

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

written by Alfred Persson | December 12, 2024



Scriptural Evidence of Universal Opportunity for Salvation in Jesus

“God is to us a God of deliverances; And to Yahweh the Lord belong escapes from death.” (Ps. 68:20)

“Christ is the door to salvation. His sacrifice is for all—living and dead.”

What about those who never heard His name? Those who lived before Him? Those who died in ignorance? The Bible says His redemption reaches

everyone, everywhere.

“The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) offered Himself once at the end of the ages to cover all sin—past, present, and future (Heb. 9:26). All face death and judgment (Heb. 9:27). That judgment isn’t bound by earthly time.

Peter says the Gospel was preached to the dead, so they might live by God’s Spirit (1 Pet. 4:6). Jesus said the dead will hear His voice, and those who listen will live (John 5:25). They will rise to life if they respond with repentance (John 5:28-29).

Christ entered the heavenly holy place, securing eternal redemption for all who believe. The dead who repent await His second coming. They have passed judgment, live in God’s Spirit, and are free from torment, waiting to rise with the church (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Christ’s sacrifice is infinite and timeless. The Gospel is truly good news for everyone, offering salvation even beyond the grave. This is the promise: hope, redemption, and life for all who turn to Him. Simple. Powerful. True.

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. 4:5-6> NKJ)

“Those who knowingly reject Christ in this life have no second chance. For them, the door closes (Heb. 6:4-8).”

Ignorance of Christ may bring mercy. Jesus said, “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven” (Mt. 12:32). Those who oppose Him without full knowledge might find forgiveness, even in the age to come. But rejecting the Spirit’s work is final and unforgivable.

Salvation comes only through Christ. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). This isn’t about luck or geography. All will hear the Gospel, whether in life or beyond.

When the dead face judgment, God, who lives in eternity, applies Christ’s sacrifice to those who respond (Isa. 57:15; Mk. 10:27). The offer is clear: forgiveness for the ignorant, but no pardon for those who knowingly turn away. Simple and final.

A Survey of Scriptures that may Support Postmortem Opportunity for Salvation

Dt. 32:39 [#A]; 1Sam. 2:6 [#B]; 2Sam. 22:5-7 [#C]; Ps. 16:10-11 [#D]; Ps. 30:1-4 [#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]; Luke 16:19-31[#Z]; John 3:16-18[#ZA]

[#A]

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

“I am He. I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal. None can deliver from My hand.”

God’s words are clear. He holds life and death in His hand. He judges, He restores, and He alone has the power to save.

“Vengeance is Mine. Their foot shall slip in due time. The LORD will judge His people and have compassion when their strength is gone. He will say, ‘Where are your gods now? Let them save you.’ But I am He. I live forever. I kill, and I make alive. I will render vengeance to My enemies and repay those who hate Me.” (Deut. 32:35-41 NKJ)

Keil and Delitzsch see this as a metaphor for Israel’s restoration. But the text speaks of more. It declares God’s ultimate sovereignty—over life, death, judgment, and forgiveness. He is the one true God, above all false idols.

This isn’t about a nation’s revival. It’s about God’s unmatched authority to give life and take it, to wound and to heal. His judgment is final, and His mercy is His alone to give. Simple, direct, and undeniable.

[#B]

He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up

“The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.”
(1 Sam. 2:6 NASB)

This shows God’s power over life and death, His rule over the grave. He brings sinners low and raises the repentant. His authority reaches beyond death.

Hannah’s words praise His justice. The proud are shattered, and the weak grow strong. The full grow hungry, and the hungry are fed. The barren bear children, and the fruitful fade.

The Lord makes poor and rich. He humbles and exalts. He lifts the poor from the dust and sets them with nobles. The earth stands on pillars He made.

He guards the faithful and silences the wicked in darkness. Strength does not save a man. Those who fight God are broken. He thunders from heaven, judges the earth, gives strength to His king, and raises His anointed. (1 Sam. 2:3-10)

God rules all—life, death, judgment, and restoration. The living and

Sheol alike answer to Him.

