalism. The judgement by which the kingdom of the Son is purified before becoming the kingdom of the Father is decided exclusively on religious grounds... Man is fitly judged by the Son of Man and the judgement is universal. The ‘sheep’, for their mild expression and docility, are a suitable image of the faithful followers of Christ the shepherd, Jn 10:3, 4, 27. They are distinguished from the ‘goats’ (cf. Ez 34:17), mistrustful of eye and intractable of conduct, aptly chosen as their wicked counterpart. ...The sentence of the wicked, expressed more briefly than the invitation of the just, is a terrible one. Instead of ‘Come!’, ‘Depart!’; in place of the Kingdom, ‘everlasting fire’.-Jones, A. (1953). The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St Matthew. In B. Orchard; E. F. Sutcliffe (Eds.), A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (pp. 897–898). Toronto; New York; Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson.*

**The above interpretation is impossible, consider:.**

31 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

32 *“All the nations (1484 ἔθνος ethnos) will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.*

33 *“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. (Matt. 25:31-33 NKJ)*

Did Christ say “all the nations [of the world]” will be judged, or “all the [Christian] nations” will be judged?

For example, Christ says the kingdom will be given to a “nation” (1484 ἔθνος ethnos) meaning Christians: “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation (1484 ἔθνος ethnos) bearing the fruits of it” (Matt. 21:43 NKJ). Peter also used “nation” to refer to Christians in 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1484 ἔθνος ethnos).” Therefore, “All the Nations” can mean “all the nations [of Christendom]” or more precisely, “all the people” [who heard the Gospel of Christ and were therefore liable for not obeying it.]

That is how some in the early Church interpreted it:

*If, after all this, we cannot suppose that a judgment of non-Christians is here meant, we may even go still further, and say that non-Christians are not included at all, and so we must also reject the view usually adopted, since Chrysostom and Augustine, that what is here exhibited is a judgment of all men, believers and unbelievers alike. For, so far from the mention of the divine ἐκλογή, ver. 34, or the idea of the δίκαιοι, ver. 37, or what Jesus says at ver. 35, or the answer of those assembled before the Judge, vv. 37 and 44, or the entire omission generally of any distinction between belief and unbelief, harmonizing with the notion of a mixed body consisting of Christians and non-Christians, they entirely exclude the latter. We should therefore return to the very old view (Lactantius, Instit. vii. 20; Jerome, Euthymius Zigabenus), which, though it had been neglected in consequence of the prevalent eschatology, was preserved by Grotius, the view, namely, that what **Jesus is here depicting is the judgment of Christians**: περὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν δὲ μόνων ὁ λόγος ἐνταῦθα, Euthymius Zigabenus, who proves this, above all, from vv. 35, 36. All the points previously adduced as arguments against the other explanations combine to favour this view.-Meyer, H. A. W. (1884). *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (W. Stewart, Ed.; P. Christie, Trans.; Vol. 2, pp. 178–179). T&T Clark.*

Context supports this early Christian Interpretation. “Goat-like behavoir” is seen in the Five Virgins foolishly failing to greet the Bridegroom when He came (Mt. 25:1-13) and in the “wicked and lazy



servant” who did nothing for the Kingdom of God (Mt. 25:14-31). After saying these parables, Christ talks about the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats. Isn’t it reasonable He is still talking about those who should have been ready for His arrival? That can’t be said about “all the nations [of the world],” it can only be said about ‘All the nations [liable for having heard the gospel of Christ].’”

Confirming “All the Nations” must refer to “all who failed to be ready for Christ’s return” is the fact this Judgment happens at Christ’s return, not after the 1000-year millennial Kingdom. Also, unlike Judgment Day when the dead are raised from the Sea, Death, and Hades (Rev. 20:11-15) , no resurrection occurs in Matthew 25: 31-46.

Furthermore, the Sheep cannot be Christians because this Judgment occurs while they are seated with Christ and His angels, as Kings and Priests. “These my Brethren (Mt. 25:40; Rm. 8:29) were “gathered” (2 Thess. 2:1) from the earth during Christ’s coming in glory. They reign with Christ as Kings and Priests (Rev. 1:6; 20:4-6; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; Mat. 24:29-31; Rev. 14:14-16). Because they believed in Christ when physically alive, they do not “come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” (John 5:24). As Christ’s “Brethren” they have authority to judge the unsaved with Christ (Mt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:3; Rev. 20:4), the “firstborn among many brethren” (Rm. 8:29).

