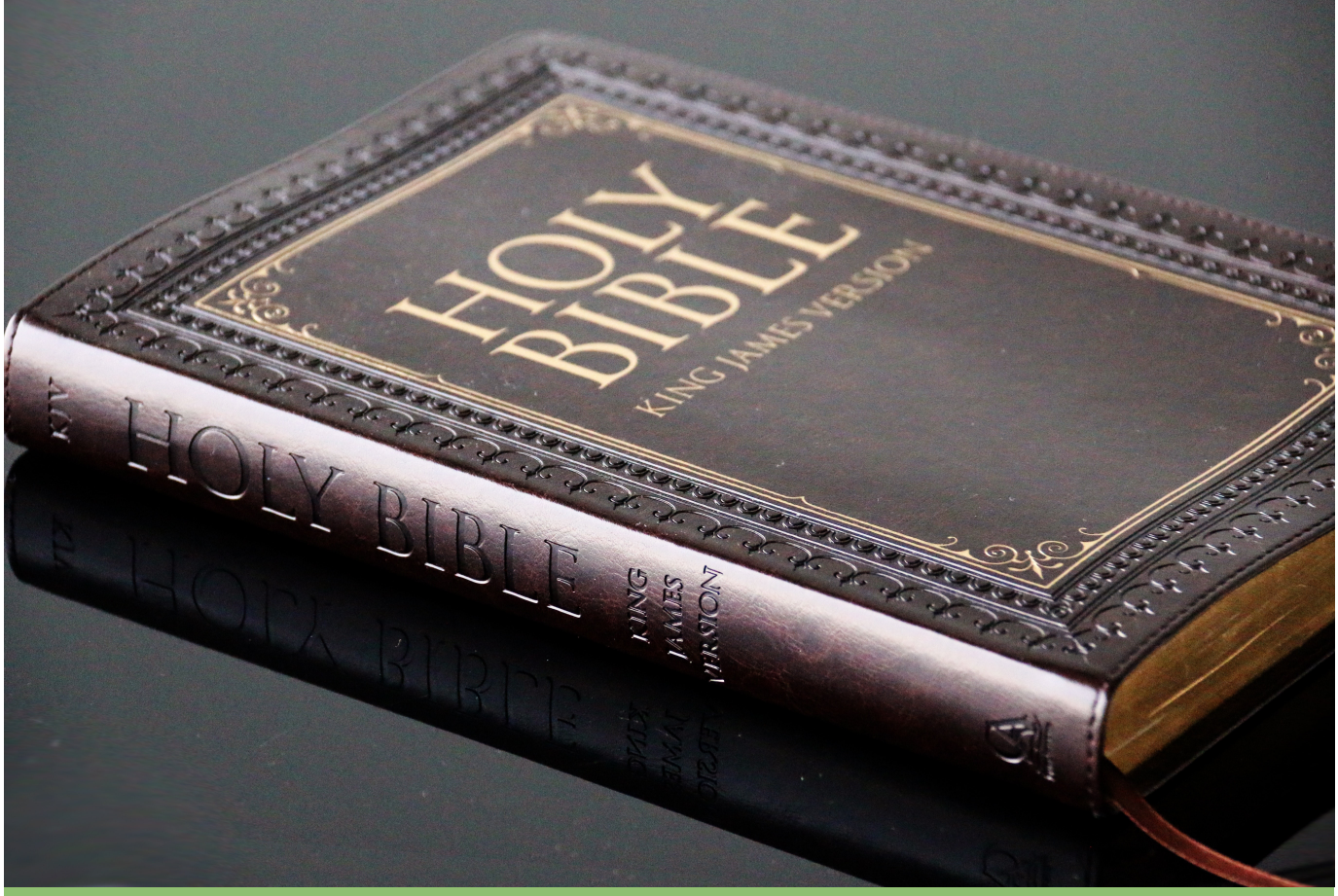


Forbidden Bible Truth

Scriptural facts that Christian leaders don't want you to know

Fourth Edition

Drew Costen

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By Drew Costen

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Introduction – Read this first!

If you're a Christian (in fact, even if you aren't), have you ever wanted freedom from not only the power of sin and the fear of hell, but also from slavery to the seemingly impossible religious rules that many Christians insist one must follow in order to actually be free from these concerns? If so, this book is for you. Throughout it, I'm going to explain some of the most important truths contained in Scripture that the religious leaders of the world do not want you to discover, truths which will set you free from ever having to worry about hell again, as well as from sin's control. And, in fact, if you read this whole book carefully, from beginning to end, you'll be *completely* free from the yoke of *all* religious bondage by the time you finish it.

In order to help you get free, we have to start with one simple question: Have you ever considered the possibility that you might be interpreting parts of the Bible incorrectly? I myself grew up as a conservative, evangelical, "born again" Christian, and I believed quite strongly in the traditional, "orthodox" ideas that most evangelicals assume are taught in Scripture. At some point near the end of the 20th century, however, I was challenged to begin looking at some of the doctrines my religious leaders taught were true, eventually leading to an in-depth investigation of *all* the doctrines we believed, in order to confirm which ones were scriptural and which were really just man-made tradition, and over time I came to recognize that almost *nothing* we learned in the Institutional Church (at least when it comes to the denominations of the churches I attended growing up) actually lines up with Scripture at all, ultimately leading me to write this book in order to share the scriptural interpretations and arguments that convinced me of the supposedly "heretical" doctrines which I now believe

to be far more scriptural than those "orthodox" teachings I grew up believing were true (and this book is indeed going to be full of teachings that you're going to initially believe are heretical and false if you're a traditional Christian, some of which will make you want to stop reading the book, but if you read the whole thing you'll see that everything I say in it is backed up by Scripture).

Of course, I should point out that, no matter what doctrines you hold to, based on the number of denominations that exist within the Christian religion, if you happen to be a Christian yourself, it should go without saying that a large number of other Christians believe you're interpreting the Bible incorrectly in one way or another. In fact, some of them even consider *you* to be a heretic, based on some of *your* beliefs. And so my challenge to you, particularly if you're a Christian who holds to *Sola scriptura* and biblical inerrancy as I do, is to read this book with a mind open to the possibility that some of the things you currently believe the Bible teaches could actually be based simply on traditions of men rather than on what Scripture really says and means (especially since, if one is being humble, they should be able to admit that they must hold to *some* false doctrines and misinterpretations of the Bible, because none of us are perfect). I should say, after reading some of the responses from people who have attempted to critique earlier editions of this book, it's become abundantly clear that most of them either weren't able to maintain this mindset while reading it, or they just didn't bother to read it very closely in the first place, likely just skimming through it quickly or simply searching for points they were curious to hear my view on, skipping the rest of the book altogether (not to mention entirely ignoring the scriptural references and supporting links, which you can find in the footnotes throughout this book). Because of this, they sometimes tried to respond to my points by making arguments I'd already completely refuted in other parts of the book. So if you are going to read it, please do so carefully and prayerfully, as well as with the humility to acknowledge that you could be wrong about something you currently believe (and please also hold off on writing any refutations until you've read the whole

thing, preferably in the order it was written rather than skipping ahead past important points, since the odds are high that I've already responded to your point somewhere in the book, which is why I generally won't respond to attempted refutations or questions until one has read the whole thing). And if you find yourself immediately disagreeing with a point I make, thinking to yourself, "This can't possibly be right because we know *x* is true instead," stop to ask yourself why you're so sure that *x* is the case, and then consider whether the reasons given in this book might actually prove that *x* isn't really true after all.

Before we do get into it, though, I should probably quickly discuss the Bible version used throughout this book. You see, A) there are a number of people out there who won't consider scriptural references from anything other than this one particular Bible version, B) because I wanted to reach the largest audience possible, C) because it's still one of the most popular and recognizable Bible versions anyway, not to mention D) because it means I don't have to worry about copyright issues, all scriptural references in this book are from the KJV (the *King James Version*).

Of course, I do delve into the original Hebrew and Koine Greek a little when necessary, in order to reach a larger audience (as well as to strengthen some of my arguments), since I wrote this book to reach all Christians – whether they be KJV-Only or not – but none of the passages of Scripture in their original languages that we'll be examining when considering the core doctrines of the true body of Christ will contradict a carefully-and-consistently-interpreted KJV. Still, if you aren't a fan of the way the KJV renders certain things, please feel free to look up the supporting scriptural references in the footnotes and the body of the book in whichever translation you prefer.

And along those lines, I should also point out that some of the writers of the books and articles I linked to in the footnotes *do* use other Bible versions

themselves, and they don't necessarily all feel as favourably towards the KJV as I do (and I do hold it in very high regard; even though I'm technically not a KJV-Onlyist myself, I am very much a KJV-Mostlyist), but I still highly recommend reading their articles and books even if you are a KJV-Onlyist, in order to learn more details that I didn't have the time to get into here myself. Speaking of those footnotes, please keep in mind that just because I link to specific articles or books doesn't mean that I agree with everything their writers and/or publishers believe and/or teach. In some cases, I link to them for the sole reason that they happen to have better supporting material on a specific point than anybody else I've found so far.

Oh, and please make sure that *you're* the one who actually reads this book (and be sure to read all of it – in order, and carefully). I've spoken with people who were too lazy to actually read the book and who embarrassed themselves by asking so-called "AI" services for a summary of the book instead, and as one might expect, the "AI" inevitably gave them an incredibly bad summary, making it obvious that they hadn't taken the time to study for themselves, based on the fact that they were *still* entirely unaware of what we actually believe the Bible teaches about the topics contained within it, not to mention *why* we believe it teaches what we believe it does about this topic, which was made obvious by the fact that all they could do was reference the same so-called "proof texts" that everyone gives and that I'd already explained our interpretations of – not to mention repeat the same bad arguments that I'd already refuted – in the book, without responding to anything I *actually* wrote in the book (and they eventually had to admit to using "AI" rather than doing the work themselves). So if that's something you're tempted to do, please don't be lazy, but rather go *"study to shew thyself approved"* instead.

And with all that being said, let's get into it.

Chapter 1: Things that differ

When considering the meaning of passages in the Bible (especially in translations which use older versions of English than most of us commonly read, speak, or understand, such as the KJV), it's very easy to unintentionally read one's preconceived theological beliefs *into* a passage (this is what's known in theological circles as eisegesis), rather than trying to carefully determine the *actual* meaning of the text in question without coming at it with any preconceived ideas as to its meaning (studying Scripture this way is referred to as exegesis). This generally occurs because one has heard people they trust tell them that certain doctrines are true, and if they assume their teachers can't be mistaken, they'll rarely bother to look into the context of the passages they're told prove these doctrines. This means that when they see certain words in these passages which seem to support their doctrines at first glance, they'll just assume the inclusion of these words in the text proves that the doctrines themselves must indeed be correct, and they won't bother to actually do any study to verify whether this truly is the case or not. Of course, as the old saying goes, a text read out of context is just a pretext for a "proof text," so this often results in people never learning the truth about what these passages *really* mean.

Equally unfortunately, most people will rarely bother to compare these passages to the rest of the Bible either, in order to make sure the doctrines they've been taught aren't contradicting other parts of Scripture. But even when they do try to dig a little deeper, they tend to be unfamiliar with the concept of perspectives in the Bible, especially the difference between the

absolute and relative perspectives (there are more than just these two perspectives in Scripture, but these are perhaps the two most important perspectives one needs to consider in their exegesis, and yet also the least well known by Christians), which means they aren't aware that two statements in Scripture which at first appear to disagree with (or even contradict) each other if they're both taken literally or both interpreted figuratively can actually both be true at the same time. As a very simple example of this important hermeneutical principle, Ecclesiastes 11:3 tells us that the rain comes from clouds,[1] while 1 Kings 17:14 says that God actually sends the rain,[2] and we can understand that both of these statements are equally true when we recognize that God is indeed the origin of rain from an absolute perspective (since all is of God[3]), even while the clouds are the origin of rain from a relative perspective.

And even when the perspective principle regarding the absolute vs the relative doesn't come into play, words just don't always mean, or at least refer to, the same thing anyway. For example, certain words (such as the word "fire," as just one example of many) *are* used literally in some passages[4] while also being used figuratively in other passages[5] (with this difference technically being another form of perspective found in Scripture). And it isn't just individual words that

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[1] If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. — Ecclesiastes 11:3

[2] For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. — 1 Kings 17:14

[3] For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Romans 11:36

[4] And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the Lord: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. — Exodus 29:18

[5] If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee. — Proverbs 25:21-22

are used figuratively in the Bible. Scripture is full of figurative phrases too, including allegories, metaphors, idioms, and other forms of figurative speech that aren't obvious from just reading the English text. This means that if one isn't familiar with the existence of a figurative word, expression, or other figure of speech in a specific passage, they can end up completely misunderstanding what that passage actually means.

It's also important to be aware of the fact that words known as False Friends exist in the KJV and other older Bible translations, which is a term that is sometimes used to refer to English words we still use today, but which can now mean something very different – in ways that the average reader is unlikely to be aware of – from what they could mean when our English Bibles were first translated (and while certain disingenuous types will try to distract from this fact by pointing out that the term "False Friends" has previously been described by saying, "In linguistics, false friends are words in different languages that look or sound similar, but differ significantly in meaning," this – almost certainly purposely – misses the point entirely by ignoring the fact that the first two words of the explanation were "in linguistics," not "in theology," and also ignores the fact that the meaning of words and phrases can change over time, not to mention that words and terms can have multiple meanings, as is the whole point of the theological definition of False Friends in the first place). As a very simple example, "convenient" generally refers to "something which saves one trouble" when the word is used today, but when you read it in Ephesians 5:3-4 in the KJV[6] it actually means "fitting," because that's what the word "convenient" meant back in 1611 (and while that particular False Friend might not trip someone up too badly today, at least as far as important doctrine goes, since it's pretty easy to see while reading the passage that the word *can't* have meant the same thing back then as it does today, there's another False Friend in

[6] But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. — Ephesians 5:3-4

that same passage which has tripped up nearly every modern Christian currently alive, leading them to one of the biggest doctrinal errors of the Christian religion, although I'm going to discuss that word in a later chapter, so I won't say any more about it here so as to not get ahead of myself). Another example that really demonstrates this point is the word "let," which generally means "allow" or "allowed" when used today (and it often did in the KJV as well[7]). However, when you read Romans 1:13 in the KJV,[8] this word actually means the *exact opposite* of that. Rather than "allowed," Paul actually meant "prevented" in that verse. This isn't a mistranslation, however, but is instead another False Friend, because that was another meaning of the word "let" back in 1611, even if we don't use that obsolete definition of the word today (and if you aren't aware of this fact, the verse can be confusing, as many other verses that include False Friends can be as well). I should add, in addition to being a False Friend, "let" is also an example of how the translators of the KJV often used the *exact same* English word to translate entirely *different* words from their original languages – with the first example of "let" we looked at being translated from the Greek ἔστω/"es'-to," and the second example being translated from κωλύω/"ko-loo'-o" – words which could have the complete *opposite* meaning from one another in their original languages at times, and cases of this happening weren't always because they've become False Friends in the 21st century either; in many cases, the reason for the translations seemed to be more for the sake of being poetic, as you'll learn farther on in this book.

As another important example of a False Friend in the KJV, we have the word "heresy," and this really is an important one to be aware of because of the study you're reading right now (since many of the truths you're going to learn in this

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[7] But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. — Matthew 5:37

[8] Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. — Romans 1:13

study are considered to be "heretical" by most Christians, as I mentioned in the introduction). Even before getting into this one, however, it's important to know that there are two different types of "heresies" when the word is used correctly, and that neither of them literally mean "incorrect doctrine" (just as "orthodox" doesn't mean "correct doctrine" either) the way most people assume they do. The first type of "heresy" is the one that's mentioned in the Bible,[9] and it's true that *these* types of "heresies" aren't good things (at least when they take place within the body of Christ), but the literal meaning of αἵρεσις/"hah'-ee-res-is" – which is the Greek word that's transliterated as "heresy" and "heresies" in the KJV – is simply "sect," as the word is also translated in other verses,[10] meaning "division" or "dissension," and does not literally mean "incorrect doctrine" at all. In fact, "sect" was a meaning of the English word "heresy" back when the KJV was translated as well, and based on the meaning of the Greek word it was translated from, it becomes obvious that this is the meaning of the word "heresy" in the KJV, and that the word "heresy" is indeed another False Friend. That's not to say that the specific sects referred to as "heresies" in the Bible aren't meant to be avoided, of course, any more than it means that said sects aren't based on incorrect doctrine, because they are on both counts. My point is simply that the word "heresy" just doesn't mean what most people assume it does when it's used in the Bible. This is also an example, by the way, of how the translators of the KJV sometimes used *different* English words to translate the *exact same* word from its original language (these are known as synonyms), and if one isn't aware of what the Hebrew or Koine Greek word that an English word in the KJV has been translated from is or means, they can get just as confused as when the translators used *the same* English word to translate *different* words from Scripture in its original languages (especially when these words have become a False Friend in modern times). And so, while I know that some KJV-

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[9] For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. — 1 Corinthians 11:19

[10] For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: — Acts 24:5

Onlyists will recoil in horror at this suggestion, and it is true that one often technically *can* determine when one of these two types of situations is happening simply by the context of a passage – as well as by when a literal (or figurative) interpretation of a specific word would contradict the literal (or figurative) usage of the same word in another place in the KJV – I would still posit that it's wise to look up every single Hebrew or Koine Greek word when doing a careful study into a passage or topic, since, at the very least, you might miss out on some important nuance that isn't obvious in the English translation if you don't, but also because you might even find yourself completely misinterpreting a passage if you avoid doing so, assuming it means the exact opposite of what it actually means (and this happens *all the time* in real life, as the rest of this study will reveal). Don't mistake this for "correcting the Bible," as some people think looking at Scripture in its original languages is, though. I know that many Christians assume that God made the Bible so easy to understand that a child could read just the KJV and figure out everything God wants us to know in it. And while one *can* learn everything necessary for *salvation* (and then some) by just reading their *King James Bible* and nothing else, the idea that that one can figure out *everything* God laid out in Scripture by reading just the KJV alone, with no study aids of any sort, is nothing more than an assumption they're making – since the Bible just doesn't say that anywhere on its pages – and it's an assumption that is indeed contradicted by the Bible itself too, such as in Proverbs 25:2 which says, *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."* This tells us that God doesn't necessarily make it easy to learn *every* scriptural truth without careful study, so it's important to stop assuming that you know everything there is to know about the Bible just because you've read it in English.