[#C]

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

David praised God for rescue—from Sheol’s grip, from death’s snare. These words show no chance of salvation after death.

“The waves of Death swept over me. The floods of Belial attacked me. The cords of Sheol surrounded me. The snares of Death confronted me. In my distress, I called to the LORD, to my God. He heard my voice from His temple; my cry reached His ears.” (2 Sam. 22:5-7, JPS)

Death closed in. Worthless men struck like a storm. Sheol’s cords twisted like a knot, ready to hold him forever. One mistake, and the snares of death would claim him. But David cried out, and the LORD answered. He saved him from death’s grip. God’s power to save is certain, even at the edge of the grave.

[#D]

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

David spoke as a prophet about the Messiah. As a man, he trusted this promise for himself. He believed he would not be abandoned in Sheol because the Messiah would rescue him. This is not about his sin or postmortem salvation.

“My heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh rests in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor let Your Holy One see corruption. You show me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand, pleasures forevermore.” (Ps. 16:9-11 NKJ)

Peter confirmed this prophecy:

“David is dead and buried, his tomb is here. But as a prophet, he knew God promised that one of his descendants would sit on the throne. He foresaw the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see decay.” (Acts 2:29-31 NKJ)

David trusted in the Messiah’s victory over death. He believed his soul would not remain in Sheol because Christ would rise. This hope let him rest, knowing resurrection awaited him.

David did not expect to escape death like Enoch or Elijah. His hope was not in avoiding death but in rising from it. His faith pointed to the promise of life beyond Sheol, fulfilled in Christ.

[#E]

You have brought up my soul from Sheol

David spoke of repentance and deliverance. His words suggest salvation

even after death.

“A Psalm of David. A song for the temple’s dedication. I will praise You, O LORD, for You lifted me up and did not let my enemies gloat. O LORD my God, I cried to You, and You healed me. You brought my soul up from Sheol. You restored my life from those who go down to the pit. Sing praises to the LORD, you His saints, and give thanks to His holy name.” (Ps. 30:1-4 ESV)

David believed he had died—or come close. He spoke of Sheol, the place of no return, and praised God for pulling him back. This was no metaphor. It was real. The word chayah, “to restore to life,” means just that. It describes revival from death, not recovery from trouble.

Some see this as a near-death experience. David felt himself slipping into Sheol, where hope ends and the pit claims the lost. But David’s words carry weight. He wasn’t speaking in symbols. He praised God for an actual rescue, a return from the edge—or beyond it.

To call this mere metaphor weakens the passage. David’s praise was for what God had done, not for imagined relief. His testimony shows God’s power to save, even after death. It speaks of postmortem salvation, a truth David experienced firsthand.

If his words were only symbolic, his praise would ring hollow. But they don’t. They tell of God’s hand reaching into Sheol and bringing life back. It’s evidence of salvation, even from the grave.

[#F]
He also brought me up out of a horrible (07588 שְׁאוֹן sha’own) pit (0953 בֹּרַח bowr), Out of the miry (03121 יָבֵן yaven) clay (02916 תֵּיט tiyt)

David’s words are simple but powerful. The “horrible pit” and “miry clay” speak of Sheol, the depth of despair and separation from God. Rescue from it means more than survival—it means forgiveness and salvation from death itself.

“I waited patiently for the LORD. He turned to me and heard my cry. He brought me up from a horrible pit, from the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock and made my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God. Many will see it, fear, and trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and does not turn to the proud or to lies.” (Ps. 40:1-4 NKJ)

The pit is deep and bleak, a place where the wicked are lost. David’s rescue shows God’s power to reach even there. It’s not just escape—it’s salvation. His new song is a song of life, a song of redemption.

The rabbis said this pit is Gehenna, a place of utter loss. But David’s story shows hope. God can lift the faithful from even the darkest depths. His deliverance points to resurrection, the promise of life after death.

David’s new song is more than gratitude. It’s the sound of salvation. It points to Christ, the rock of faith and hope. Others hear it and believe. They see God’s saving power and turn from lies to truth.