Both the Sheep and the Goats know Christ, they call Him LORD. They know Christ’s disciples but had not joined them in the Faith. King Jesus decrees if they received His disciples (Mt. 12:40) they have received Him. Those who helped His brethren during the Great Tribulation would receive their reward (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), entry into the Kingdom of God.

*31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

*32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.*

*33 “And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

*34 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

*35 ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;*

*36 ‘I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

*37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?*

*38 ‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?*

*39 ‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’*

*40 “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you,*

*inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

*41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*

*42 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;*

*43 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

*44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'*

*45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*

*46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt. 25:31-46 NKJ)*

The unsaved in Christendom are the theme of this context. The ten virgins know Christ "the bridegroom" but only five reacted in a positive manner. They do not become Christians until the wedding banquet when the door is shut. The unwise Goats are left in the outer darkness, Christ does not know them (Mt. 25:1-13). Same with the Servants of the man on a journey, only those who respond correctly are rewarded upon his return. The wicked Goat servant who clearly didn't know the Master is cast into the outer darkness (Mt. 25:14-30). The theme is carried over to the time of Christ's arrival, in Christendom many did not commit to Christ. These Sheep and Goats are now judged. Those who vicariously received Christ by receiving His brethren are deemed to have received Christ (Mt. 25:40), those who did not He does not know so casts them away. As Peter said, Judgment begins first with the house of God (1 Pt. 4:17). Therefore, "all the nations (1484 ἔθνος ethnos)" gathered before Christ and His angels (Mt. 25:32) are not "all humanity" of the earth, they are "all the people" [who heard the gospel of Christ] preached (Mt. 24:14; 28:19) and so were held liable for how they responded to it.

*1484 ἔθνος ethnos {eth'-nos}*

*Meaning: 1) a multitude (whether of men or of beasts) associated or living together 1a) a company, troop, swarm 2) a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus 2a) the human race 3) a race, nation, people group 4) in the OT, foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles 5) Paul uses the term for Gentile Christians-Strong's Concordance*

That the Sheep are "of the elect" is deducible from Jesus inviting them to enter the Kingdom prepared "for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). Such things can only be said to the Elect (1588 ἐκλεκτός eklektos Eph. 1:3-12). They had not actualized their salvation in time by

an act of faith (Eph. 2:8).

Christ commands the sheep enter the same eternal state of all resurrected believers (1 Cor. 15:51-55) joining those seated with Him to reign as kings and priests while they wait for the “New Heavens and New Earth” (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pt. 3:13) eternal kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. That Kingdom arrives after Christ’s Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 21:1).

So, nothing explicit is said about the rest of humanity that survived Armageddon and the End Time plagues, who weren’t members of Christendom either a “sheep or a goat.” But as the Millennial Kingdom is populated by people who do marry and reproduce, who can choose to become Gog and Magog and rebel again, it seems the Millennial Kingdom exists so the survivors of Armageddon get a “second chance.”

There are three groups in Revelation 20:4-15. The Righteous, the Unrighteous and the Middling People. Christians are the kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4) having supernatural bodies like Christ’s resurrection body (Mt. 28:6; Mk.16:6; Lk. 24:6-7; 1 Jo. 3:2) and do not marry or bear children (Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25). Both the Unrighteous who can die during the Millennial and the Middling people repopulate the earth with billions of people. Those who are saved join Christian kings and priests. The rest remain “spiritually dead” until the Great White Throne Judgment. Just before this judgment, the Unrighteous become Gog and Magog following Satan again, and are consumed by fire (Rev. 20:7-10). The Middling people are the first to stand before the Throne and be judged according to their deeds. If these merit their names being recorded in the book of life, then they changed in a twinkling of an eye and given resurrection bodies like Christ’s. Those whose names are not found in the book of life die the second death.

Then rest of earth’s dead are judged, Death Hades and the Sea give up their dead. They are judged according to whether they repented of evil in Hades and believed in the LORD Jesus Christ, to have their name transposed from the book of the Middling People to the Book of Life:

*[#Y] 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 not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the*

*lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15 NKJ)*

Not only are billions alive at the time of Christ's coming saved and so never die, but all those who died without Christ since the foundation of the earth hear the gospel preached while in the grave, and those who obey it will rise to a resurrection of life during the Great White Throne Judgment that occurs at the End of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. It is called "Judgment Day" not "Sentencing Day" because the dead are JUDGED according to their works up until that time (Rev. 20:12-13), whether they obediently heard obeying the voice of Christ our LORD.