And just like it doesn't literally mean "incorrect doctrine" when it's used *in* the Bible, the word "heresy" doesn't literally mean that *outside* of the Bible either. Instead, when used extrabiblically, it simply means "that which is commonly accepted to be incorrect." And just as this type of "heresy" doesn't literally

mean “incorrect doctrine” any more than the biblical type does, the word “orthodox” doesn’t mean “correct doctrine” either, but really just means “that which is commonly accepted to be true,” and there’s always been plenty of commonly accepted error out there, just as there’s always been lots of commonly rejected truth (with much of that truth being labelled as “heresy” by Christians).

For example, Galileo was technically a heretic, according to the Roman Catholic Church, because he taught that the earth wasn’t the centre of the universe,[11] but he was still quite correct that it wasn’t. Meanwhile, Rome considered their view that our planet was the centre of the universe to be the orthodox one, but they were entirely incorrect, and they even eventually admitted that Galileo’s heresy was true after all, many centuries later (thus proving that “orthodox” doctrines taught by the Roman Catholic Church can indeed be wrong and that the things they call “heresy” can be right; and it’s important to keep in mind that, if they can be wrong about *even one thing* when it comes to what they refer to as orthodoxy and heresy, they could then be wrong about *anything* they teach is either orthodox truth or heresy).

So remember that just because something is called “heretical” by a Christian doesn’t mean it’s necessarily incorrect, and that something being called “orthodox” by a Christian doesn’t necessarily make it true. Of course, even though they refer to something else altogether from what most Christians today mean when they use the word, the things referred to as “heresies” in the English Bible translations which do use the word (sects, in other words) *are* things to be avoided (although that doesn’t mean sects are inherently a bad thing in and of themselves; it’s only sectarianism *within* the church that we need to avoid as members of the body of Christ, while sects/“heresies” *outside* the church might be good or bad, depending on the reason for the division). But

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[11] *Galileo goes on trial for heresy* by the History.com Editors: https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/galileo-is-accused-of-heresy

outside of *those* specific things, *many* of the things that Christians mistakenly refer to as "heresy" or as "heretical" (or even as "heterodox," which basically means the same thing) are actually quite true, as you'll learn throughout this book. And remember also that Jesus and all of His followers were considered to be heretics by the religious orthodoxy of their day, so consider yourself in good company when someone calls you a heretic or refers to the truths you believe as "heresy."

There are *many* more False Friends in the KJV that I could get into (and I will cover some very important ones in various parts of this book), but the main thing to keep in mind is that anyone using *only* the KJV with no study aids *definitely* holds multiple false doctrines because of this fact, which is why even a KJV-Onlyist should really compare the KJV to multiple different Bible translations when studying, even if only to avoid this common pitfall. That isn't to say the KJV is a bad translation. The words its translators used were perfectly fine for the time it was translated, for the most part. One just needs to be aware that it's not a particularly literal translation, but is actually a very figurative – and even poetic – translation in various places (many of which will surprise many of you), and also of the fact that the definitions of words change over time, which all means that if one isn't aware of a word's definition in 1611 when it was first translated (as well as the fact that many of these words were translated figuratively), they're going to unintentionally end up going astray.

This all means that just because you see a word in one passage, you shouldn't automatically assume it *has* to be referring to the exact same thing as it does in another passage, or that you even definitely know what the word means to begin with, because it could be that it actually means something entirely different in that passage from what you're assuming or have been taught it means. So when you're studying your Bible, be sure to use all the study tools available to you – such as concordances, an English dictionary (I would personally recommend the *Oxford English Dictionary* over all others for the sake

of discovering the meanings of False Friends in the KJV, because it covers definitions going back to the 17th century and even earlier), Bible dictionaries (including Hebrew and Koine Greek Bible dictionaries), different Bible versions, internet search engines, and any other study aids you can get your hands on – in order to determine whether or not the interpretations you've always assumed were correct really are.

And with all that in mind, since soteriology (the study of salvation) is probably the most important subject in Scripture, we need to be very careful to make sure we're interpreting all the passages which talk about being saved correctly. Because while most Christians assume that there's only one type of salvation referred to in the Bible, this just isn't true, unless you think that being saved in whatever way it is you believe that Jesus saves us today – which, according to most Christians, is being saved from some form of never-ending punishment, generally consisting of either being perpetually tormented in fire, or at least ceasing to exist permanently after the final judgement – is the exact same sort of salvation that Peter[12] and the rest of Jesus' disciples experienced[13] when they were saved from drowning, that it's the same sort of salvation the Israelites experienced when they were saved from Egyptian slavery,[14] or that women are required to give birth[15] in order to experience that sort of salvation from never-

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[12] And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. — Matthew 14:28-30

[13] And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. — Matthew 8:24-25

[14] Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. — Exodus 14:30

[15] Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. — 1 Timothy 2:15

ending punishment, it should really be a lot more clear than it is to most Christians that the words "salvation," "save," and "saved" are not all referring to the same type of salvation every time they're used in Scripture (although, if you don't agree, I'd love to know how those *are* literally all the exact same sort of salvation).

In fact, that there are different types of salvation referred to in Scripture – as well as the fact that, while nobody will experience *every* type of salvation, we'll all experience at least *one* of the different types of salvation by the end of the ages, as will be proven from Scripture in a later chapter of this book – is important to understand when it comes to interpreting the passages where Jesus spoke about getting to enter the kingdom of heaven vs going to hell, as well as the passages where Paul wrote about going to heaven, because when reading those passages about hell (such as Matthew 18:8-9[16] or Mark 9:43-48,[17] as just two of the various examples), somebody who isn't aware of what Jesus meant there might ask what He was warning us about, not realizing that He wasn't warning *us* about anything, because He wasn't talking to *us* to begin with (unless, perhaps, you're Jewish). You see, His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day aside, Jesus' earthly ministry and messages were technically only meant for *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"* as He told His

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[16] Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. — Matthew 18:8–9

[17] And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. — Mark 9:43–48

disciples in Matthew 15:24,[18] and not to Gentiles (yes, He did help certain Gentiles on rare occasion, but that was the exception rather than the rule). This means that, while it technically is possible for the odd Gentile who fears God and does works of righteousness[19] to end up enjoying the type of salvation that Jesus taught about during His earthly ministry – as evidenced by the salvation of Cornelius and those other Gentiles who heard Peter preach when he visited

[18] But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. — Matthew 15:24

[19] Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. — Acts 10:34-35

Cornelius at his home in Caesarea[20] – this sort of salvation is still primarily for

[20] There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. — Acts 10:1-48

Jews and other Israelites,[21] and really, basically all of the rewards and judgements Jesus spoke about (including His warnings about hell, not to mention the majority of the other teachings He shared) were essentially only for and about Israelites, with the judgement of the sheep and the goats being one of the only significant exceptions (since He specifically said that one is a judgement of the nations[22]). That's not to say there won't be any Gentiles in hell, but the particular warnings Jesus gave regarding hell technically weren't for them, nor should the contents of these passages ever be taught to Gentiles as reasons *they* might end up in hell, because, with very few exceptions, the statements of Jesus recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John weren't directed to,[23] or even relevant to, Gentiles at all (and if you find yourself skeptical about this claim, I *will* prove this fact throughout the rest of this book).

And just as the punishment referred to as hell in those passages will be "experienced," so to speak, by certain dead people right here on earth (as I'll also demonstrate from Scripture later on in this book, neither living nor conscious humans can suffer in any of the biblical "hells" spoken of in the KJV, outside of, perhaps, stubbing their toe on a rock or something similar while in one specific version of "hell"), the salvation Jesus spoke about is also to be experienced right here on earth, in the kingdom of heaven (even if it might not be experienced until after one has been resurrected from the dead).

Unfortunately, because most people don't pay particularly close attention to the specific wording in Scripture, the fact that Jesus said the salvation He taught

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[21] Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. — John 4:22

[22] And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: — Matthew 25:32

[23] Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. — Matthew 6:31-32

about during His earthly ministry is to be experienced in the kingdom of heaven has confused generations of people, leading most to assume it's a reference to an afterlife location called heaven, and others to believe it's instead referring to a spiritual state within themselves, based on the way the KJV renders one of Jesus' statements about the kingdom as: *"the kingdom of God is within you"* (which they often interpret literally, largely because they misunderstand a handful of other statements by Jesus – not seeming to realize that He generally spoke in ways which kept the masses from fully understanding what He was getting at when they were around, purposely doing so to keep them from converting and experiencing the sort of salvation He spoke about because it wasn't meant for them,[24] which also confirms that He wasn't talking about the same sort of salvation Paul generally wrote about, since that sort of salvation is meant for everyone[25] – ultimately forcing them to descend into contradiction and even outright absurdity in their interpretations of large portions of Scripture, as you'll soon discover). This passage really shouldn't be interpreted as meaning the kingdom is literally inside our bodies, though, because Jesus said that specifically to the Pharisees,[26] and it doesn't appear that they were saved when He said that to them, which means it makes far more sense to interpret this as Jesus simply telling His audience that the kingdom had been present within the midst of the people He was speaking to the whole time – in the Person of its Messiah and future King (and various Bible versions even

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[24] And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. — Mark 4:10-12

[25] For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. — 1 Timothy 2:3-4

[26] And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. — Luke 17:20-21

translate it more along these lines) – and that this would be the case for as long as He remained among them in Israel (because the word "you" in the KJV is a plural word, translated from the Second Person Plural Greek word ὑμῶν/"hoo-mone'" in this verse, this should also be obvious to anyone who is aware of how the KJV renders words such as this one, because to take it literally, it would have to mean that Jesus was saying, "the kingdom of God is within all of you," meaning every single person, including the unbelieving Pharisees, listening to Him speak). In fact, that the term "the kingdom of heaven" was really just a reference to the kingdom of God being ready to come fully into effect on the earth is made quite clear in many places throughout the Bible.[27]

First of all, we know that Jesus' primary message of salvation was about the coming of the kingdom of heaven and how to get to live in it when it comes fully into effect,[28] and we also know that Jesus' messages while He walked the earth were given in order to confirm that *"the promises made unto the fathers"* would indeed come true, as Paul explained in Romans 15:8[29] (and these were promises made primarily for the circumcision, as Paul also wrote there, meaning promises for the descendants of the "fathers" known as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: ethnic Israelites, in other words). Since the Israelites were promised a future kingdom[30] – one ruled by Jesus, as we also learned in prophecies about Him ruling over the kingdom from the throne of David,[31] which is a figurative

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[27] Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. — Matthew 6:10

[28] And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 3:2

[29] Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: — Romans 15:8

[30] And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. — Daniel 2:44

[31] Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. — Isaiah 9:7

term that just refers to rulership over "the house of Jacob," meaning the descendants of Jacob who live in the actual land of Israel[32] – and were also promised that they'd get to dwell in the very land which God gave to their fathers[33] (meaning the land of Canaan,[34] now known as the land of Israel), this all tells us that the kingdom in question will indeed have to be specifically located in that land of Canaan/Israel where God said it would, in fact, be located (a land that was already referred to as "the kingdom of the Lord" at one time anyway,[35] before the nation of Israel fell and its peoples were scattered among the Gentiles and the promises of their future restoration to the land were then prophesied, such as what God promised them in the book of Jeremiah,[36] for

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[32] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. — Luke 1:32-33

[33] And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. — Genesis 15:7

[34] Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. — Genesis 12:1-5

[35] And of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. — 1 Chronicles 28:5

[36] Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. — Jeremiah 32:37-40

example), or at least that it will have to be centred within the land of Israel. (For those who don't know, the term "the Lord" used in the phrase "the kingdom of the Lord" in 1 Chronicles 28:5 is translated in the KJV from the Hebrew יְהוָה/ "yeh-ho-vaw'," or more likely "yah'-way," which is God's actual, proper name in Hebrew, and so anybody who heard Jesus say "the kingdom of God" during His earthly ministry would have recognized it as a reference to Israel based on that verse.)

Now, some Christians try to claim that these promises were all fulfilled back in Joshua's time, based on what Joshua 21:43-45 says about all having come to pass at that time,[37] but there were many prophecies about the same promises connected with dwelling in the land God gave to the fathers (the land of Israel) which were written *after* the events in Joshua took place as well, such as the one in Jeremiah we just looked at, as well as in the book of Ezekiel[38] (to name just two of *many* such examples). Besides, the promise about the land that God made is referred to as an "everlasting" covenant in various places,[39] and even though "everlasting" rarely, if ever, actually means "never-ending" when it's used in the less literal Bible versions which include the word (as we'll discuss in a later chapter, although anyone who has paid close attention while reading the Bible should really know that fact already), it does still mean that the covenant God made with Abraham regarding the actual land will last a lot longer than

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[37] And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. — Joshua 21:43-45

[38] And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. — Ezekiel 36:28

[39] Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; — 1 Chronicles 16:16-18

some Christians think (especially based on when 1 Chronicles was written, not to mention the time period it was written about, as well as the promise in the book of Jeremiah we just looked at – which also used the term in regards to the same sort of promise – all of which were *after* Joshua's time), so there's no reason to believe that the promises related to the very plot of land which God promised to Abraham and his descendants aren't still in effect, especially since many of the details connected with these various prophecies about said land still haven't been fulfilled yet. And remember, Ezekiel says that the land will have some pretty clear geographical boundaries on the earth,[40] not in heaven, or even "in our hearts" (or in whichever bodily organs some people think the kingdom exists inside) when the promises God made to Israel are finally

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[40] Thus saith the Lord God; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazarhatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazarenan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side. And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward. The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side. — Ezekiel 47:13-20

completely fulfilled,[41] as demonstrated by the fact that the prophecy said the land would have borders from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Jordan on the east, with the northern boundary at Hamath, and the southern boundary at Kadesh (and if that's supposed to refer to a supposed kingdom "within us" in some figurative manner, I'd like to know which organs in the bodies of Gentile believers that each of those locations is supposed to be referring to are, as well as what happens if someone is missing that specific body part; and if it's not about body parts, I'd like to know what those specific

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[41] Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. Thus saith the Lord God; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations: Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord. — Ezekiel 36:1-38

geographical locations *do* refer to if it isn't actual land), as well as by the fact that the land is said to contain a new temple with some pretty specific dimensions at that time as well, according to the prophecies[42] (with a part of those dimensions carved out for priests from the tribe of the Levites – who are Israelites, not Gentiles – and I trust that nobody believes we have tiny Levites living inside of us either, which would have to be the case if the kingdom and its temple were literally within our bodies). This all confirms that the kingdom is going to be on earth, specifically within those borders that will make up the nation of Israel in the future, rather than somewhere else. And since the temple is said to be located *within* the borders of the land rather than the land being said to be located within the temple, if the kingdom of God actually *is* within us the way some Christians like to claim it is, the bodies of Gentile believers *can't* be the same temple Ezekiel referred to – as some Christians also like to claim it is, based on their bad misunderstanding of Paul's statement about those of us in the body of Christ currently being "the temple of God,"[43] as though there can't be more than one temple – because that would place the figurative "land" (presuming "the land" is a figurative reference to that kingdom "within us," at least, as I've heard some of these Christians claim) *within* the figurative "temple" made up of our bodies, which is the opposite of what the prophecies

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[42] Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, an holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand. This shall be holy in all the borders thereof round about. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary and the most holy place. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the Lord: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. — Ezekiel 45:1-5

[43] Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? — 1 Corinthians 3:16

in Ezekiel say. And since Ezekiel's prophecies to Israel about the land were given *after* the events in the book of Joshua took place, even if the promises given beforehand *were* fulfilled in Joshua's time, this means that what was recorded in the book of Joshua can't have been the *final* time they're fulfilled, but rather it means that these prophecies about the land still have to have a second, future fulfillment as well, with what happened in the book of Joshua just being the first fulfillment. (And for those who aren't familiar with the concept, *many* prophecies in Scripture had more than one fulfillment, with the most famous example probably being Isaiah 7:14, which said, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.";* this prophecy had its first fulfillment when a woman who was presumably a virgin at the time the prophecy was given[44] – although obviously no longer a virgin by the time she was pregnant – gave birth

[44] Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. — Isaiah 7:10-16

to her prophesied son, while the second fulfillment would have obviously been Mary giving birth to Jesus.[45])

Besides, we also know that Israel has to be where the kingdom will be located in the future because Jesus taught His disciples about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God during the 40-day period between His resurrection and His ascension up to heaven,[46] and yet, just before He ascended to heaven, when His disciples asked Him if He'd be bringing the kingdom back to Israel at that time, Jesus didn't correct them by asking, "Did I not just spend 40 days explaining that the kingdom will be in heaven rather than on earth?", or, "Did I not just spend 40 days explaining that you're already living in the kingdom?", or even, "Did I not just spend 40 days explaining that the kingdom already exists within your bodies, which means the kingdom exists within you rather than you getting to exist within the kingdom?" (whichever of those three that somebody might happen to believe is the truth about the kingdom), but rather just said, *"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own*

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[45] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus. — Matthew 1:18-25

[46] To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: — Acts 1:3

power,"[47] which means He not only didn't tell them that the kingdom was already fully in effect for Israel, He also didn't correct their understanding that the kingdom was going to be located on earth – specifically in Israel, where it already once existed in the past (even if in a far less grand manner at that time than it will when it's restored to Israel in the future) – which are things they should have really already understood if He'd actually just spent more than a month explaining what the kingdom was about, and that it wasn't going to simply be located in Israel, anyway.