David’s rescue is real. It’s a witness to God’s strength and a promise of redemption. Even from the depths, God can save. The rock beneath David’s feet foreshadows Christ, the foundation of all salvation.

[#G]
God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol

“God will redeem my soul from Sheol. He will receive me.”

Redemption follows repentance and obedience. This text speaks plainly of salvation after death.

“The foolish go to Sheol, and those who follow them do the same. Like sheep, they are appointed for Sheol, with Death as their shepherd. The upright will rule over them in the morning. Their forms will waste away in Sheol, with no home left. But God will redeem my soul from Sheol’s power. He will receive me.” (Ps. 49:13-15 NAS)

Sheol holds the unrighteous forever. Death is their shepherd, leading them to decay. They fade into shadows, consumed by eternal night. But for the righteous, it is different. God redeems them from Sheol. He brings them into His presence. Morning comes for them, and with it, victory over Death.

If God did not rescue the righteous from Sheol, this promise would be empty—worse, it would mock His care. A man who leaves everything in his cellar to rot cannot be praised for his concern. To praise God for redemption while denying it would be the same.

This psalm teaches postmortem deliverance. The righteous are not left in Sheol. God redeems them, proving His power over death and His love for His own.

[#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)

“God has delivered my soul from death, the death the sinful die.”

Deliverance happens before Sheol. This does not speak of salvation after death.

The Targums, Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, add meaning to help the common people understand. In Edward Cook’s translation, italicized words show how 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 Targum)

David thanked God for saving him from the second death, the one the wicked never escape. He believed he would rise again to walk in God’s light among the living. His deliverance was complete—before Sheol, not after.

[#I]

To GOD the Lord belong escapes from death

“To God belong escapes from death.”

David speaks of Christ’s triumph. He ascended on high, leading captives free and giving gifts to men. But without repentance, this cannot mean salvation after death.

“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. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! To GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.” (Ps. 68:18-20 NKJ)

Paul expands this prophecy. Christ first descended into the earth, then ascended far above the heavens to fill all things. He blesses His church with gifts—apostles, prophets, teachers—to prepare His people, so God might dwell among them.

“But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” (Eph. 4:7-10 NKJ)

This speaks of Christ’s victory over death, fulfilling David’s words. Yet, escape from death is not for all. It is for those who answer with repentance and a good conscience toward God. Without that, there is no postmortem salvation.

Christ conquered death and offers life. He equips His people to grow into unity and fullness in Him. This victory is both now and in the end, but always tied to repentance and faith.

[#J]

And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

“Do not let the pit close its mouth on me.”

The psalmist cries for mercy from the depths. This is a plea for salvation after entering the pit, implying postmortem forgiveness.

“Let not the floodwaters overwhelm me. Do not let the deep swallow me up, nor the pit shut its mouth on me. Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good. Turn to me with Your tender mercies. Do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble. Hear me quickly. Draw near to my soul and redeem it. Deliver me from my enemies.” (Ps. 69:15-18 NKJ)

The psalmist calls out from despair. He knows God’s mercy is great, even in the depths. He believes redemption is still possible. His cry from the pit shows faith that God can save, even when all seems lost. This is the hope of salvation beyond death, the power of God to redeem from the grave.

[#K]

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

“You have shown me troubles, but You will revive me. You will bring me up from the depths of the earth.”

David reflects on his trials. He trusts God to forgive, to quicken his soul, and to lift him from Sheol. This implies salvation even after death.

“You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, will revive me again and bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” (Ps. 71:20 NKJ)

Some translations read “us” instead of “me,” shifting the focus from a personal plea to a national one. Most stick with “me,” tying the psalm to David. As an old man, David recalls his struggles, the troubles caused by his sin, and God’s mercy in delivering him.

God’s past deliverance inspires David’s confidence. He trusts that the same God who raised him once will do so again, even from Sheol. Whether the voice is David’s or the nation’s, the meaning is clear: God’s power to revive reaches beyond the grave. Postmortem salvation is implicit, rooted in God’s mercy and love.