Therefore, Catholic-Protestant *confirmation bias* that refuses to accept scripture that repentance in Hell is possible must be rejected as unsound.

*And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. (Jon. 2:2 KJV)[2]*

*I called on Your name, O LORD, From the lowest pit (0953 בֹּרַח בֹּרַח bowr). (Lam. 3:55 NKJ)*

*1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

*2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit (0953 בֹּרַח בֹּרַח bowr), out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

*3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.(Ps. 40:1-3 KJV)*

*As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit (0953 בֹּרַח בֹּרַח bowr) wherein is no water. (Zec. 9:11 KJV) Compare Luke 16:24*

Therefore, rather than superimpose the bias all raised from Death and Hades are unsaved wicked who are eternally lost, we can accept the implication of John's negative: " anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"—it implies SOME WERE found written in the Book of Life and therefore NOT cast into the fire:

*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15; Compare John 5:28-29; Dan. 7:10)*

Do You And Family Want Everlasting Life In The Coming Cosmic Paradise?

***16 For God so loved the world 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 to condemn the world, but that the world 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)*

Unlike religions that speak of life in heaven or on paradise earth, the true Gospel of Christ promises believers everlasting life in a cosmic paradise too wonderful to imagine:

*7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,  
8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

*9 But as **it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”***

*10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Cor. 2:7-10 NKJ)*

The Cosmic Paradise is so unlike the present it is called “the New Heavens and New Earth”:

*“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. (Isa. 65:17 NKJ)*

*1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

*2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*4 “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

*5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”*

*6 And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

*7 “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (Rev. 21:1-7 NKJ)*

**Some fear the New Heavens and New Earth will be oppressive, liberty replaced by ever present rule. That is the opposite of what God has promised:**

*16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.  
17 **Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.***

*18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,*

*just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:16-18 NKJ)*

We will have the time of our eternal lives, exploring every aspect of God and His infinite creation, doing our heart's delight:

*Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Ps. 37:4 NKJ)*

*10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.*

*11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

*12 I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives,*

*13 and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor— it is the gift of God.*

*14 I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. (Eccl. 3:10-14 NKJ)*

Its is clear from Genesis, Adam and Eve had autonomy, God visiting as a friend on occasion looking in:

*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, (Gen. 3:8 NKJ)*

Confirming the liberty given to His children, God did not want His rule be replaced by an oppressive king:

*6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD.*

*7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Sam. 8:6-7 NKJ)*

That was their defect, not ours:

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

*19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

*20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;*

*21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. 8:18-21 NKJ)*

**What does God tabernacling among men, dwelling with them signify?**



3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them**, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (Rev. 21:3-7 NKJ)

What does it mean for infinite God to "tabernacle...dwell" with humans? It means "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts. 17:28), "one in Him":

*"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also **may be one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (Jn. 17:21 NKJ)*

God is worshipped in His Temple, but in the New Heavens and New Earth the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple, so we will be in Him:

*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Rev. 21:22 NKJ)*

All Born Again Christians, having been Baptized in the Spirit when they believed, experience daily a "foretaste" of this reality: God the Holy Spirit is in them, gently prompting them through their conscience (Rom. 9:1; 8:14; Heb. 4:12; 2 Thess. 2:13-17) to do what is right in the eyes of God. Not oppressive, He liberates from bondage to sin so we can live according to our conscience, and live life abundantly.

I cannot wait for the Revelation of the Children of God, in perfect liberty with God dwelling in us sharing our joys and discoveries as a loving Father does His Children "the apple of His eye".

*17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

*18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.*

*19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying. (Isa. 65:17-19 NKJ)*

*7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*

8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written: **“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”**

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Cor. 2:7-10 NKJ)

END

*Does the Bible teach there is a second chance in the afterlife to be saved by Jesus? (A work in progress)*

- Does The Bible Teach There Is A Second Chance In The Afterlife To Be Saved By Jesus?
- Lazarus and the Rich Man: Can the Rich Man Repent and be Saved?
- The Judgment of the Unsaved Sheep and Goats At Christ’s Return
- Predestination unto Salvation: Was Divine Election Conditional or Unconditional?
- Preaching to the Dead (Postmortem Evangelism)
- Elect Rise From Hell On Judgment Day?
- Does the Lake of Fire symbolize Eternal Torment for all?
- The Origin of Satan and Demons
- The Coming False Christ and His Followers Revealed
- Tell Christians what you believe