And Peter himself confirmed this only a short time later, in his sermon in Acts 3 when he said, *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,"*[48] telling us that the kingdom was going to be sent *from* heaven to take place *on* the earth (the various prophecies he was referring to in that sermon also make it pretty clear that *"the times of refreshing"* and *"the restitution of all things"* – a reference to the coming kingdom – is going to take place on earth too, when Jesus returns, rather than is going to take place in heaven; and this obviously hasn't occurred yet either, as anyone who is familiar with history, or who just watches the news, can tell you, although I don't have the space to get into all of those prophecies here, but you can look them up to see for yourself).

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[47] When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. — Acts 1:6-7

[48] Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. — Acts 3:19-21

That's not all, though. Jesus explained that angels *"shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"*[49] in his explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares[50] (after which, *"the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"*[51]). Now think about this carefully. If the kingdom of heaven is an afterlife location which people go to when they die, as most Christians assume (including many Christians who also believe that the kingdom is somehow "within us" at the same time, however that's supposed to work), and only those who are saved can go to heaven, as most Christians also assume, this passage would make no sense, because the angels can't *"gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity"* if these people are not already in the kingdom at the time of the

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[49] Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. — Matthew 13:36-42

[50] Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. — Matthew 13:24-30

[51] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. — Matthew 13:43

judgement. And this doesn't happen as each individual sinner dies, as some might try to claim in order to fit these facts into their assumptions about what the kingdom is, since the parable makes it clear that everyone involved "grew up" together in the same place,[52] meaning on earth, and also that the judgement would involve everyone being judged together at this time as well, at *"the end of the world,"*[53] meaning "the end of the age" (the KJV tends to translate the Greek word αἰών/"ahee-ohn'" – which literally means "age" – as "world"), so this can't refer to each sinner being judged in heaven immediately after each of their individual deaths. If "the kingdom" was a reference to the heavenly afterlife most Christians believe the saved end up in after they die, they'd have to already be saved, not to mention dead, which means this parable would be telling us that some people will become sinners in heaven some time after they die, and then be cast out of heaven into hell, presuming the "furnace of fire" actually was a reference to hell (although, contrary to what most Christians assume, the mention of a "furnace" in this context is actually quite figurative and has a very specific meaning that isn't connected with hell or the lake of fire at all, but that's a topic for a later chapter of this book, so keep reading to learn what it's actually referring to, if you aren't already familiar with the meaning). Or, if the kingdom was literally inside our bodies instead, it would mean that angels would have to pull tiny human sinners residing in the "kingdom" out of our bodies and cast them into some sort of literal furnace, leaving us behind. Since neither of those interpretations make any kind of sense whatsoever (not to mention since Jesus outright said in His explanation of the parable that the "field" refers to the world[54] – this time actually referring to the

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[52] Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. — Matthew 13:30

[53] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. — Matthew 13:39

[54] The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; — Matthew 13:38

planet itself, being translated from the Greek κόσμος/"kos'-mos" rather than αἰών in this verse – not to heaven, or even to our bodies), it should be pretty clear by now that the type of salvation Jesus and His disciples taught about during His earthly ministry (and that even the type of salvation His disciples taught about *after* His ascension into heaven, both in person and in their writings) primarily involved certain descendants of Isaac[55] dwelling in the land of Israel[56] and reigning over the earth[57] and its people as "kings and priests"[58] (presuming they're included in Israel's first resurrection,[59] or are among those "that overcometh" and survive the Tribulation[60]) during the thousand-year period of time[61] that the kingdom of heaven exists in that

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[55] Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. — Romans 9:6-7

[56] The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. — Psalm 37:29

[57] But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. — Psalm 37:11

[58] And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. — Revelation 5:10

[59] Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. — Revelation 20:6

[60] And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. — Revelation 2:26-27

[61] And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. — Revelation 20:4-6

part of the world (thus fulfilling a prophecy from the Hebrew Scriptures,[62] meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to today as "the Old Testament"), as well as finally being able to keep the Mosaic law perfectly because the New Covenant will finally have come fully into effect for the house of Israel and the house of Judah[63] (and since Gentiles don't have an old covenant of any sort to be replaced with by something new, because they weren't given any covenants to begin with,[64] it should be pretty clear that the New Covenant is only for the members of the house of Israel and the house of Judah, as Jeremiah stated, rather than for Gentiles who aren't descendants of either of those houses), after the believing Israelites who aren't living there at

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[62] And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. — Exodus 19:6

[63] Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:31-34

[64] That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: — Ephesians 2:12

the time[65] have been returned from their exile[66] back to the land of Israel.[67] Bringing His people into the New Covenant (which was inaugurated by Jesus' death,[68] but which has largely been put on hold until His Second Coming because most of Israel rejected Him as their Messiah during His first time on earth, as demonstrated by the fact that Jeremiah said *"they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"*[69] when the New Covenant comes fully in effect, and that sure isn't happening anywhere in the world yet, especially not in Israel) is how Jesus will *"save his people from*

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[65] And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. — Isaiah 11:11-12

[66] And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. — Jeremiah 29:14

[67] I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. — Ezekiel 20:41-42

[68] And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. — Hebrews 9:15-17

[69] And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:34

their sins," as the angel put it in Matthew 1:21[70] – letting us know that Jesus will fulfill the prophecy in Psalm 130:8 which said, *"And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,"* involving both forgiveness for their sins,[71] as well as finally being redeemed out from among the nations and Gentiles they'll have been living among back to God in Israel[72] – because it's important to remember that pretty much any reference[73] to *"His people"* in Scripture[74] is specifically a reference to faithful Israelites.[75] And since the promises God gave concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah are without repentance,[76] we know that these prophecies will indeed be fulfilled for exactly the very people that they were made to (i.e., ethnic Israelites), in the exact location He said they'd take place in (i.e., the land of Israel).

And just as a quick but related aside, those Christians who claim that Gentile believers within the body of Christ are, in fact, the temple written about in Ezekiel also believe that we're the "kings and priests" written about in Revelation and Exodus (thus making us both the temple and its priests, apparently), despite the fact that these are obviously prophecies about

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[70] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. — Matthew 1:21

[71] But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. — Psalm 130:4

[72] And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; — Revelation 5:9

[73] Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. — Deuteronomy 32:43

[74] And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the Lord, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the Lord your God, and his people Israel, — 2 Chronicles 35:3

[75] Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, — Luke 1:68

[76] For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. — Romans 11:29

Israelites. But even if that were the case, since it seems unlikely that there would be any priests on the New Earth, because there presumably won't be a need for any priests anymore at that time, what with there being no physical temple in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth,[77] but rather God Himself, along with "the Lamb" (meaning Jesus), being the temple on the New Earth, the temple written about in Ezekiel *can't* be the same "temple" written about in Revelation 21 (and we can't currently be living on the New Earth either, as some of these Christians somehow also believe to be the case, because regardless of whether Ezekiel was referring to a literal temple made out of physical stone or to a metaphorical "temple" made up of Gentile believers, neither of those "temples" would be God and the Lamb, which means the thousand-year kingdom of heaven and the New Earth can't actually coexist at the same time).

That said, until John wrote the book of Revelation, nobody would have known how long the type of salvation Jesus was preaching about during His earthly ministry would last, or even necessarily would have known that the kingdom of heaven might be different from the New Earth (which *was* prophesied about in the Hebrew Scriptures[78]). And while it's true that anyone who experiences this type of salvation in the kingdom of heaven will also get to go on to live in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth, at that point the specific type of salvation Jesus was teaching about would technically have come to an end, since the thousand years will have run their course. (And before moving on, I should say, yes, it's true that the kingdom of God *does* also have a spiritual nature,[79] and is not *solely* physical, but there *is* still a physical aspect to it – especially for the

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[77] And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. — Revelation 21:22

[78] For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. — Isaiah 65:17

[79] For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. — Romans 14:17

part of it that Israelites will be living in[80] – as everything we've covered still demonstrates.)

This all means that the method of getting to enjoy this kind of salvation in Israel isn't what most Christians have assumed either. You see, this isn't the type of salvation which Paul taught isn't based on works[81] (although that is an equally valid type of salvation for those people it applies to), but rather, in addition to having to believe that Jesus is Israel's Christ (or Messiah, with these synonyms literally just meaning "anointed"), as well as the Son of God,[82] this sort of salvation also requires a number of other things from those who are able to do so as well. For example, it requires repentance of one's sins[83] (as opposed to the type of repentance Paul wrote about, which simply referred to changing one's

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[80] Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. — Matthew 6:25-33

[81] Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, — 2 Timothy 1:9

[82] But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

[83] I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. — Luke 5:32

mind about who could actually save his readers), as well as making sure to do[84] various sorts of good works,[85] including baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ[86] (and there are multiple other types of baptisms when it comes to this type of salvation too, baptisms which don't even include getting wet in some cases, such as a baptism *with* – or *in* – the Holy Spirit, for example, as well as a baptism with "fire,"[87] among others), following the commandments Jesus taught

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[84] Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. — John 5:28-29

[85] What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. — James 2:14-26

[86] Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. — Acts 2:38

[87] I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: — Matthew 3:11

His disciples during His earthly ministry,[88] which includes the commandments within the Mosaic law,[89] doing whatever it takes to be extremely righteous[90] and to avoid sinning[91] (which is presumably what Jesus meant when He told His audience to amputate body parts in order to avoid hell and enter the kingdom), and then confessing one's sins if they slip up and do end up sinning[92] (not to mention also forgiving others who sinned against them[93]). In addition, they're not only required to turn from pride and be

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[88] And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. — 1 John 2:3-7

[89] And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. — Matthew 19:17-19

[90] For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. — Matthew 5:20

[91] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. — Matthew 7:21-23

[92] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. — 1 John 1:9

[93] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. — Matthew 6:12-15

extremely humble[94] (since, while avoiding sin and following the Mosaic law is required of Israelites in order to get to enjoy life in the kingdom, following the law on its own doesn't save anyone,[95] and, in addition to faith,[96] humility and repentance are even more required for Israelites than almost anything else[97]), as well as having to make sure they're both meek[98] and poor in spirit,[99] they also can't be greedy or selfish[100] (these sorts of warnings[101] directed towards the

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[94] At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. — Matthew 18:1-4

[95] Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. — Romans 3:20

[96] But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. — Hebrews 11:6

[97] And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. — Luke 18:9-14

[98] Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. — Matthew 5:5

[99] Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. — Matthew 5:3

[100] Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. — Matthew 19:23-24

[101] No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. — Matthew 6:24

rich are given all throughout the Bible,[102] and since rich people can believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God just as easily as poor people can, it appears that being willing to give up one's wealth in order to follow Jesus around Israel[103] could be required of an Israelite in order for them to enter the kingdom, at least back then and as far as this type of salvation goes, since otherwise Jesus could have simply told the young man to accept Him as his personal saviour – or perhaps told him to do something that actually *is* a biblical concept – rather than telling him to sell all he had and give it to the poor so he could follow Jesus around the nation while He preached), and they do also have to endure to the end[104] (of one's life or of the period commonly known as the Tribulation, whichever comes first) as well. And that's not all. There are *many* other requirements mentioned elsewhere in Scripture too, but I think you get the idea, which is that this is not the same type of salvation Paul primarily taught about.

I know that most Christians reading this will want to insist that these required works are all meant to be interpreted as being the fruit of one's faith – or, as some claim, that Jesus actually commanded His audience members do all these things so that His more humble listeners would realize they couldn't do what He told them to do and would have faith in His death for our sins, and His subsequent burial and resurrection, instead (which is what Paul said people who experience at least one of the types of salvation he wrote about have to

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[102] Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. — James 5:1

[103] The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. — Matthew 19:20-22

[104] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. — Matthew 10:22

believe in order to be said to be saved,[105] yet which isn't something anyone prior to him is ever recorded as teaching needed to be believed in order to be saved, especially not during Jesus' earthly ministry) – but there's absolutely zero indication in any of those passages that they aren't meant to be interpreted literally (and that would also require us to have to make ourselves humble enough to be able to do this, which is a very difficult work in and of itself for anyone to do), particularly in light of what He said to the lawyer when He told the parable of the Good Samaritan, never once implying anywhere in Luke 10:25-37 that He didn't mean for the lawyer to keep the law (in fact, all He said about following the Mosaic law after sharing the parable was, *"Go, and do thou likewise,"* in regards to the method of following the law that lawyer agreed it was referring to[106]).

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[105] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: — 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

[106] And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. — Luke 10:25-37

Besides, Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:17-19, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* All has not been fulfilled yet (heaven and earth haven't passed yet – unless you're reading this book on a whole new planet called the New Earth, long after it was first published – and there are still many prophecies yet to be fulfilled, at least as of the time I wrote this book), so those for whom the Mosaic law is relevant to, namely Israelites, still have to follow it (or, at the very least, certainly still had to until Christ's death, if Jesus' statement that *"it is finished"*[107] was referring to *all* being fulfilled, although since the current heaven and earth are still here – and there are still many unfulfilled prophecies – as of the time I'm writing this, I don't believe it was). Nobody listening to Jesus could have possibly interpreted any of His statements as meaning that works weren't actually still required of them anyway, since not only had a form of salvation by grace through faith apart from works not ever been taught prior to Paul doing so,[108] at the time they were preaching to the inhabitants of Israel, not even Jesus' disciples understood that He was going to die,[109] which means that A) this isn't something that Jesus' audience members could have possibly believed is true in order to avoid the type of hell He was warning about, and B) Jesus and His disciples would have then spent three

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[107] When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. — John 19:30

[108] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. — Ephesians 2:8-9

[109] For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. — Mark 9:31-32

years preaching basically useless messages if the common understanding that there's only one type and method of salvation were true, considering this would mean they didn't once explain how to *actually* be saved from said "hell" fire if salvation were based solely on faith in Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection at that time the way it was for those Gentiles Paul later preached to (and people like Zacchaeus couldn't have actually been saved, despite what Jesus said in Luke 19:8-9,[110] which was actually in response to Zacchaeus promising to do good works in the form of making up for his previously harmful actions, not for claiming to believe in Christ's death for our sins, which is something that wasn't even discussed in the passage). In fact, even Jesus' disciples couldn't have been considered to be saved until *after* His death and resurrection – contrary to what Luke 10:20 seems to imply[111] – if it were a belief which was required in order to avoid this particular hell (yes, as I alluded to before, for those who aren't aware of this fact already, there's more than one "hell" referred to in the KJV; remember, the same English word doesn't always mean the same thing every time it's used in the Bible, and the word "hell" in the KJV is, in fact, translated from four different words in the original Hebrew and Koine Greek Scriptures, most of which refer to different locations or concepts from one another, with the particular "hell" we're talking about right now being translated from the Greek word γέεννα/"gheh'-en-nah," which is why it's often referred to today as Gehenna, and is also why it's sometimes transliterated that way, depending on your Bible version), since not even they believed He was going to die or be resurrected until after they saw it all finally happen.[112] This

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[110] And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. — Luke 19:8-9

[111] Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. — Luke 10:20

[112] When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. — John 2:22

also means that Jesus' death wasn't something people prior to His crucifixion were looking forward to for their salvation, because despite His death being foretold in the prophecies of both Jesus and certain other prophets, there's no scriptural basis for assuming that anybody actually was looking forward in time in faith for His death to take place to save any of them, so this common assertion has absolutely no scriptural merit either (and if people could be saved *prior* to Christ's death by simply believing that He's Israel's Messiah and the Son of God, along with performing the requisite works of faith, of course, without having to trust in His death *"for our sins"* the way Paul's Gentile converts were required to in order to be considered saved, or even having to know that His death was *"for our sins"* at all, there's no good reason that I can think of to assume it couldn't *still* be possible to experience the sort of salvation Jesus and His disciples taught about that way either, especially since many of His teachings about this sort of salvation and how one experiences it are connected with the future Tribulation), which means there's no good reason to assume these commands weren't being mentioned as actual requirements for salvation (or, at the very least, for maintaining salvation) rather than just as evidence of one's salvation (or rather than to convince them of their inability to do what was necessary, in order to drive them to faith in a sacrifice they didn't even know He was going to make), at least not without reading one's preconceived doctrinal bias that there's only one type of salvation into Scripture (which anyone with a concordance can tell you isn't the case anyway, as we've already discussed). And so, anyone who is being honest with the text will admit that works *are* required for *this* type of salvation (it's interesting how many Christians insist on interpreting the parts of Scripture which seem to be meant to be interpreted literally in a figurative manner, all the while criticizing those of us in the body of Christ for not interpreting the parts that make more sense to be interpreted figuratively in a literal manner, but they have no choice if they want to continue believing that their doctrinal assumptions are correct). This all means, while we're aware that not everybody will experience the sort of salvation He and His disciples taught about during His earthly ministry and

beyond[113] since, based on what Jesus said, not everyone will get to live in the kingdom of heaven during the time it exists in Israel, one day even Gentiles other than Cornelius and his associates will be saved in this way because of Israelites – as Isaiah prophesied[114] – and their rise to prominence in the future[115] (and yes, before someone brings it up, that prophecy in Isaiah was indeed at least partially fulfilled by Jesus during His lifetime,[116] but prophecies can have more than one fulfillment, as we've already learned, and this is one of them, which we know from the fact that Paul and Barnabas *also* fulfilled it *a second time*,[117] and also from the fact that it will have an even larger fulfillment in the

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[113] He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. — John 3:36

[114] And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. — Isaiah 49:6

[115] Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. — Acts 3:25

[116] And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. — Luke 2:25-32

[117] And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. — Acts 13:44-49

future, when the kingdom of heaven begins in Israel and when Gentiles can only get saved thanks to the priesthood of Israelites[118]).