[#L]

You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol

“Great is Your mercy. You have delivered my soul from Sheol.”

The psalmist praises God’s unmatched power. His mercy and works are unlike any other. This implies forgiveness of sin and salvation, even after death.

“Among the gods, there is none like You, O Lord. No works are like Yours. All nations You have made will come and worship You, O Lord, and

glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your truth. Unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart and glorify Your name forever. For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.” (Ps. 86:8-13 NKJ)

God is the Worker of Wonders, the one who performs impossibilities. He delivers souls from Sheol, acts no other can achieve. To call Him “Worker of Wonders” but deny His saving power would mock His name. His mercy and deliverance are real. They reach even into the depths, giving hope to those who repent. This is salvation beyond death, proof of His greatness and love.

[#M]

To release those appointed to death.

“The LORD will build Zion and appear in glory. He will hear the prisoner’s groaning and free those appointed to death.”

This is a prophecy of Christ’s return, not postmortem salvation.

“The LORD shall build Zion. He shall appear in glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise it. This will be written for future generations, for a people yet to be created to praise the LORD. He looked down from His sanctuary, from heaven He viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner and release those appointed to death, to declare the name of the LORD in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem when peoples and kingdoms gather to serve the LORD.” (Ps. 102:16-22 NKJ)

This speaks of Christ’s second coming, when Zion is restored and the nations gather. The groaning of prisoners and release from death are tied to His glory at the end of the age. It is about the creation of the New Testament Church, Jew and Gentile united, to declare His name in Jerusalem. This is not about salvation after death but the triumph of the Messiah.

[#N]

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

“God heard me in Sheol. He delivered my soul from death.”

David speaks of God’s mercy. He recalls a near-death or after-death rescue. He called, and God saved him.

“I love the LORD because He heard my cry. The pains of death surrounded me. Sheol gripped me with trouble and sorrow. I called to the LORD: ‘O LORD, save my soul!’ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous. He saved me when I was brought low. He delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land

of the living.” (Ps. 116:1-9 NKJ)

David’s prayer shifts to the future. Jewish scholars saw in this a promise for future generations—a hope of resurrection on the Day of Judgment. The rabbis linked David’s words to the deliverance of souls from Gehenna, salvation for the righteous from Sheol.

The school of Hillel taught that God’s mercy tips the scale. Those who are neither perfectly righteous nor wicked may rise from Gehenna through divine mercy. David’s psalm supports this, speaking of God’s power to save even from the depths.

David’s testimony isn’t just about his own salvation. It’s a promise of hope for others—salvation for the repentant, even after death. God hears, even in Sheol. God saves.

[#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.”

God speaks with authority. He promises to save His people, even from Sheol. Postmortem salvation is clear.

“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)

This is no question. It is a declaration of victory over death and the grave. Keil and Delitzsch reject any attempt to weaken the promise into doubt. The text affirms that God will rescue those in the realm of the dead and bring them back to life.

Paul later cites this passage in 1 Corinthians 15:55, proclaiming that death will be swallowed up in victory. The prophet’s words, written for Israel, extend to all who trust in God. The promise is clear: Sheol will lose its hold, and death will be defeated.

This is more than poetic hope. It is a declaration of God’s power. He will redeem His people, not just from earthly peril but from the depths of Sheol itself. This is salvation, full and final.

[#P]

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

“Out of the belly of Sheol, I cried, and You heard me.”

Jonah believed God could save even from Sheol. His prayer is clear. He saw his time in the fish as like death, and his deliverance as salvation

from the grave.

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly. 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. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas. The waters surrounded me. The deep closed around me. Yet You brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.’” (Jon. 2:1-6 NKJ)

If God didn’t deliver souls from Sheol, Jonah’s praise would be empty and insulting. But he knew God’s power to save, even from the depths. His prayer shows repentance, trust, and hope in salvation beyond death.