And on the topic of the disciples preaching to Gentiles before Paul, no, I don't believe the Ethiopian eunuch was a Gentile, but rather it seems likely that he was actually an Israelite himself, of the diaspora, because not only was he visiting Jerusalem to worship[119] like those a few chapters earlier in Acts 2 were,[120] but also because it wasn't pointed out in the chapter how problematic this should have been if he *was* a Gentile, even though such a big deal[121] is made of Peter's time spent going to minister to Gentiles in the same book[122] (and he wasn't referred to as a proselyte the way Nicolas of Antioch was just two

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[118] Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. — Zechariah 8:22-23

[119] And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, — Acts 8:27

[120] And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. — Acts 2:5

[121] And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. — Acts 10:28

[122] And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. — Acts 11:1-3

chapters before this one either[123]). So it seems very probable that preaching to Gentiles who weren't already proselytes was only done one time prior to Paul doing so, almost certainly for the purpose of Peter being able to later help defend Paul's ministry to the nations.[124] That said, even if the eunuch actually was a Gentile proselyte, his statement of faith before his water baptism had nothing to do with trusting in Christ's death for our sins at all – which makes sense, considering the fact that, while he *was* told by Philip that Jesus died,[125] just as Cornelius and his household later learned from Peter,[126] neither Philip nor Peter told their respective listeners that Christ's death was *for our sins,* or that His death *for our sins* is what they needed to have faith in for their salvation – but rather he simply confessed his belief that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of

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[123] Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: — Acts 6:3-5

[124] And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. — Acts 15:7

[125] The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. — Acts 8:32-35

[126] And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; — Acts 10:39-40

God,[127] lining up exactly with what John wrote that an Israelite had to believe in order to be saved.[128] (Yes, I'm aware that verse 37 of Acts 8 isn't included in various modern Bible versions, but while I do personally believe it belongs there, either way, I trust you'll notice that what I said about belief in Christ's death being *for our sins* definitely wasn't mentioned in the chapter either.)

And while Paul did sometimes teach about the same sort of salvation that Jesus and His disciples were proclaiming (especially when he's recorded as preaching to Jews in the book of Acts, as well as when he discussed the salvation of Israel in his epistles), most of the time he was either simply referring to being quickened[129] (sometimes also referred to as being vivified, depending on your Bible version, which refers to having our mortal bodies be made immortal[130] as happened to Jesus after His resurrection,[131] being *"made alive"*[132] beyond the

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[127] And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. — Acts 8:36-38

[128] But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

[129] I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; — 1 Timothy 6:13

[130] But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. — Romans 8:11

[131] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peter 3:18

[132] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

reach of death,[133] which means being incapable of dying,[134] as well as never being subject to the corruption[135] and the humiliation of mortality ever again,[136] which is something that will only happen to certain people who experience the sort of salvation that Jesus taught about during His earthly ministry, at least at the time they're experiencing their particular type of salvation – specifically those who are raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just[137] – with those who are still living at the time they begin enjoying what the KJV figuratively refers to as "everlasting life"[138] or "eternal life"[139] in the kingdom of heaven not being given true immortality at that point, since those who are resurrected after Jesus returns will be like the angels, in that they'll no longer

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[133] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? — 1 Corinthians 15:54-55

[134] Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. — Hebrews 7:16

[135] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. — 1 Corinthians 15:53

[136] Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. — Philippians 3:21

[137] And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. — Luke 14:14

[138] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. — John 3:16

[139] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. — Mark 10:30

marry nor reproduce,[140] and won't even be able to die ever again,[141] and if everyone who was given "everlasting life" was quickened/made immortal right then, there wouldn't be anyone left to fulfill the prophecies of righteous Israelites not only growing old but also having children in the city of Jerusalem in the kingdom,[142] both on this planet and also later on the New Earth[143] – speaking of the New Jerusalem at that point, even if nobody realized it was going to be a whole new city called Jerusalem prior to the time that John wrote about it in Revelation[144] – as well), and finally being made truly sinless because of that immortality (which is what salvation will eventually be for those who

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[140] For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. — Matthew 22:30

[141] But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. — Luke 20:35-36

[142] Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. — Zechariah 8:1-5

[143] For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. — Isaiah 65:17-20

[144] Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. — Revelation 3:12

experience the type of salvation that Paul primarily wrote about), or to experiencing that particular salvation (immortality and sinlessness) before anyone else, while reigning[145] with Christ in the heavens[146] (which is what the **special** salvation Paul wrote is "**specially**" for those that believe is,[147] at least in part, and which can only be fully experienced by someone whose mortal body has been quickened, as I'll explain in a later chapter), since the citizenship of those he wrote to is in heaven rather than in the land of Israel where the citizenship of the people Jesus preached to is located (I realize that the way the KJV renders Philippians 3:20 as saying *"our conversation is in heaven"*[148] can be confusing to those who aren't familiar with the language, but it just means "our citizenship is in heaven," and since the citizen of a particular commonwealth has the right to go there whenever they please, as soon as we have the *ability* to do so – which will be when we're quickened – we'll almost certainly *want* to spend most of our time there). Those of us who get to enjoy this special sort of

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[145] It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. — 2 Timothy 2:11-13

[146] Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. — Ephesians 1:15-23

[147] For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. — 1 Timothy 4:10

[148] For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: — Philippians 3:20

salvation (*also* referred to figuratively as "everlasting life,"[149] or as "eternal life,"[150] in the KJV) are the members of the church that Paul (and only Paul) referred to as the body of Christ,[151] which consists *only* of those who truly understand what it means – and also truly believe – that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, as he explained three chapters later in the same book which he called us the body of Christ in (and if you haven't read the whole Bible before and aren't already aware of why this "everlasting life" is a figurative term in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, please keep reading, as I'll go into great detail later in this book on the meaning of "everlasting," "eternal," and "for ever" in the English Bible versions which commonly use these words). This obviously isn't something that anyone to whom Jesus and His disciples preached during His earthly ministry could have believed because, as we already discussed, at the time they were preaching to the inhabitants of Israel, not even His disciples knew that He was going to die, so this "method" of salvation was clearly intended for a different audience (which means that neither they, nor anyone who believed the message they proclaimed during Jesus' earthly ministry, could be members of the body of Christ; although that's okay, because they had membership in another

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[149] But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. — Romans 6:22

[150] For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:23

[151] Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

church Jesus began[152] – one which was just as special as the church[153] that Paul was the first member of[154] – and their church is known as the Israel of God[155]).

Just to add some further details about the special type of salvation Paul taught to the nations, unlike the requirements for experiencing the salvation that Jesus and His disciples taught about, this kind of salvation is entirely without any requirement of works of any kind, on our part at least, as already noted.[156] Paul was quite clear that even if we don't do any works at all, we can still be justified,[157] which means that faith without works is *not* dead for those in the body of Christ. In addition, something few are aware of is that baptism for those who enjoy this sort of salvation isn't in water. Yes, Paul did baptize a few people in water early on,[158] but he would have eventually stopped completely as he progressed in receiving revelations of truth from the Lord,[159] particularly

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[152] And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. — Matthew 16:18

[153] Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: — Colossians 1:24

[154] Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. — 1 Timothy 1:16

[155] And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. — Galatians 6:16

[156] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. — Ephesians 2:8-9

[157] But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. — Romans 4:5

[158] I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. — 1 Corinthians 1:14-16

[159] It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. — 2 Corinthians 12:1

after learning the truth that there's only *one* sort of immersion, or baptism,[160] for us, which is immersion *by* the Holy Spirit, *into* the body of Christ,[161] including into what He experienced in His body, such as His death[162] (and he was careful to point out that Christ *didn't* send him to baptize at all,[163] which would be unusual if water baptism *was* necessary for the sort of salvation he was teaching the Gentiles about, as some Christians believe, and if he actually *was* trying to get them saved) – as opposed to the various different types of baptisms for Israel that I already mentioned, some of which involved water and some of which didn't, telling us that not all baptisms end up getting someone wet – and so this baptism, or immersion (which is all the Greek word βάπτισμα/"baptisma" that we transliterate the English word "baptism" from means), is quite dry for us, and happens to us entirely passively at the moment we believe and are saved. (In order to try to ignore this point, some Christians claim that Paul simply meant we should only be baptized in water once in our lives rather than repeatedly, but he preceded the words *"one baptism"* with the words *"one hope"* and *"one faith,"* and I certainly hope nobody would think we should only have hope or faith once in our lives, as would be the case if Paul meant we should be baptized only once in our lives there, so that interpretation doesn't really fit with the rest of the passage if we're interpreting the whole thing consistently, which tells us he's really just saying that there's only

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[160] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. — Ephesians 4:4-6

[161] For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. — 1 Corinthians 12:13

[162] Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:3-4

[163] For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. — 1 Corinthians 1:17

one *type* of baptism for us – one which doesn't involve water at all; and while not every Christian uses that interpretation, because others will instead claim that 1 Corinthians 12:13 should actually be translated as "for *in* one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," but since there is now only *one* baptism for those in that body, and this verse still tells us that baptism into the body of Christ is what this one baptism is, if "in one Spirit" somehow *were* the best translation, and if it did refer to that baptism *with*, or *of*, or *in* the Holy Spirit, then it can't also include getting wet, because water baptism would then be a *second* baptism *in addition* to our *one* baptism in or with the Holy Spirit, so this doesn't help defend the idea of water baptism for the body of Christ at all anyway.) And while forgiving others is still something God would like us to do,[164] it isn't required for salvation for us the way it is for Israel[165] since we aren't under the Mosaic law[166] or required to do good works in order to be saved when it comes to our type of salvation (even though, yes, God will still end up having most members of the body of Christ do good works,[167] but we aren't required to do them in order to be saved, or even to *demonstrate* that we've been saved – since we've already learned that *"to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"* – and since Paul told us that *"we are his workmanship"* in the verse where he said we're *"created in Christ Jesus unto good works,"* we know that those are works God will make sure we do, or that He'll technically do through us), the way Israelites are when it

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[164] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

[165] For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. — Matthew 6:14-15

[166] For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. — Galatians 3:10

[167] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. — Ephesians 2:10

comes to their type of salvation (or the way other Gentiles are if they also want to experience the sort of salvation Jesus and His disciples spoke about – remember, Gentiles can experience the same salvation Jesus and His disciples preached about, as evidenced by Cornelius and his household, just as Jews can experience the sort of salvation Paul primarily preached about, as evidenced by Paul himself), and, in fact, we can be saved right now *despite* the fact that Israel is *not* currently a light to the Gentiles[168] as they one day will need to be for Gentiles to be led to salvation, which will be at the time when the law shall go forth of Zion[169] (which isn't right now, since the law not only *doesn't* go forth from Zion, but doesn't even apply to Gentiles at present).

The differences between those various forms of salvation also tells us how important it is that one doesn't confuse the people referred to as the body of Christ with the people called the Israel of God, or else they're likely to misunderstand not only which teachings in the Bible apply specifically to them, but how they receive their type of salvation as well. (Some Christians believe the term "the Israel of God" is being applied to the body of Christ by Paul in that verse in Galatians 6, but as you read the rest of this chapter you should be able to figure out for yourself why that's quite impossible, although I will explain why it's impossible a little later in the chapter as well, so please keep reading and it will soon become clear why there are indeed two different churches going by those two different names.)

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[168] I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. — Romans 11:11

[169] But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. — Micah 4:1-2

Of course, most Christians interpret the Bible with a major preconceived bias already present, which is the assumption that the whole Bible is to and about everyone. But unless you believe that everyone needs to build a literal ark out of literal gopher wood,[170] needs to get naked when they preach,[171] or needs to own a sword,[172] it should be pretty obvious that there are things in Scripture which simply don't apply to you, and based on what we just covered about the different types of salvation, it should also be obvious that there are two entirely different sets of messages for two entirely different groups of people in the Bible. And if a declaration regarding one of those particular types of salvation could be referred to as a proclamation of "glad tidings,"[173] or a pronouncement of news which is good, aka "good news" (all of which is what the English word "Gospel" means), if there *are* multiple different types of salvation mentioned in Scripture, which we know there are (unless, again, you think that Jesus' disciples being temporarily saved from dying by being saved from drowning in water is somehow the exact same sort of salvation He provided through His death for our sins), then each of those proclamations of good news would technically not be the *same* proclamation of good news as one another, which would mean it could be said that there's more than one Gospel referred to in Scripture, based on the definition of the word "Gospel." But if that's the case, shouldn't the Bible also *say* that there are multiple types of proclamations of

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[170] And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. — Genesis 6:13-14

[171] At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. — Isaiah 20:2

[172] Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. — Luke 22:36

[173] And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, — Luke 8:1

good news, perhaps even giving each of these proclamations of good news different titles? Well, it actually does just that – and even tells us the names of these respective proclamations – in Galatians 2:7, where we're told that they're called the Gospel of the Uncircumcision and the Gospel of the Circumcision.[174]

Unfortunately, since most Christians mistakenly assume that there's really only one kind of salvation and one type of proclamation of good news anywhere in the Bible, they'll also insist that because the next two verses in Galatians explain how both God and the pillars of the circumcision church (the Israel of God) sent Paul to the heathen (the Gentiles) while Peter and the rest focused on the circumcision[175] (the Jews), then verse 7 must have simply been saying the exact same thing as well. But these verses were really Paul *expanding* on his previous statement in verse 7, by telling his readers who the primary audiences of each of the two separate proclamations of good news regarding the different types of salvation are, providing new information about what he'd just told them rather than simply being unnecessarily repetitive the way most Christians assume he was being in these verses, causing them to then read this assumption of redundancy into verses 7 through 9, ultimately leading them to believe it just meant that Paul preached the Gospel to the uncircumcision and that Peter preached the exact same Gospel to the circumcision. However, for those who insist on interpreting it this way, if Paul *was* trying to get across to his readers that the different types of salvation are shared through different proclamations of good news with the titles of "the Gospel of the Circumcision" and "the Gospel of the Uncircumcision," or even perhaps different proclamations of good news

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[174] But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; — Galatians 2:7

[175] (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. — Galatians 2:8-9

with the titles of "the Gospel *to* the Circumcision" and "the Gospel *to* the Uncircumcision," if that's how one prefers to translate verse 7, I need to ask you to explain what he would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you that there *are* indeed two separate proclamations of good news being referred to by two separate titles there, especially in light of the fact that there are obviously multiple different types of salvation referred to in different parts of the Bible, with different methods of being saved when it comes to each of them as well.

As far as what the Gospel of the Uncircumcision is, it's simply the good news that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day,[176] although I should quickly say that Paul also referred to this good news by various other names as well, such as "the Gospel of Christ,"[177] as "the Gospel of the Grace of God,"[178] and even sometimes simply as "the Gospel of God."[179] And, of course, those of us in the body of Christ sometimes also refer to it as Paul's Gospel, because Paul himself called it *"my Gospel,"*[180] and because

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[176] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: — 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

[177] And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. — Romans 15:29

[178] But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. — Acts 20:24

[179] That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. — Romans 15:16

[180] Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, — Romans 16:25

one generally doesn't call something theirs unless they're trying to differentiate it from something that belongs to someone else, or at least trying to point out that it doesn't belong to, or perhaps originate from, someone else; and if there was only one Gospel then Paul would have said "*the* Gospel" rather than "*my* Gospel"[181] in those particular passages[182] (although some have tried to use Paul's use of the phrase *"my grace"* in Philippians 1:7[183] to try to argue that Paul using the word "my" doesn't prove this, but this verse is actually even more proof of what I've been saying, because Paul was the first human to be shown the sort of grace connected with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, as already mentioned,[184] so this grace began with him just as this Gospel did – relatively speaking, of course; from an absolute perspective, both the grace and the Gospel we're talking about obviously began with God and Christ, but I'm speaking from the relative perspective here, just as Paul was when he referred to *"my grace"* and to *"my Gospel"*).

As for the Gospel of the Circumcision, it was originally referred to as "the Gospel of the Kingdom,"[185] because it was the proclamation of good news that

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[181] In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. — Romans 2:16

[182] Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: — 2 Timothy 2:8

[183] Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. — Philippians 1:7

[184] Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. — 1 Timothy 1:16

[185] And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. — Matthew 4:23

"the kingdom of heaven is at hand"[186] which John the Baptist[187] first proclaimed,[188] and which Jesus and His disciples also preached while He walked the earth.[189] From a literal perspective, this proclamation of good news meant that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (and, in fact, while Jesus was still in their midst in Israel, so was the kingdom itself, from a certain perspective, which is why *"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"*[190] is what this Gospel meant from a figurative perspective, and which is also what the proclamation of this Gospel message had to transition into after Acts 13,[191] when the kingdom was no longer literally "at hand" for Israel any longer, at least for the time being), since it was ready to

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[186] From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 4:17

[187] In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 3:1-2

[188] The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. — Luke 16:16

[189] These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 10:5-7

[190] But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

[191] And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. — Acts 13:42-48

come fully into effect in the near future, and would have shortly thereafter if the right qualifications were met by Israel – although that didn't happen, as we know, so the "nearness" of the kingdom to Israel went into abeyance in Acts 13 (if not earlier). To be saved in connection with this Gospel, one has to repent[192] and believe the proclamation of good news that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (which is the most important part of how one believes this Gospel, although prior to Acts 13, they also would have been required to believe that the kingdom truly was "at hand" at the time), and follow this belief up with the required good works such as water baptism[193] and following the law as well, of course. However, after Paul turned to the Gentiles in Acts 13, because the "nearness" of the kingdom to Israel was temporarily put on hold by God at that time – since the majority of Israel was blinded by God to the truth about Jesus from then on, as prophesied both in word[194] and in type[195] – he needed a label to distinguish between his Gospel and Israel's Gospel, which would be why he

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[192] Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. — Acts 3:19

[193] He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. — Mark 16:16

[194] What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. — Romans 11:7-8

[195] And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. — Acts 13:6-12

began calling it the Gospel of the Circumcision (although most believing Israelites saved in connection with this Gospel would have just called it "the Gospel"[196] from that time on, since they weren't concerned with differentiating between the two Gospels themselves when preaching to their intended audience of other Israelites).

In addition, this Gospel of the Circumcision has also been referred to as "the Gospel of God" by Peter,[197] and this has caused some confusion among certain Christians, because of the fact that Paul *also* referred to *his* Gospel by that label, but this comes down to the fact that "the Gospel of God" is a more generic term that can be used for *any* good news connected with God, and this is, in fact, why Paul said that the Gospel has to be rightly divided in the first place[198] (yes, the term "the word of truth,"[199] or "the word of the truth,"[200] is basically always a reference to a Gospel in the Bible[201]). Now, this is where some Christians will also (rightly) point out that the Greek word ὀρθοτομέω/"or-thot-om-eh'-o" – a variation of which "rightly dividing" is translated from in the KJV – can *also* be translated as "making straight" or "correctly handling" or some other similar term, in order to distract from the idea that the good news about God needs to

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[196] But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. — 1 Peter 1:25

[197] For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? — 1 Peter 4:17

[198] Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. — 2 Timothy 2:15

[199] In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, — Ephesians 1:13

[200] For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; — Colossians 1:5

[201] Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. — James 1:18

be divided. But as you read the rest of this chapter, it should become pretty obvious to you why "rightly dividing" is indeed a better translation than those other options are when it comes to this verse, so I'm not even going to bother responding to that point here, because you'll be able to see for yourself by the time you finish this chapter.

I should also quickly discuss the fact that their assertion about "the Gospel of God" is similar to how some will also point out that Paul referred to the Gospel he preached to the nations as "the Gospel of Christ," as I already mentioned, but that Mark 1:1 refers to "the Gospel of Jesus Christ,"[202] and that Paul also refers to "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" in 2 Thessalonians 1:8,[203] in order to claim that these must all be the same Gospel. Well, as far as Paul's reference to "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 goes, he actually was referring to the Gospel of the Circumcision there, as I'll cover in a later chapter, which is the Gospel that the reference in Mark 1:1 would have also been connected with, so this isn't a problem at all. And as far as his reference to "the Gospel of Christ" in Romans 15:29 goes, this label doesn't have the word "Jesus" in it, telling us that it isn't the same Gospel as the one in those other two passages at all, although the fact that there is more than one Gospel in the Bible should make this clear enough anyway, even if you have to finish reading this book before you're convinced that this is indeed the case.

That there isn't only one Gospel in the Bible really should be more obvious to more people than it currently is, though. I mean, first of all, we know that Paul didn't learn the Gospel he preached to the nations from any mortal humans, but rather he said that he learned this Gospel directly from the glorified Jesus

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[202] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; — Mark 1:1

[203] In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: — 2 Thessalonians 1:8

Christ.[204] However, it wouldn't make sense for him to have been persecuting the Israel of God if he wasn't aware of their most important teaching already (the Gospel they were preaching), so the Gospel he learned directly from Christ couldn't have been the same Gospel he was persecuting the Jewish church for preaching, because he would have had to have already known that Gospel before he ever even met Christ on the road to Damascus in order to persecute them for preaching it. Although, if you disagree, I'd like you to explain *what* Paul was persecuting the Israel of God for, exactly, if his Gospel was the same one they were already preaching, as well as what the Gospel he said he received not of man, *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*, was. In addition, it doesn't appear that Paul was told this Gospel by Jesus on the road to Damascus either, at least not based on what Scripture says about this encounter,[205] yet he immediately proclaimed the same message about Jesus that Peter and the rest of the apostles were preaching after being healed by Ananias,[206] so the obvious

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[204] But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. — Galatians 1:11-12

[205] And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. — Acts 9:1-6

[206] And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. — Acts 9:17-20

conclusion seems to be that the good news he later preached to the Gentiles wasn't the same good news which Peter preached to Israel and the proselytes, and which Paul himself preached at the beginning of his ministry, as well as three years later in Jerusalem, where the apostles and Jesus' brother James became acquainted with him for a couple weeks,[207] and the most important part of the "him" they became acquainted with would certainly include what the Gospel he believed and preached at that time was – he wouldn't have just been sitting around discussing sports with them for two weeks, especially since he preached with them at the time he visited with them in Jerusalem as well.[208] (And for those who aren't acquainted with 17th-century English, the phrase *"other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother"* in Galatians 1:19 in the KJV simply means "other than the apostles, I got to know nobody except for the Lord's brother James," which makes sense considering the fact that this James wasn't one of the 12 apostles, and that Acts 9:26-29 says he *did* meet the rest of the apostles and even preached with them, as I just mentioned.) If the Gospel that Paul referred to as *"my Gospel"* really was the same Gospel he'd already preached with them in Jerusalem, why would he have then had to return more than a decade later to explain what the Gospel he was now preaching among the Gentiles was?[209] Peter and the rest of the

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[207] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. — Galatians 1:18-19

[208] And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. — Acts 9:26-29

[209] Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. — Galatians 2:1-2

apostles (as well as James) would already be well aware of what the Gospel he preached was from his previous visit if it was the *same* Gospel, so for those who believe it was the same Gospel, I have to ask what the Gospel was that he preached among the Gentiles which he had to explain to them, exactly, if they already knew the Gospel he preached, and why did he have to explain it to them?

But all that aside, the definition of the word "Gospel" (or "Evangel," as some Bible versions translate the word) really makes it clear that there's more than one of them in the Bible anyway. Remember, the word "Gospel" refers to a pronouncement of glad tidings, or news which is good, and the word "news" quite literally refers to "a series of specific words which, when laid out in a specific order, conveys specific information about a specific subject." This means that if you have *another* set of specific words which, when laid out in *their own* specific order, convey some *other* sort of specific information about that subject, you can't say that you have the *same* news, regardless of whether both sets of news are good in nature, or even about the same person (for example, the news that "Joshua went to the graveyard and then returned" can't be said to be the exact same news as "that thing you've been anticipating is ready to happen," because the two messages mean something entirely different from one another since they convey entirely different pieces of information from each other: one piece of news being about an action a person took, with the other piece of news being about something the hearer or reader had been anticipating being ready to occur). Because they're providing us with different sorts of information from one another, it means that they are, by definition, different sets of news (and that there are at least two different sets of news in existence). And since the news which is good that Jesus and His disciples preached prior to Paul's conversion (which was the news that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand") didn't contain the same specific words as the news which is good that Paul later preached to the nations did (which is the news that "Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day"), nor

did it convey the same specific information (since their news which is good didn't contain anything about Christ's death for our sins in it, which it couldn't have because most of the people proclaiming it weren't even aware of the fact that He was going to die at the time they preached their news), it should be very evident that the news which is good that Jesus' disciples preached during Jesus' earthly ministry simply *can't* be said to be the same news which is good (meaning the same Gospel) that Paul taught, and so anyone who still insists there's only one set of glad tidings/news which is good/Gospel in the Bible is simply lying to themselves at this point. Although, if anyone disagrees, I'd be very curious to hear them explain how the news which is good about Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection that Paul preached is indeed what Jesus' disciples were preaching when they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom during Jesus' earthly ministry, all while being unaware that He was even going to die.

And to quickly get the most common objections to the idea of there being two Gospels out of the way, first of all, some people mistakenly believe Paul was saying in Galatians 1:8-9 that anyone who preaches another Gospel will be accursed. Unfortunately, the people who use this argument not only read more into this passage than it's actually saying, they also don't pay close attention to the specific wording of the passage either,[210] leading them to believe a whole doctrine that wasn't what Paul was getting at there at all. You see, Paul wasn't saying there is only one true Gospel there, or that nobody could ever preach a Gospel to someone other than the one he taught the body of Christ (if that were the case, nobody could ever share good news of any sort with anyone if it wasn't about Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection, including good news/gospels/glad tidings about births or job promotions or any

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[210] But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. — Galatians 1:8-9

other sort of positive information). Most people who base their assumptions about there being only one Gospel on this passage have likely only read translations of Scripture which render verses 6 and 7 in the way the KJV does when it says *"another gospel: which is not another"* in the verses before his warning.[211] The problem is, if one doesn't understand that this is a very poetic sort of translation, they can easily end up very confused. Is it another Gospel or is it not another Gospel? It can't literally be both another Gospel and not another Gospel at the same time, which tells us that this particular translation isn't meant to be read literally.

What most people aren't aware of is that Paul actually used two distinct Greek words rather than one in the original text (and that Paul literally just meant: "a *different* gospel which is not another") in order to differentiate between any legitimate Gospels that weren't his but were still perfectly okay to be taught to certain people to follow for salvation (as long as it wasn't members of the body of Christ being taught that) and any illegitimate "gospels" that shouldn't be taught by anyone at all, speaking of both a **different** (ἕτερος/"het'-er-os") *so-called* "gospel" which isn't actually a real Gospel at all, and **another** (ἄλλος/"al'-los") *actual* Gospel. The word ἕτερος basically means "other of a differing sort," while ἄλλος means "other of the same sort," so the wording of this passage allows for the existence of another/ἄλλος *true* Gospel (or even true Gospels, plural) in addition to Paul's Gospel. For those who haven't figured it out yet, this is another example of the translators of the KJV translating two different words (which meant something quite different from one another in their original language) using the same English word in the KJV, and if one isn't being careful in their Bible study, they can end up completely misinterpreting the passage as saying the exact opposite of what it actually means because they aren't aware of this fact.

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[211] I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. — Galatians 1:6-7

Simply put, Paul wasn't saying that people who taught there are other Gospels are under a curse, since he did so himself in the very next chapter of this epistle.[212] All he was telling his readers is that anyone who tried to get those in *the body of Christ* to follow the requirements of any Gospels **for their salvation** other than the one *they had already received from him* would be accursed. But Peter and the rest of the circumcision believers could preach the requirements of their particular Gospel as something to be followed to anyone that they wanted to without fear, **as long as it wasn't to existing members of the body of Christ**, based on the words "*unto you*" in verses 8 and 9, since Paul was writing to those who had already believed his Gospel (meaning those who had already become members of the body of Christ), not to those who hadn't. In fact, the different/ἕτερος "gospel" that Paul was warning about there was actually an adulterated mix of both Gospels, which means it was an attempt to blend the two Gospels into one (those whom Paul was condemning were trying to mix the law elements associated with the Gospel that Peter preached in with the pure grace of Paul's Gospel, resulting in a bastardized false "gospel" that can't help anyone). Unfortunately, this means that the evangelists and teachers of the Christian religion today who are also trying to force the contents of each of these two actual Gospels into one (by insisting that there *is* only one Gospel) are guilty of preaching that very same different/ἕτερος "gospel" that isn't even another/ἄλλος (completely legitimate) Gospel at all like the Gospel that Peter preached was, bringing the curse that Paul warned about upon themselves.

And on the off chance that anyone ever tries to claim that "different" and "another" (or ἕτερος and ἄλλος) literally mean the same thing, here are some sentences to consider: 1) "the word 'different' is different from the word 'another,'" 2) "the word 'another' is another from the word 'different,'" 3) "the

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[212] But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; — Galatians 2:7

word ‘another’ is different from the word ‘another,’” 4) “the word ‘different’ is another from the word ‘different,’” 5) “the word ‘another’ is another from the word ‘another,’” and 6) “the word ‘different’ is different from the word ‘different.’” Read those, then ask yourself if those sentences all mean the same thing, or if the last five even make any sense at all. And to really drive the point home, if the two words truly did mean the same thing, the verse could also be translated as “a different Gospel which is not different,” similar to sentence number 6 above, but that would be an extremely nonsensical translation. And if the words “different” and “another” *don’t* mean the same thing, as those examples I just gave prove, there’s literally no way to interpret the passage as meaning Paul is saying there’s only one legitimate Gospel, because he’s clearly allowing for at least three separate messages called gospels in this passage, 1) his own Gospel, 2) another Gospel, and 3) a different “gospel,” which means the only way he could have been talking about only two messages called gospels – 1) his own Gospel, and 2) a different “gospel” – with only one being legitimate, is if “another” and “different” actually *did* mean the same thing. (This isn’t to say that ἕτερος and ἄλλος can’t ever be used as synonyms of one another in a more figurative manner in other places, since we already know that the same word can be used in different ways in different passages, but it should be clear by this point that Paul wasn’t using ἕτερος as another word with literally the same meaning as ἄλλος in this passage – since then he’d have been contradicting himself by saying it both was and wasn’t another Gospel at the same time – but that he was instead using the two words with different definitions intended, contrasting them with one another, in this case; and yes, I used the words “different” and “another” repeatedly in this sentence on purpose, to really drive my point home.) And even if we only look at the way the KJV renders the verse, ignoring the original Greek words, that translation is obviously still saying the same thing, just very poetically (since a literal interpretation on its own would be contradictory, as I just mentioned), so it has to be interpreted as meaning: “another” [so-called] gospel which is not [actually] another [legitimate Gospel] (with the first “another” there being in

quotation marks in order to demonstrate that it still just means "different" [from any actual Gospels], when it comes to this particular translation).