Jewish scholars in Christ’s time understood Sheol’s reality and the possibility of deliverance. They called it a section of Gehenna, where Jonah’s cry was heard. Jonah’s experience wasn’t just survival—it was a metaphor for redemption, even in the grave.

Jonah’s prayer speaks of God’s mercy, power, and salvation. He believed, and he was saved. The same hope reaches to all who call on the LORD, even from the depths.

[#Q]

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

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

The prophecy of Zechariah points to Christ’s sacrifice. His blood frees the captives, even those in Sheol. This is postmortem salvation.

“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. I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit because of the blood of your covenant.” (Zech. 9:9-11 NKJ)

Christ’s first coming is shown, lowly on a donkey. Then it flashes forward to His triumph, where His blood redeems the dead, raising them from the pit. This is no metaphor. The waterless pit is Sheol, and His blood breaks its chains.

The New Covenant in Christ’s blood brings freedom and life. The dead in Christ are raised at His second coming, freed from Hades to reign with Him. This double portion is their reward, as priests and kings, sharing in His triumph.

Paul echoes this in Romans: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness. This is My covenant, when I take away their sins.” Christ’s sacrifice saves, His mercy reaches all, and even the dead are set free.

[#R]

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

“Every sin will be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Spirit. That won’t be forgiven, not in this age or the age to come.”

Jesus spoke plainly. Sins committed in ignorance can be forgiven. Those who reject Him as the Son of Man, seeing only His humanity, can find mercy. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whose power was fully revealed, is eternal and unforgivable.

“If you are not with Me, you are against Me. Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not. Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, in this age or the age to come.” (Matt. 12:30-32 NKJ)

The age to come begins when Christ returns. Those who died in ignorance of Him will be forgiven their sins, even blasphemy against His humanity. If they obey the gospel preached to them, they will rise to life when He appears a second time for salvation.

But there is no forgiveness for eternal sins—blasphemy against the Spirit, leading others into sin, or worshiping the Beast. These sins condemn forever.

This teaching shows hope for the ignorant, even after death. Forgiveness in the age to come means postmortem salvation for those who turn to Christ. But it also draws a clear line: for some sins, there is no return.

[#S]

all that are in the graves shall hear his voice (ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς), And shall come forth; they that have done (ποιήσαντες aorist participle) good, unto the resurrection of life

“The dead will hear His voice and live.”

Jesus spoke of life after death. The dead in their graves will hear His voice. Those who obey will rise to life. Those who don’t will face judgment.

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. The hour is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:21-29 KJV)

The judgment depends on their response. The dead, still in Sheol, will

act when they hear Him. Those who obey rise to life. Those who reject Him rise to condemnation.

The Greek shows this clearly. The aorist participles for “done” mean actions completed after hearing His voice. The dead in the graves still have a choice. This is salvation offered even after death.

Jesus declares it plainly. The Father gives life, and the Son will raise the dead. Judgment comes, but so does mercy for those who listen and obey. Postmortem salvation is real, for His voice reaches even the grave.

[#T]

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.”

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Paul speaks of Israel’s salvation. It comes long after many have died. Postmortem mercy is clear.

“Blindness has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. Then all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion and take away their sins.’ God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable. As you once disobeyed but found mercy, so will they. God has committed all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” (Rom. 11:25-32 NKJ)

The promise doesn’t end in death. At Christ’s second coming, Israel will find mercy, just as the Gentiles did. Enemies of the gospel, once disobedient, will be saved when they repent and believe.

This is God’s plan—unsearchable, beyond understanding. His mercy reaches past life into death. The Deliverer comes, and all who turn to Him will live.

[#U]

“He went and preached to the spirits in prison”

“Christ preached to the spirits in prison. Those who obeyed found life.”

Peter connects Christ’s preaching to spirits in prison with the church’s salvation. The disobedient from Noah’s time heard His voice and responded, just as the church responds in baptism.

“Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom He went and preached to the spirits in prison—those who were disobedient in Noah’s days. Eight souls were saved through water. This is like baptism, which now saves us, not by washing the body but by the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 3:18-22 NKJ)

Christ descended into the depths, proclaiming liberty to captives. The formerly disobedient responded with faith, rising to new life, just as baptism signifies for the church. Both point to salvation through His resurrection.

David spoke of this descent: “You turned and revived me, bringing me up from the depths of the earth.” (Ps. 71:20 Septuagint) Christ’s soul did not perish in Sheol. The Spirit gave it life, making Him the firstborn from the dead. In the Spirit, He preached to those imprisoned, offering salvation.

Peter’s comparison is clear. The response of the spirits mirrors baptism—not water, but faith and repentance. Those who believed rose to new life, joining the church in Christ’s triumph. This passage shows postmortem salvation for the willing, a victory over death and disobedience.

[#V]

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

“The gospel was preached to the dead so they might live according to God in the Spirit.”

Peter says it plainly. Christ preached to the dead. They were judged for their deeds in life but could live again by God’s Spirit. Postmortem salvation is real.

“For this reason, the gospel was preached to those who are dead, so they might be judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the Spirit.” (1 Pet. 4:5-6)

The dead heard the truth, free from delusion and ignorance. They were judged for their deeds but given a chance to respond. Those who answered with a good conscience toward God were made alive by the Spirit, living in hope while awaiting Christ’s return.

This wasn’t metaphorical. The Spirit gave life to souls once trapped as shadows of themselves in Sheol. They lived in the Spirit, unaffected by torment, awaiting salvation with the rest of the church at Christ’s second coming.

The simplicity of this truth cuts through confusion. Christ is the firstfruits, showing the way for all—even those who died unsaved but later believed. The gospel’s reach extends beyond life, offering salvation even in death.

[#W]

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

“Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.”

Paul saw hope even in death. The sinner faced judgment, but his spirit

could still be saved at Christ's return. This shows postmortem salvation.

"Destruction of the flesh" means death. "The day of the Lord" is the moment of Christ's second coming, when the church is raptured and the dead are raised (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Paul believed this man could be saved, even after death, when Christ comes again. The chance for repentance and salvation extends beyond the grave. Simple. Clear. Powerful.

[#X]

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

"Men die once, then comes judgment. Christ, offered once for sin, will appear again to save those who eagerly wait for Him."

The writer of Hebrews speaks plainly. After death, there is judgment. Among the judged are those who wait for Christ, hoping for salvation. This implies postmortem salvation.

"Inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this, judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him." (Heb. 9:27-28)

Christ's sacrifice transcends time and space. Unlike the old covenant's endless sacrifices, His offering was once, for all people, for all time. The gospel is preached even to the dead, giving them a chance to believe, repent, and live according to God's Spirit (1 Pet. 4:5-6).

The New Covenant reaches beyond death. Those who hear and respond pass through judgment and wait for Christ's return. His sacrifice is enough to save all who turn to Him, even after death. This is the promise of salvation, universal and eternal. Simple. Powerful. True.

[#Y]

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

"The dead stand before the throne. Books are opened, and the Book of Life is among them. Names are written, and judgment follows."

Revelation shows names added to the Book of Life on Judgment Day. This implies postmortem salvation for those judged worthy.

"I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. Books were opened, and another book was opened, the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to their works, written in the books. The sea, Death, and Hades gave up their dead, and each was judged. Anyone not found in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:11-15 NKJ)

This matches ancient Jewish belief. The righteous are already written in the Book of Life. The wicked are blotted out. But the middling—the

undecided—have their names inscribed based on their deeds and repentance. Malachi called it the “Book of Remembrance” for those who feared God.

The Book of Life is opened on Judgment Day to add names, not just to confirm them. Those who feared and obeyed are spared. Those who refused are not. This understanding was clear in the first century and aligns with the teachings of Jesus and Paul.

Judgment Day offers hope, even for the middling. It is not the final sealing of fates but a day where some are written into life, showing God’s justice and mercy.

[#Z]

If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded.