Besides, anyone who has studied the Bible already believes that there *were* other glad tidings (again, meaning Gospels) preached in Scripture, such as the angel Gabriel's proclamation of glad tidings regarding the impending birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias,[213] with "glad tidings" being translated from a verb form of the same Greek word εὐαγγέλιον/"yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on" that "Gospel" is translated from in the KJV (and that the English word "evangelism" is transliterated from), literally meaning to "preach this good news" in that passage. This means that there's no way Paul could have been saying there's only one message allowed to be labelled as words of good news/a Gospel/glad tidings/εὐαγγέλιον in existence or else we'd have to remove those verses discussing the other "glad tidings" from the Bible altogether, and Gabriel would have been accursed for telling Zacharias about his wife's pregnancy, unless those various other words of good news/glad tidings are all a part of a larger, all-encompassing, progressively-revealed "Gospel" we have to believe in so we can be saved. But then John the Baptist's birth would also have to be a part of what the body of Christ has to have faith in for their salvation (and someone who hadn't heard of John the Baptist yet couldn't get saved until they do if this were the case), so this obviously makes no sense, especially in light of what Paul said the Gospel he preached actually was, which means that right off the bat we already have multiple proclamations of good news/Gospels/glad tidings/εὐαγγέλιον in the Bible even before we get to any of the Gospels that one can believe when they get saved. All that being said, even if somebody somehow still hasn't recognized that there's more than one Gospel in the Bible after everything I've already covered, they should at least now recognize that the passage in Galatians we just looked at about a different gospel which is not

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[213] And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. — Luke 1:19

another can't be used to refute the idea, since its wording does at least allow for another/ἄλλος legitimate Gospel to exist, even if they somehow still don't believe there definitely is another.

And yet, even though the idea of including all proclamations called good news/Gospels/glad tidings/εὐαγγέλιον in the Bible into one progressively-revealed Gospel makes no sense and contradicts other parts of Scripture (unless, again, people have to have faith in John the Baptist's birth in order to be saved), anyone who *does* still believe there's only one Gospel in the Bible after reading all that is pretty much *forced* to believe in a progressively-revealed Gospel (whether they're consistent and include the good news about John the Baptist's birth in what's required to be trusted in for salvation or whether they choose to ignore consistency and leave it out). Of course, many Christians who believe there's only one proclamation of good news/glad tidings/Gospel in Scripture actually do admit that they believe this one proclamation of good news as a whole *was* progressively revealed throughout Scripture, and that it now contains both the proclamation of good news made during Jesus' earthly ministry (that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, along with the details of how one gets to enter it) as well as the proclamation of good news which Paul preached to the nations (that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day), and that these two different proclamations of good news are simply two parts of one all-encompassing proclamation of good news which has only been gradually revealed through progressive revelation (although not too all-encompassing, or else, again, we'd have to have faith in the birth of John the Baptist for our salvation, not to mention have to do the good works that were required in order to be saved – which included following the Mosaic law and being baptized in water – back when Jesus and His disciples preached the part of this supposedly progressively-revealed "Gospel" that they preached during Jesus' earthly ministry, since a progressively-revealed "Gospel" would include *everything* connected with it in *all* the time periods it was supposedly being revealed throughout, because otherwise it wouldn't be *one* complete set

of news with *one* complete set of requirements that had been progressively revealed as time went on but would rather be two *distinct* sets of news with *two entirely different sets* of requirements). And while this idea isn't actually stated anywhere in Scripture, which means they're ultimately just making this idea up in order to support their assumption that there can't be more than one Gospel in Scripture, at least they recognize that this would have to be the case if there really was only one Gospel recorded there, which it indeed has to be, considering the fact that what Paul referred to as the Gospel he preached among the nations included Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection, which is something that Jesus' disciples couldn't have included in the Gospel they preached during His earthly ministry, since they weren't even aware He was going to die at the time, much less be resurrected, as I keep pointing out. Some of these Christians also like to say things such as, "Jesus is the Gospel," however, and while this makes for a catchy statement that many people would automatically want to nod their heads in assent to because of how spiritual it sounds, since the Bible tells us what the two different proclamations of news which is good related to salvation made by Jesus' disciples and later by Paul really are, and because it tells us that these proclamations of news which is good are *about* Jesus, not that He Himself *is* the proclamation of news which is good (with the first proclamation being about the *identity* of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, and the second one being about the *work* of Jesus through His death for our sins), unless you're aware of a verse in Scripture which actually outright says, "Jesus is the Gospel" (which is something I've never seen in the Bible), we know that this is also nothing more than an assertion made in order to defend their assumption that there really is only one Gospel.

However, let's pretend for a moment that the Bible actually did say there's only one progressively-revealed Gospel in Scripture. If that were the case, considering the fact, again, that none of Jesus' followers prior to Paul preached that Christ's death was *for our sins* (or even that Christ was going to die in the first place, when they were proclaiming the news which is good that they

preached prior to His death), or that one had to have faith in His death *for our sins* in order to be saved back then (which they couldn't have since – just as a reminder for those who have somehow already forgotten since the last time I mentioned it – **none of them even understood that He was going to die prior to Him doing so**), this would mean the Gospel being preached before Paul's ministry to the nations (or, at the very least, before Jesus actually died) would have been pretty useless unless those who heard the Gospel being preached back then could be saved *without* believing that Christ's death was *for our sins*, which means anyone who believes this idea is ultimately telling us that we have to divide this *one*, supposedly progressively-revealed, "news which is good" into *two* separate halves, preached during *two* different periods of time, made up of two different sets of words talking about *two* different specific sets of things needing to be believed (and perhaps performed) in order to be said one is saved during each of those two respective periods of time: with the first half being preached during the first period of time, meaning *prior* to Paul joining the body of Christ (or prior to Christ's death and resurrection, at least; but since we have no scriptural record of Christ's death being *for our sins* as something that was taught as something that had to be believed in order to be able to be said one is saved by anyone before Paul did, especially based on Peter's sermons in Acts and what John wrote in John 20:31, we have no good basis for assuming it was), and the second half being preached during the second period of time *by* Paul after he joined the body of Christ, taking us full circle to what I've been getting at all along here. Which means the bottom line here is, if there *are* two different proclamations (meaning two sets of words with two entirely different meanings) which were *both* called "news which is good" that were preached by *two different sets of people* during *two different periods of times* (as would have to be the case even if they were both a part of one progressively-revealed Gospel, and which we've already determined is the case anyway, one being about Jesus' identity and the other being about His work on the cross), then, since the phrase "news which is good" is literally the definition of the word "gospel," the existence of one progressively-revealed Gospel would

still ultimately result in the existence of *two* Gospels after we divide that one progressively-revealed Gospel into its two respective halves, meaning its two respective proclamations of "news which is good" preached in their two respective time periods. So at the end of the day, even if we decided to somehow try to claim that there *is* only one Gospel, progressively revealed over time, it still technically results in two Gospels anyway, once all the facts about how it has to be divided into two entirely separate messages preached in two entirely separate time frames are taken into consideration. And with all that being said, there's almost no point in even going over the other objections to the idea of two Gospels, because we've now proven that it's impossible for there to be anything *less* than two Gospels in Scripture once we've properly divided the hypothetical progressively-revealed one Gospel into its two respective halves (since, even if two halves do equal one, you still begin with *two* of these halves, each called "news which is good" and each of them being a very different set of news, regardless), but for the sake of clarity, I'm still going to go over them anyway.

And so, in answer to the next most common objection, yes, it's true, as many Christians also like to point out when trying to deny the existence of multiple Gospels in Scripture, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile for those people Paul wrote this epistle to.[214] However, that's only the case *within* the body of Christ (members of the body of Christ being those people that this epistle was specifically written to, along with all his others as well), because one's

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[214] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:28

nationality is irrelevant for those in Christ's body,[215] whereas, for the Israel of God, and even for Gentiles during the thousand-year kingdom, the nationality of Jews and other Israelites will remain very important.[216] This means that, based on everything we've covered, it should also now be clear that Paul was *reducing* the scope of membership within the Israel of God in Romans 2:28-29[217] to include only certain Jews, not expanding it to include the Gentiles in the body of Christ as well, since "neither Jew nor Gentile" doesn't mean "you're all Israelites now," considering there would then still be Jews, even if *only* Jews, in the body of Christ.

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[215] Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. — Ephesians 2:11-22

[216] Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. — Zechariah 8:22-23

[217] For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. — Romans 2:28-29

And yes, it's also true – as some will point out – that while Peter didn't teach Christ's death as being *for our sins* in the book of Acts, and even taught that Jesus' death was bad news for the Jewish people he was speaking to in the same book[218] (rather than being the good news that it was for Paul's Gentile audiences and that it is for us), Paul technically isn't recorded as teaching Christ's death as being for our sins, or as being good news, in the book of Acts either. However, the fact of the matter is that *no* sermon of Paul recorded in the book of Acts contains a *full* "Gospel message" explaining how one gets saved, which means his full Gospel message of how one is saved must have been preached "off screen," so to speak (meaning that specific part of his messages wasn't recorded in Acts, unless you think *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"*[219] in and of itself is enough of an explanation of how to get saved for someone who wouldn't have known what that even meant, since he and Silas didn't say *what* to believe *about* the Lord Jesus Christ in that verse; so while they did later explain all the details about what they meant by that statement,[220] those specific details weren't actually included in the book), whereas the sermons of Peter recorded in Acts are a lot more comprehensive (and while these sermons telling his audience members how they could be saved in the manner of salvation he was referring to in these sermons often did include the fact that Jesus Christ died, exactly *zero* of these sermons contained the information that His death was specifically *for our sins* – meaning **why the sins of humanity have now been entirely dealt with and why nobody will be judged for their sins at their final judgement**, as I'll prove a little later, although it's also important to know that people *will* still be judged for other reasons, and that

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[218] Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? — Acts 2:36-37

[219] And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. — Acts 16:30-31

[220] And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. — Acts 16:32

people's sins *aren't* automatically forgiven simply because of Christ's death, as I'll also discuss, but we'll get to all that later – or that it was necessary to believe specifically that "this is *why* Christ died" in order to be saved in the way Peter meant his audience could experience salvation, meaning getting to enjoy life in the kingdom of heaven on earth in the future[221]). So this just means that the writer of Acts didn't include the contents of Paul's Gospel in the book, likely because it's primarily a Circumcision writing (meaning a book of the Bible not signed by Paul, which he did all of his epistles directed specifically to members of the body of Christ[222]) to Israelites concerned with why the kingdom of heaven didn't come fully into effect in the nation of Israel at that time, and not simply a general history lesson about the "early church" and nothing more, the way many assume it is.

Now, some like to also point out that Peter *does* mention the death and blood of Christ in one of his own epistles (in 1 Peter 1:18-19[223] and in 1 Peter 2:24[224]) in a manner that was far more positive for his readers than the way he explained it in his sermons in Acts was (where it was discussed only as a negative as far as his listeners at the time were concerned[225]). And while what Peter wrote in his

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[221] Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. — Acts 3:19-21

[222] The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. — 2 Thessalonians 3:17

[223] Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: — 1 Peter 1:18-19

[224] Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. — 1 Peter 2:24

[225] Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: — Acts 2:23

first epistle technically *can* be considered news which happened to be good, at least as far as his written audience was concerned (which consisted only of Israelites, since it was addressed to "the strangers,"[226] and the Greek word rendered as "stranger" in that verse – translated from παρεπίδημος/"par-ep-id'-ay-mos" – literally means "someone who comes from a foreign country into a new location to reside there by the side of the natives," telling us that Peter was writing specifically to Israelites of the dispersion, or diaspora), it's important to note that it wasn't *called* "the good news" (or "the Gospel") in Peter's epistles the way the message which Paul proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 15 was,[227] and also to note that we already know what the *actual* message called "the good news" which Peter taught was, at least the message called "the good news" which he preached during Jesus' earthly ministry, and that the message which *he* would have called "the good news" at that time had nothing to do with Christ's death for our sins, or even His subsequent burial and resurrection, at all, because at that time he didn't even realize Jesus was going to die, as I trust you still remember. So yes, Peter did eventually realize the connection between Christ's

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[226] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, — 1 Peter 1:1

[227] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: — 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

death and Isaiah 53,[228] but not until after Jesus died and rose again, and there's also no indication that he ever actually understood the full effect that Christ's death for our (meaning all humanity's) sins had the way Paul did either, with it seeming likely that he only knew the Circumcision connection to His death according to prophecy rather than the Uncircumcision connection according to the revelation of the mystery (or secret, depending on your Bible translation), which was kept secret from the time the world began until it was revealed to and through Paul.[229] Because yes, Jesus *did* have to die in order for Israel's New Covenant to come into effect, and also in order to be a propitiation for their

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[228] Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. — Isaiah 53:1-12

[229] Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, — Romans 16:25

sins[230] (and yes, the sins of Gentiles who get saved in connection with their Gospel too), but His death accomplished *so much more* than that as well (and Peter and John and the other disciples certainly weren't aware of *any* of what the cross accomplished until *after* Christ died and was resurrected, which means the Gospel they preached prior to that point couldn't possibly have contained anything about it the way the Gospel which Paul preached did anyway). You see, the cross of Christ reached so much deeper into humanity's need than merely bringing one small nation closer to their second birth (although that is an important result of His death and resurrection as well), getting right down to the root of humanity's biggest problem itself. Remember, Israel's Passover lambs were not tortured during the temple sacrifices under the Mosaic law. Rather, their throats were slit, with that being the extent of their suffering. However, the same can't be said about Jesus Christ on the cross. His six hours of torment on the cross touched an aspect of humanity's condition that the swift death of the Passover lambs could never reach. In fact, the depth of suffering during His time on the cross goes deeper than anything Peter or John ever understood, telling us that the whole human race is finished (the Passover lambs left Israel intact while the cross wiped out everything and everyone in its path,[231] even if this might only apply in practice to believers in Paul's Gospel at first, with it only applying to everyone else from a proleptic perspective until later – prolepsis being a common figure of speech used throughout the Bible which means "the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished," calling what is not yet as though it already were, in other words, as God Himself often

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[230] And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. — 1 John 2:2

[231] For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: — 2 Corinthians 5:14

does[232]). The other apostles looked back to the patriarchs, but when Paul taught about what happened on the cross, he went all the way back to Adam in his explanations.[233] No other writers discussed Adam when it came to dealing with sin and salvation; they wrote about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, among others, but only Paul traced our entire spiritual history back to the first man,[234] and only in Paul's Gospel is the entire race made new. The Circumcision writings promise a new birth for the nation of Israel (no, being "born again" doesn't mean what most Christians have assumed it does, as I'll prove later in this book), but the new creation Paul taught about is to the new birth what a lake is to a teacup. You see, when Jesus rose from the grave, there was a whole new creation (referred to as a new "creature" in the KJV) which came into existence,[235] one which comes into the lives of everyone who believes Paul's Gospel today,[236] and which will eventually come into the lives of every human who will ever have lived (as I'll also prove later in this book). This new creation eliminates fleshly distinctions such as Gentile and Israelite,[237] but Peter wasn't able to teach this because he has to remain an Israelite in the kingdom, seeing

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[232] Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. — Romans 4:16-17

[233] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

[234] Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: — Romans 5:12

[235] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. — Galatians 6:15

[236] Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

[237] For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:27-28

as Jesus promised him that he would sit on one of twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel[238] (which also means he was not, and is not, a member of the church called the body of Christ, but is instead a member of the church called the Israel of God, and the same goes for all of the rest of the twelve apostles for the same reason). So if you want to really understand the complete result of what happened on the cross, you look to Paul's epistles. While the Circumcision writings are indeed useful for their intended purposes, they just don't teach us everything that the cross accomplished the way Paul's writings do.

Some Christians also like to claim that because the churches of Judea had heard, *"That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed,"*[239] that this means Paul had been preaching the same Gospel Peter and the rest of the disciples preached. And the truth is, they're absolutely correct, because Paul *did* preach the Gospel of the Circumcision to Israelites at various times, as we already covered, including at the time when the churches of Judea heard this report. But having done so doesn't mean he couldn't have *also* preached a *second* Gospel to the Gentiles at *other* times as well, so this doesn't actually help prove that there's only one Gospel the way they might think it does either.

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[238] And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. — Matthew 19:28

[239] Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. — Galatians 1:21-24

On a somewhat related note, certain Christians also argue that, because Paul wrote to believers in Galatia,[240] and because Peter also wrote to believers in Galatia,[241] these believers must have all been following the exact same Gospel and must have been members of the exact same local church (a similar argument is also sometimes made that because Paul wrote an epistle which is labelled as being to the Ephesians in our Bibles, and because John was also given a prophecy for a local church in Ephesus,[242] that the teachings in both of these writings had to have been for and about people in the same local church – and even that they had to have been for people living in the same time period, which I say because I personally believe that the seven churches listed in Revelation are seven Jewish churches which won't even come into existence until around the time of the Tribulation in the future, but that's a much bigger topic than I have the time to get into here). Of course, this assertion demonstrates a serious deficiency of logic, since the idea that, just because two men wrote to people in the same general region, they had to have been writing to the exact same people in the exact same local church (and also had to have been writing about the exact same thing), is nothing more than an assumption one has to make in order to support their presupposition that there's only one Gospel and one church spoken of in the Bible. In addition, they sometimes also argue that because Paul wrote specifically to the same audience Peter wrote to

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[240] Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: — Galatians 1:1-2

[241] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, — 1 Peter 1:1

[242] Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. — Revelation 1:11

at least once,[243] he must have taught the exact same things as Peter. And, in fact, Paul sometimes *did* teach the exact same things as Peter, when he taught members of the Israel of God doctrines related to their own Gospel (as we already covered). But again, that doesn't mean he didn't *also* teach *different* things to those under *his* Gospel. Besides, as we've also already discussed, we know from 1 Peter 1:1 *exactly* who Peter's audience was anyway, and it didn't include Gentiles since it was specifically addressed to *"the strangers,"* telling us that Peter was writing to Israelites *living among Gentiles* in Galatia and other locations, and not to the Gentile members of the body of Christ that Paul was writing to in his epistle to the Galatians at all. And just as Peter was only writing to Israelites among the diaspora in his epistles, I should also point out that James was also only writing to members of *"the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,"*[244] just as John was writing specifically to Jewish "brethren" rather than to Gentiles,[245] and Jude, who technically didn't specify an audience, but seemed to also be writing to people who were intimately familiar with Israel's history,[246] and considering the intended audience of rest of this batch of epistles, it's very unlikely that Gentiles were included among his book's audience either, any more than they were included in the audience of the book of Hebrews, with the name of *that* book clearly pointing out *its* intended audience – although I think it's safe to say that all the Circumcision writings would likely still apply to all

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[243] And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; — 2 Peter 3:15

[244] James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. — James 1:1

[245] Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. — 3 John 1:5-7

[246] I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. — Jude 1:5

believing members of the Israel of God and not just to those among the diaspora. Simply put, while all Scripture is useful for all of us in various ways,[247] any book of the Bible not signed by Paul is primarily to and about the Israel of God, with only Paul's 13 epistles being specifically to and about members of the body of Christ.

Meanwhile, other people have also argued that Paul wasn't teaching unbelievers how to get saved in his epistles, since he was writing to people who were already believers, so what he referred to in 1 Corinthians 15[248] as the Gospel he preached unto them wasn't meant to teach his readers in Corinth how to get saved. And while it's true that his written audience *was* primarily made up of believers, this is irrelevant, and I'm not sure why anyone would even present that as an argument against the existence of two Gospels, because Paul still outright said in that passage that it *was* the Gospel he preached unto them, and also that it's the Gospel they had to believe in order to be saved,[249] so we know exactly what he preached unto them as how they're saved, which means their argument doesn't actually help them prove that there's only one Gospel anyway.

That said, it is also true that chapter 15 of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians wasn't *specifically* written to teach about Paul's Gospel (although, whether he originally intended to or not, he ended up expanding on what his Gospel meant later in the chapter regardless, as will also be discussed in more detail later in this book), but was instead originally written to discuss bodily resurrection

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[247] All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. — 2 Timothy 3:16-17

[248] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; — 1 Corinthians 15:1

[249] By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. — 1 Corinthians 15:2

(since some of the members of the church in Corinth had stopped believing in their own literal future resurrection in physical bodies), with the specific contents of Paul's Gospel only being included in two verses in the chapter in order to make his point that resurrection *has* to be literal because otherwise it would mean that Christ Himself hadn't even risen from the dead and that they would have then believed the Gospel he preached to them when he first met them in vain if Christ hadn't risen from the dead (since a third of the Gospel he preached to them was specifically about Christ's resurrection). And this fact about the point of this chapter (or at least the point of the first part of the chapter) is actually important to keep in mind for when a different group of Christians attempts to claim that Peter and others were preaching the same Gospel as Paul based on verse 11, where Paul wrote the words, *"Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."* If simply sharing his Gospel with his readers was why he wrote the chapter, as these particular Christians assume, their claim that *"so we preach, and so ye believed"* in that verse means they were preaching the same Gospel *would* be valid. But if you consider the context of the rest of the verses surrounding verse 11,[250] it becomes

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[250] For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. — 1 Corinthians 15:3-17

clear that Paul was simply telling his readers (readers who already knew his Gospel, per verse 1, which means he didn't need to share it with them again here in order to get them saved so much as to make a point) that both he and Peter saw and preached about the risen Christ, which proves that Jesus *was* indeed resurrected from among the dead in the same physical body, just as the Gospel he'd already told them back when he met them in person says as well, which means his readers could be reassured that they'd be raised from the dead in the future too.

So no, he wasn't saying that both he and Peter preached the same Gospel. If that's all his point was, he wouldn't have needed to include all of what he did in verses 5 through 17 at all, but would have, at most, replaced verse 5 with verse 11 (and included Peter's name in the verse) and left it there without mentioning the details about Jesus being seen by all those people after His resurrection. Besides, if sharing his Gospel *was* his only (or even just his main) point there, and *"so we preach, and so ye believed"* actually *was* in reference to his Gospel, it would also mean that everything written in verses 5 through 10 was a part of his Gospel as well, and that the Good News we have to believe in order to be saved would also include the facts that Jesus was seen of Cephas and James and 500 others after His resurrection, as well as that Paul is the least of the apostles, but that he also laboured more abundantly than the rest of them, among various other details he included in those six verses, but I don't think anyone would believe *that's* all a part of the Gospel we have to believe in order to join the body of Christ rather than being a part of the explanation of why he even mentioned his Gospel in this chapter in the first place, so we can lay this misunderstanding of verse 11 to rest once and for all.

Still, it's easy to see how someone could misunderstand verse 11, since Paul didn't explain why he wrote the first eleven verses (or why he even mentioned his Gospel there at all) until he got to verses 12 through 17. And so, if a modern reader goes through the chapter without being aware of the controversy about

resurrection among the Corinthian church back then, they could be forgiven for assuming that Paul *was* writing this chapter in order to share his Gospel (at least if they don't pay close attention to the wording of verses 5 through 11). But Paul's audience at the time *definitely* would have understood what he was getting at by the time they heard verses 4 or 5 being read, realizing *why* Paul was explaining that Jesus really did rise from the dead, and when whoever read the letter to them for the first time got to verses 12 and onwards, they almost certainly would have hung their heads in shame and concluded that, "Yes, if we believed Paul's Gospel when he first told us in person that Christ rose again the third day after His death for our sins and burial, then physical resurrection *is* literally true." Still, we shouldn't look down on them for this, because without their mistake, Paul wouldn't have written the most important chapter in the Bible, and we wouldn't know what his Gospel actually even was.

It's also sometimes pointed out that Paul had Timotheus (Timothy) circumcised,[251] and that he even performed other actions under the Mosaic law at times as well,[252] in order to try to argue that this means there must be only one Gospel (and sometimes also to try to prove that those of us in the body of Christ *are* under the law), not realizing that these facts actually help prove the exact opposite of what they assume. The reason Paul had Timothy circumcised was simply because he wanted to bring him along on a particular journey to help preach, and he knew that the Jews in the region would cause trouble for them if someone who was Jewish but hadn't been circumcised was preaching to

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[251] Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. — Acts 16:1-3

[252] Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. — Acts 21:26

them. This doesn't mean that Paul was supporting following the Mosaic law as something members of the body of Christ should do, however (as is also demonstrated by the fact that he didn't have Titus circumcised,[253] which he definitely would have done if following the Mosaic law *was* necessary for the body of Christ). So how could he have done these things, then? Well, simply because he wasn't doing them for the sake of obeying the Mosaic law in the first place (nor was he doing them for the sake of his or Timothy's salvation), but rather was doing them because these actions were beneficial for the spreading the Gospel of the Circumcision to other Israelites.[254] As we've already discussed, Paul often preached the Circumcision Gospel to Israelites in the hopes that they as a whole would finally accept Jesus as their Messiah, and law keeping was still important for those who followed that particular Gospel (if it wasn't, James wouldn't have been bragging to Paul about how zealous for the law the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were,[255] and Paul would have also chided him for not correcting them). But when he was teaching about his own Gospel instead, Paul was very careful to point out that law keeping for its own sake (or for trying to perfect oneself) was *not* something they should be trying to do,[256] and that following the law simply for the sake of following the law (or even for the sake

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[253] But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: — Galatians 2:3

[254] And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; — 1 Corinthians 9:20

[255] And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. — Acts 21:20-21

[256] O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? — Galatians 3:1-3

of trying to please God) leads to falling from grace[257] (that's not to say it's wrong to do or avoid certain actions listed in the law for reasons *other* than keeping the law itself, including being circumcised for medical reasons, or avoiding murdering people because it's against the secular law, not to mention avoiding specific actions because they're unloving; it's just doing so for the sake of following the Mosaic law that causes us to fall from grace – which, I should probably also point out, doesn't mean losing one's salvation, but just means missing out on enjoying the freedom Christ gave us, and possibly also losing out on certain rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ, since Romans 8:30 tells us that anyone God calls for membership in the body of Christ *will* be justified and glorified,[258] with absolutely zero qualifications beyond being predestined and called by God, making it very clear that it's impossible for members of the body of Christ to lose their salvation).

I've also heard it claimed that, because Peter defended Paul's specific form of ministry to the nations by saying, *"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they,"* referring to Cornelius and those

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[257] Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. — Galatians 5:1-4

[258] Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. — Romans 8:30

with him getting saved after hearing Peter preach,[259] that every single Jew and Gentile must then all be saved in the exact same manner, and all in connection with the exact same Gospel. This is reading far more into the statement than Peter was really getting at, however. It's important to remember that Acts is a Circumcision writing, and that Paul's Gospel was never actually explained in the book (because its original audience wasn't meant to understand his Gospel, since they had their own Gospel to follow). And since Peter himself didn't really comprehend the difference between the two Gospels either (in fact, it's quite possible he wasn't even aware that there were two Gospels at the time he made this statement), he really couldn't have meant anything more than: "Jews and Gentiles can both be saved by Jesus Christ if they have faith." And this is indeed true when it comes to both Gospels, even if the faith we have in connection with Jesus is different under each Gospel, with one being about His identity, and the other being about what He accomplished.

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[259] And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. — Acts 15:1-12

Of course, if someone reads Peter's statement without being aware of all the details we've covered in this chapter, and, as such, reads Acts 15 while still believing that there is only one Gospel, it's easy to see how they'd read that assumption into Peter's statement and think it proves their belief to be true. But anyone who is familiar with all the facts we've looked at so far (as well as the facts we've yet to look at) can see why this statement doesn't actually prove that there's only one Gospel or way to be saved at all, and can understand that Peter was just stating the facts about being saved by Jesus that he was aware of (keeping in mind that he never became fully aware of *all* the facts, because if he did, he would have ended up in the body of Christ and would eventually end up in heaven, and hence will have missed out on the specific rewards in the kingdom of heaven that he was instead looking forward to).

And finally, no, the body of Christ has not been "grafted into Israel," nor are we now "fellowcitizens of Israel," as many misunderstand Romans 11:1-25 and Ephesians 2:11-22 to be saying, even though, yes, Abraham is indeed said to be the "father" of those who follow the law *as well as* the "father" of those who simply have faith.[260] Because – as many Christians who make the claim that believing Gentiles within the body of Christ become "spiritual Israelites," and hence members of the Israel of God, seem to forget – Abraham had many physical descendants who *weren't* Israelites, which means that being able to refer to Abraham as one's "father," be it physically as in the case of his biological descendants, or even just metaphorically as in the case of the members of the body of Christ, just doesn't mean someone is also an Israelite. To be an Israelite, someone also has to be a biological descendant of Isaac and Jacob as well (presuming they don't marry or proselytize into the actual nation of Israel instead, of course).

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[260] Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, — Romans 4:16

I should also quickly point out that this assertion about Abraham's descendants is similar to the claim some of the same people make that, because Paul said in Galatians 3:16 that the promises made to Abraham apply to Jesus,[261] no Israelite actually will inherit the land as they were promised to in the various supporting passages I've already included above. What they fail to realize is that Paul was using specific literary and rhetorical methodology there which Jews sometimes used to bring out deeper truths in Scripture that Gentiles are unlikely to be aware of based on a strictly literal interpretation of a passage in the Hebrew Scriptures (this is along the lines of the way Matthew interprets Jesus' return from Egypt[262] as being a fulfillment of Hosea 11:1[263] as well, even though, in its literal context, Hosea was obviously referring to the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt in the Exodus; this is a method of scriptural interpretation that is often used to reveal hidden or layered meaning in a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures without negating the original interpretation, or its first fulfillment in the case of prophecies). There's a lot more that can be said about this, but ignoring these facts also ignores the fact that we aren't claiming *all* Israelites will inherit the land of Israel anyway. We believe that only those Israelites who are Christ's (meaning those who are members of the Israel of God) will inherit the land along with Christ Himself (and that those of us in the body of Christ will as well, because we'll be in an even higher position of rulership than the Israel of God will be at that time – reigning with Christ over the whole universe, which includes earth – and by extension we'll also "inherit" the land of Israel, so to speak, along with the Israel of God, even if we're not literally living in the land while we're reigning from and living in heaven), which is backed up by Paul a few verses later

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[261] Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. — Galatians 3:16

[262] When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. — Matthew 2:14-15

[263] When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. — Hosea 11:1

anyway, when he wrote in Galatians 3:29, *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,"* demonstrating that "seed" (which, yes, is translated from the singular Hebrew word זֶרַע/"zeh'-rah" in Genesis,[264] but just like the singular English words "sheep" or "deer," or even the word "seed" itself on occasion, depending on the context, can be used as a plural word as well) doesn't only refer to Jesus but refers to all those people who are Christ's as well, meaning both those in the Israel of God and those in the body of Christ. I should also point out that, if Jesus Himself *is* the only one who receives the fulfillment of the promises, the people using Joshua 21:43-45 to try to prove that all the promises were already fulfilled back in Joshua's time are going to have some trouble continuing to use that passage to also try to prove that they can't also be fulfilled for future Israelites too. To sum it all up, Paul wasn't trying to redefine Israel as simply meaning "Jesus Christ" in that verse, but rather he was pointing to Him as the central figure through whom God's promises to the Israel of God – not to mention to the body of Christ – are fulfilled, which also means that Galatians 3:16 doesn't make the Gentiles in the body of Christ a part of the Israel of God the way some people want it to either.

In fact, we can see quite clearly that the Israel of God is a distinct group from the Gentiles in the body of Christ because Israelites are only said to be the

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[264] And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. — Genesis 12:7

natural olive branches in Romans 11,[265] not the whole tree. Remember, not all of the natural olive branches are pruned out of the tree in that figurative explanation of past, present, and future events pertaining to Israel and the other nations (at least it's still future as of the time this book was written). Instead, some of the natural olive branches remained attached to the tree (with it being these particular branches that refer to Israelites who believed the

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[265] I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. — Romans 11:1-25

Gospel of the Circumcision, and not the trunk itself representing them) while the wild olive branch was grafted into the tree *next* to the remaining branches rather than replacing them. And as Paul made clear in this passage, Israel is not cast away permanently, but is only "cast away," so to speak, temporarily, until the full complement of the nations may be entering the body of Christ (I say again, *entering the body of Christ*, and **not** entering the *tree*, since the *whole* wild olive branch is already grafted into the tree), at which point the nation of Israel will become the focus of God's purposes once again, at the time when the pruned-out branches are grafted back into the tree. If this seems confusing, the phrase *"cast away"* in verse 1 was translated from a different Greek word in the KJV – ἀπωθέω/"ap-o-theh'-om-ahee" – than the phrase *"casting away"* in verse 15 was – which was instead translated from ἀποβολή/"ap-ob-ol-ay'" – and is referring to a more forceful and permanent thrusting away in that verse than the temporary placing aside that the hyperbolic "casting away" of verse 15 in the KJV is referring to, for anyone who might be wondering how Israel can be not cast away while also being "cast away" at the same time. If it isn't obvious by now, this case of being both "cast away" and not cast away at the same time is yet another example of how the translators of the KJV seemed to enjoy using the same English word or phrase to refer to contrasting concepts for some reason, as we already saw by how they used the English word "another" both figuratively and literally to represent two different Greek words in their translation of Galatians 1:6-7, and the same goes for how they used the English word "fall" to refer to both "falling" and also not falling at the same time in this very chapter of Romans as well. In verse 11, Paul asked, *"Have they stumbled that they should fall?",* then answered his own question by saying, *"God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy."* So we can see that they didn't literally fall far away and permanently, but they did "fall," hyperbolically speaking, with the first "fall" being translated from a variation of the verb πίπτω/"pip'-to" in the Greek, referring to falling from a height, being thrust down violently or purposefully, or even to perishing, and the second "fall" being translated from a variation of the noun παράπτωμα/"par-

ap'-to-mah" in the Greek, literally referring to simply stumbling and landing gently (or at least less violently than the first word implies) beside or near something else (this word is also translated as "trespasses" in other verses in the KJV, I should add). While this contrasting usage of the same English word in the same passage in the KJV can be confusing to those who don't understand what's going on, it seems that the translators were having fun with words in these examples, and that they expected the readers to be able to figure out when the words are being used literally and when they're being used figuratively in the same passages, based on an understanding that the Bible can't contradict itself. And so, we know from what Paul wrote in this chapter that, while the nation of Israel as a whole did indeed stumble ("fall"), and has even been "cast away," so to speak (really just meaning temporarily placed on the back burner), so that Gentiles can have an opportunity to enjoy salvation without having to go through Israel for the time being (when he wrote, *"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles…",* and, *"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world…"*), he also told his readers that the nation of Israel *will* be restored in the future (when he also wrote, "*…how much more their fulness?",* and, "*…what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"*).