“The rich man lifted his eyes in Hades. He was in torment but still called Abraham ‘Father.’”

Jesus told the story plainly. The rich man, suffering in Hades, was not beyond hope. His torment was not final but revealed truth, sorrow, and regret.

The rich man showed no hatred, no blasphemy. He called Abraham “Father” and sought mercy. Abraham called him “son,” a word of affection. This was not the language of eternal condemnation. Even Abraham and the redeemed longed to cross into Hades to ease his suffering, implying redemption was still possible.

The torment was mental anguish, not the fiery pain of hell. The rich man asked only for a drop of water, not for escape. The word used for “torment” (basanos) means testing, like refining gold to reveal its purity. The flame was the flame of God’s judgment, a purging fire to bring truth to the surface.

This imagery points to cleansing, not retribution. The rich man’s suffering, like the refiner’s fire, was designed to strip away delusion and sin. If he believed, even in Hades, he could be saved.

The parable is clear. Torment in Hades is not the end. It’s a chance to face the truth, to repent, and to hope for salvation when Christ comes again. The story holds the promise of redemption, even beyond the grave.

[#ZA]

that the world (2889 κόσμος kosmos) through Him might be saved.

“God so loved the world, He gave His only Son to save it. Not part of it—all of it.”

Christ came for the whole kosmos, all humanity, living and dead. His sacrifice holds infinite value, enough to redeem everyone. Excluding the

dead from salvation would diminish its worth.

“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 to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:16-17 NKJ)

The kosmos includes the living and those in the realm of the dead. Christ descended into the depths, preaching to the spirits in prison, offering salvation to all (1 Pet. 3:18-22). His blood reconciles everything, seen and unseen, through the cross (Col. 1:20).

If salvation only reached the living, billions would be left out. That would make God’s sacrifice seem insufficient. But God sent His Son for everyone, to set captives free—those bound by sin, those in the grave.

The kosmos He came to save is the entire creation. Living or dead, all are called to believe, to be judged, and to live according to God. His love reaches everywhere, even the depths. That is the measure of Christ’s redemption—full, infinite, and complete.

Addendum

Chronology of Judgments/Resurrections

Paul’s summary of main events will be followed by a more detailed list:

- 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
- 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.*
- 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*
- 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.*
- 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*
- 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.*
- 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:20-26 NKJ)*

During Christ’s Second Coming just before He enters Jerusalem all the dead in Christ, whether they came with Him or rise from Hades, take part in the First Resurrection-Rapture of the Church (Heb. 9:28; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:5, 15:51-54; Rev. 14:12-16; 20:4-6).

When Christ enters Jerusalem judgment begins first with the House of God. All the Sheep and Goats of Christendom from every nation, who weren’t born again are judged if they came to the aid of Christ’s brethren during the Great Tribulation. The Sheep who did vicariously “receive Christ” join the kings and priests seated with Christ receiving a “supernatural body” just like Christ and His brethren have. The goats who did nothing

to aid persecuted Christians are cast into Gehenna Fire (Mt. 25:31-46; 13:36-42).

Immediately after or perhaps during that judgment Christ's angels gather all the irredeemably wicked and followers of the Beast and cast them into Gehenna fire (Mt. 13:47-50).

The rest of humanity enter Christ's millennial Kingdom unchanged except they do not grow old or get sick. They repopulate the earth and Christ's brethren reign over them as kings and priests for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

Satan is released from his prison to deceive the earth once more; God sends them such a strong delusion (2 Th. 2:11) like hooks drawing Gog and Magog to their doom (Rev. 20:1-10; Ezek. 38:4; 30:2) Fire from heaven consumes them implying they are cast into Gehenna fire, aka "Lake of Fire".

Yahweh God in Compound Unity sits in the Great White Throne but it is Jesus Christ God the Son who does the judging.

The first is a judgment of the survivors of the Millennial Kingdom. If their deeds and works merit their names being written into the book of life.

Then the Rich Man and all still in hades rise and if they repented after being purged of all wickedness and with their restored free will choose to obey Christ as LORD, their names are then written in the book of life.

But the irredeemably wicked are not written into the book of life and so are cast into Gehenna Fire, also known as the Lake of Fire. It is the second death from which there is no return.

The wicked cast into the lake of fire must have been the majority raised from hades as the vision of them being cast into the lake of fire is emphasized by John (Rev. 20:15).

All found written in the book of life during the Great White Throne judgment are given immortal supernatural bodies and join Christ and His brethren as they enter the New Heavens and New Earth. New Jerusalem descends onto the earth and God dwells among mankind, He in us and we in Him (Rev. 21-22).

ADDENDUM

A theory why most of the Christian Church lost this first century concept of salvation after death.

The Gentile Church became confused about eschatology when Aramaic Palestinian Jews vanished from it. The Roman Empire dispersed that culture, only a remnant of Jews remembered what it was. Many uniquely Jewish concepts became unknown.

We see the change when Christian scholar Clement of Alexandria (150-215), who retired to live with the Bishop of the Jerusalem at the end of his life, says:

So I think it is demonstrated that God (being good) and the Lord (being powerful) both save with a righteousness and equality that extends to all who turn to God, whether here or elsewhere. For it is not here alone that the active power of God is present. Rather, it is everywhere and is always at work.... For it is not right that those persons [who died before Christ] should be condemned without trial, and that those alone who lived after His coming should have the advantage of the divine righteousness. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, EE Eastern), 2.491. Dead, Intermediate State of The. (1998). In D. W. Bercot (Ed.), A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers (p. 192). Hendrickson Publishers.

The Catholic doctrine of Purgatory is a corruption of early Jewish Christian concepts that saw Hades as an intermediate place for the dead that wasn't necessarily a place of punishment but rather a shadowy realm where souls awaited their final fate. First Century Palestinian Jews believed the dead could undergo purification or purgation in preparation for their eventual resurrection or judgment. NT scripture is in agreement plainly stating the dead will rise from Hades and it will cease to exist:

*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. (Rev. 20:13-14 NKJ)*

Christ our Teacher (Mt. 23:8) agrees:

*25 "Most assuredly, I say to you, 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.***

26 "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

27 "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

*28 "**Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice***

*29 "**and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.***
(Jn. 5:25-29 NKJ)

All the dead "in the graves" who obediently "hear" God's voice will rise in "the resurrection of life" but those who do not "hear" obediently will rise "to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:25, 29).

It is written:

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:3 NKJ)

Levi's descendants are God's first fruits (Num. 3:41), as God does for them He will do for all who obey the gospel preached ALSO to the dead that they may live according to God (1 Pet. 4:6):

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. 4:6 NKJ)

For there is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11 NKJ)

The reason why the "Book of Life" is open during the Great White Throne Judgment is to write the names of those redeemed from Hades in it:

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)

COMPARE the teaching of the school of Hillel in Christ's day:

[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].

"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

It is inconsistent with sound hermeneutic exegetes ignore 1st century Jewish Tradition, which Paul the apostle was immersed in (Acts 23:6; 26:4-6) and some of which our LORD Jesus described as “treasure”:

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)

If everything the Pharisees taught was wrong Jesus would have said so. Instead, we read:

*1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.
3 “Therefore **whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do** (Matt. 23:1-3 NKJ)*

A likely reason for God using Paul to write most of the NT was his expertise in 1st century Judaism:

*6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, **I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee**; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!” (Acts 23:6; 26:4-6)*

*4 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem;
5 since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that **I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.**
6 “And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; (Acts 26:4-6 NAS)*

This 1st century Jewish context sheds light on Paul’s statement “All [obedient] Israel” would be saved, even those who had died “enemies of the Gospel” will find mercy. Repentance and redemption is implied:

*26 and thus **all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written, “**The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.**”
27 “And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”
28 **From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but***

from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;
29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,
*31 so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you **they also may now be shown mercy.***
32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. (Rom. 11:26-32 NAS)

All who repent and believe, of course.

End