It also helps to understand that this passage has nothing to do with the salvation of individuals, nor does being pruned from the tree have anything to do with the idea of losing one's salvation, which is made clear by the fact that the pruned-off natural branches were never saved to begin with and yet had to have been a part of the tree at one time in order to be pruned from it. This is also made clear by the fact that it's a *singular* wild branch, as opposed to the *plural* natural branches. Of course, some who read the KJV might be confused by the fact that it says *"a wild olive tree"* in verse 17,[266] but Paul explained in the same verse that this **whole** *"wild olive tree"* was *"graffed in*

[266] And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; — Romans 11:17

among them," which means he was either referring to a single wild olive branch being grafted into the natural olive tree among the remaining natural olive branches, or to an entire (presumably much smaller) wild olive tree being grafted into the natural olive tree, trunk and all. Either way, that only one whole object – as opposed to multiple, separate wild-olive branches – was grafted into the natural tree is clarified A) by the fact that the Greek ἀγριέλαιος/"ag-ree-el'-ah-yos," which *"a wild olive tree"* was translated from in the KJV, is a Singular noun, as well as B) by the fact the KJV also uses the Second Person Singular "thou" in both this verse and verse 24, rather than the more catch-all "you" that most English Bible translations used to render the Greek word σύ/"soo" in those verses. This all tells us that the single wild branch (or *"wild olive tree"*) grafted into the natural tree refers collectively to every single Gentile who will have lived during the entire time that the dispensation (meaning the administration, or economy) of the grace of God is in effect[267] – since Gentiles, both saved and unsaved, are being grouped together as a singular whole in these verses – rather than simply referring to only those Gentiles who join the body of Christ (and also confirms that the "grafting into the tree" only happened one time rather than happens multiple times – as each Gentile gets saved – the way most Christians assume Paul meant). And since the *whole* wild branch (or *"wild olive tree"*) will eventually be pruned from the natural tree, as it will have to be in order for the temporarily-removed natural branches to be grafted back *"into their own olive tree,"* every Gentile member of the body of Christ would lose their salvation if being grafted into and pruned from the tree was connected with being saved.

And so, no, being grafted into the tree doesn't mean that a Gentile has been grafted into Israel, or that they have become a "spiritual Israelite," which is a completely unscriptural term anyway. Instead, I would suggest that the *"wild*

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[267] If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: — Ephesians 3:2

olive tree" being temporarily grafted into the natural tree simply refers to the fact that Gentiles currently have access to God (via justification by faith[268]) without needing Israelites to help them do so the way Gentiles will need them for in order to get to know God in the future, after the *"wild olive tree"* is removed from the natural tree (due to unbelief,[269] since after the body of Christ is taken up to heaven,[270] there will be no more believing Gentiles left in the wild olive tree). This means that Gentiles don't replace or become a part of the church called the Israel of God at all, but rather are currently able to join the church called the body of Christ instead, at least until the full complement of the nations has entered the body of Christ (meaning until the last person called for membership in the body of Christ has been saved), at which point the dispensation of the grace of God will come to an end, the *"wild olive tree"* will be removed from the tree, and the only way for Gentiles to approach God again (at least for 1,000 years) will be to go through citizens of the nation of Israel. (In addition to what I wrote here, I'd also suggest reading Aaron Welch's article on this topic,[271] to learn even more details about this passage.)

And this also all tells us that the same goes for the idea some Christians have that Paul said Gentiles join the "commonwealth of Israel," or become "fellowcitizens" of the nation of Israel, when they join the body of Christ. Based on everything we've just covered, this obviously can't be what he meant in

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[268] Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. — Romans 5:1-2

[269] Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. — Romans 11:20-21

[270] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:17

[271] *An Analysis of Paul's Olive Tree Parable* by Aaron Welch: https://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2017/03/an-analysis-of-pauls-olive-tree-parable.html

Ephesians 2.[272] Besides, the word "commonwealth" (translated from πολιτεία/ "pol-ee-ti'-ah" in the original Greek) has to do with actual citizenship in an actual nation, and we don't legally become citizens of the country called Israel when we join the body of Christ (if you're a Gentile who disagrees, try moving to Israel and telling the government there that you're now a legal citizen of their nation because you've come to believe in Jesus, and let us know how well that goes). Besides, our citizenship is in the heavens, not down here on earth where Israel is located, as we've already established, and I don't see the term "spiritual Israel" anywhere in the chapter (or in the Bible, for that matter), so anyone who tries to claim we're "spiritual Israelites" is just reading their assumptions into the chapter. Instead, we've become "fellowcitizens" of the kingdom of God, and of the household of God (which members of the Israel of God are certainly also members of), and not of the nation of Israel itself, although the nation of Israel *will* become a part of the kingdom of God after Jesus returns, at which point the land will be known as the kingdom of heaven, but it certainly isn't a part of the kingdom yet, which means that we Gentiles can't be said to become citizens of the nation of Israel, or really even a part of Israel in any way, when we believe Paul's Gospel, but simply become citizens of the kingdom of God.

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[272] Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. — Ephesians 2:11-22

As for those who might be wondering why I make a distinction between "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven," yes, I'm well aware of the fact that the term "the kingdom of heaven"[273] seems, at least at first glance, to be used simply as a synonym for "the kingdom of God"[274] at times in the book of Matthew (which is the only book in the Bible to use the phrase "the kingdom of heaven"), and also that the word "heaven" was a common metonym for "God" in general back then as well. However, since we now know that the book of Matthew was basically only talking about the part of the kingdom of God which will exist in Israel in the future, the fact that Paul *also* used the term "the kingdom of God"[275] tells us that the kingdom as a whole is much larger than *just* Israel, and that it must encompass the parts of the universe that aren't just here on earth. And since Jesus almost certainly wasn't actually saying the words "the kingdom of heaven" when He spoke the words recorded in the book of Matthew (based on the fact that the books of Mark[276] and Luke[277] both used the phrase "the kingdom of God" in the parallel passages to the ones where Matthew recorded Jesus' statements with "the kingdom of heaven" instead[278]), it seems that God inspired Matthew to do so in order to give us a label that refers strictly to the part of the kingdom of God that would apply only to Israel. Basically,

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[273] Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. — Matthew 11:11

[274] For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. — Luke 7:28

[275] For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. — 1 Corinthians 4:20

[276] And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: — Mark 4:11

[277] And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. — Luke 8:10

[278] He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. — Matthew 13:11

none of the references to entering the kingdom of God in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John were about the part of the kingdom of God that the body of Christ will be in after we're caught up together in the air to be with Christ when He comes for His body[279] (which will be heaven), but are referring to the kingdom in Israel in the future, as we've now learned, and so "the kingdom of heaven" can't refer to the part of the kingdom of God which is in heaven either, since it's specifically only used in reference to the part of the kingdom which is in Israel. So while "the kingdom of God" *can* technically refer to both, since both Jesus and Paul used it, anytime we see the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" used, we know it's only referring to Israel after Jesus' Second Coming. To put it simply, it basically just means "the kingdom [sent] *from* heaven." So while it's perfectly fine to refer to Israel during the thousand years as "the kingdom of God," since those are the words Jesus presumably actually spoke, to make things less confusing, it's also easier to just refer to it as "the kingdom of heaven" when discussing it ourselves. And for those who aren't convinced, remember that the book of Matthew used *both* terms,[280] so I have to assume that God inspired the use of the unique term in specific places in Matthew for a reason (I don't believe that anything is in Scripture by accident, but rather I believe that everything written there is included a very good reason, which means that whatever reason that the writer of the book of Matthew might have had to use the term from a relative perspective, God made Him do so for *His* own reason from an absolute perspective, which I believe was to give us a term to use for the specific part of the kingdom of God which will be in Israel in the future).

And with all that being said, it should now be obvious why the title *"the Israel of God"* in Galatians 6:16 can't possibly be referring to the body of Christ. Since there's literally zero scriptural basis for the idea that those of us in the body of

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[279] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:17

[280] And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. — Matthew 19:24

Christ are some sort of "spiritual Israel," I trust you can now see that this can only be a reference to the circumcision church. And while the Greek word translated as "and" – καί/"kahee" – in the *"and upon the Israel of God"* part of the verse technically can be used to distinguish or identify a group when it's used in Koine Greek, this particular use of καί is rare, and never actually occurs in this exact construction anywhere in the Greek Scriptures, at least based on what I could find while digging into this topic. And as far as I've been able to find, aside from when it refers to Jacob,[281] the word "Israel" is never used to refer to anyone *other* than ethnic Israelites in Scripture anyway. And while there's a *lot* more[282] that can be said about this topic to prove this,[283] based on everything we've learned in this chapter about the kingdom of heaven and the different types of salvation, the words "and upon" simply *have* to be telling us that there are two separate groups of people being spoken of by Paul in this verse (the first group being "as many as walk according to this rule," meaning members of the body of Christ, and the second group being those known as "the Israel of God"), especially in light of everything else he'd just finished teaching in this epistle (since the whole context of this epistle contradicts any notion at all that Gentiles are now a part of Israel, because if we are, we'd also be required to keep the Mosaic law the way they're required to, when the entire reason Paul wrote that epistle in the first place was to make sure we *don't* try to follow the Mosaic law).

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[281] And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. — Genesis 32:28

[282] *Who is the "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16?* by Brian Collins: https://exegesisandtheology.com/2020/09/07/who-is-the-israel-of-god-in-galatians-616

[283] *Who is "the Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16?* by David Huffstutler: https://religiousaffections.org/articles/biblical-studies/who-is-the-israel-of-god-in-galatians-616

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Will keep the law perfectly when the New Covenant finally comes fully into effect and replaces the Old Covenant completely (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Micah 4:2, Hebrews 8:8-12).	Not only are we not under the law at all, and in fact should not try to keep any of it (Romans 6:14, Galatians 5:3), Gentiles were never under the Old Covenant – which was about Israelites keeping the Mosaic law – to begin with, so we don't have an Old Covenant to be replaced with by a New Covenant the way Israel does anyway (Exodus 12:43-49, Exodus 19:3-6, Leviticus 26:46, Deuteronomy 4:8, Deuteronomy 28, Nehemiah 9:13-14, Psalm 147:19-20, Malachi 4:4 Romans 2:14-15, Romans 9:3-5, Ephesians 2:12).
Jewish believers within this church were still zealous of the law, even after the Council of Jerusalem, and they were upset that Paul was teaching Jewish members of the body of Christ to avoid practicing the Mosaic law, including circumcising (Acts 21:17-26).	Not only did Paul teach against circumcising – or any law-keeping – for Gentiles in the body of Christ, he taught against it for *anyone* in the body of Christ, including Jewish members, and if Paul was teaching the same thing that Peter and James and the rest of the Jewish church were, the members of their church in Jerusalem wouldn't have been so upset at Paul for teaching against circumcising and law-keeping for Jewish members of his church when he visited them later (Acts 15:1-21, Galatians 2:1-3, Acts 21:17-26).
Spoken of by the prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21-25).	A secret until Paul (Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:8-10).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Only 12 apostles for this church – a number with much spiritual significance to Israelites – and they were all called inside of Israel (Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 10:2-4). Even though Judas was replaced by Matthias after being disqualified (Acts 1:12-26), no others out of the 12 were ever replaced because there will only be 12 thrones for them to sit on in the kingdom of heaven, and only 12 foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem to be named after them on the New Earth (Matthew 19:28, Revelation 21:14).	The first apostle of our church – who is not one of the 12 apostles of the Israel of God – was called outside of Israel (Acts 9:3). This is spiritually significant because Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).
Are supposed to eventually teach all the nations to obey everything Jesus commanded, and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:16-20), although – outside of Peter's visit to Cornelius – Scripture tells us this hasn't happened yet (Acts 11:19, Galatians 2:8-9).	The fact that Paul is called *the* apostle of the Gentiles, and that a whole new set of apostles were in fact sent to the Gentiles, is significant because it means the 12 apostles of the Israel of God were *not* the apostles of (or to) the Gentiles (Romans 11:13, Acts 14:14, 1 Corinthians 4:6-9, Ephesians 4:11), nor were the rest of the members of that church preaching to the Gentiles yet either, since the pillars of their church had agreed to leave the preaching to the Gentiles to Paul and to those with him, for the time being, which means Israel hasn't even really begun her so-called "Great Commission," as it's often referred to, yet (Galatians 2:8-9, Acts 13:2).
Proclaimed among Israelites (James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1).	Proclaimed among the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:8).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Called the little flock, and as future citizens of the New Jerusalem, which is referred to as the bride of the lamb itself after it descends to the New Earth, the saints of this church who will inhabit this city can figuratively (albeit only proleptically) also be referred to as the bride of the lamb (Luke 12:32, John 3:29, Revelation 21:9), and are also referred to as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).	The saints of this church are referred to as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 5:30).
Racial distinctions important (Matthew 15:26, Matthew 19:28, Revelation 21:12, Zechariah 8:22-23).	Racial distinctions irrelevant (1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28).
Believers known *from* the foundation of the world (Revelation 17:8).	Believers known *before* the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
Believers called first, then chosen (Matthew 22:14).	Believers chosen first, then called (Romans 8:30).
Water baptism required (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).	Water baptism not required (1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:13).
Many types of baptism/immersion: John's baptism in water unto repentance, the Lord's baptism in water – obviously not a baptism unto repentance – water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ/the name of the Lord, baptism *in* the Holy Spirit, and in fire, baptism into Moses, and baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, 13-17, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 2:38, Acts 10:48, 1 Corinthians 10:2, Matthew 28:19).	Only one baptism/immersion: not *in* the Holy Spirit (or in water either), but rather *by* the Holy Spirit, *into* the body of Christ, including into what He experienced in His body, such as His death (Ephesians 4:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:3-4).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Must have circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16, Acts 7:51, Romans 2:29).	Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11).
Must have works, if possible between conversion and death, since faith without works is dead for them (James 2:20).	Even if we don't have works, but only have faith, we are still justified, which means faith without works is not dead for us (Romans 4:5).
Must keep His commandments, and live as Jesus did (1 John 2:3-6).	God's grace motivates us to live well, not the threat of losing our salvation if we don't, as is the case for Israel (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
Must forgive others or God will *not* forgive them (Matthew 6:12-15).	Should forgive one another as God has already forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32) – but even without works, we're still justified, so we aren't required to forgive others in order to be saved, even if it's still good for us to do so (Romans 4:5).
Must not eat things sacrificed to idols (Revelation 2:14, 20).	Are permitted to eat things sacrificed to idols as long as conscience permits it (Romans 14:14, 1 Corinthians 8:4).
Must be an overcomer to avoid second death (Revelation 2:11).	Saved from second death by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).
Hoping for grace, which will be brought to them when Jesus returns to the earth (1 Peter 1:13).	Already standing in grace (Romans 5:2).
Must be waking and watching, not sleeping (Matthew 25:1-13, Luke 12:37, Hebrews 9:28).	Whether waking or sleeping (1 Thessalonians 5:10).
Must be wise, not foolish, or will not be chosen (Matthew 25:1-13).	Few who are wise are chosen, and most who are chosen are foolish (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Can be put to shame at His presence if not careful (1 John 2:28).	*Will* all be changed for the better – meaning given glorified, immortal bodies – at His presence, which is the blessed hope all of us in this church should be looking forward to (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Titus 2:13).
Will go through day of wrath (Revelation 6:1-17).	Not appointed to wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:9).
Will meet Christ on earth (Acts 1:11-12, Zechariah 14:4).	Will meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
The resurrection of the just, also known as Israel's "first resurrection" (Luke 14:14, Revelation 20:1-6), occurs 75 days *after* Jesus steps foot on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4-7, Acts 1:9-12, and compare the numbers in Daniel 12:11-13 to the numbers in Revelation 13:5 to understand the 75 day difference between these two events).	The dead in the body of Christ are first resurrected, then those who are still living will rise with them to meet Christ in the air together when He comes for our church, before He ever even gets close to the Mount of Olives (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
Will reign on the earth as a kingdom of priests over the nations (Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 61:6, 1 Peter 2:5-9, Revelation 2:26-27, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 20:6).	Will reign in the heavens (Ephesians 2:6-7, 2 Timothy 2:12).
Will fill earth with knowledge of God's glory by being a light to the Gentiles and salvation to the ends of the earth (Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 49:6).	Will display God's wisdom among the principalities and powers in the heavens (Ephesians 3:10-11).
The meek shall inherit the earth, and will live in the land God gave the patriarchs, which is the land of Israel (Matthew 5:5, Ezekiel 36:28).	Our citizenship is in the heavens (Philippians 3:20).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
There will still be mortal “flesh and blood” humans living in the part of the kingdom of God that is on the earth, and they will even continue to reproduce, both in the thousand-year kingdom of heaven in Israel, as well as on the New Earth for a time (Zechariah 8:3-4, Isaiah 65:17-25).	Mortal “flesh and blood” is not able to inherit the part of the kingdom of God that is in the heavens (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
The 12 apostles will judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).	Paul, not one of the 12 apostles of the church known as the Israel of God, but rather the first apostle of the church known as the body of Christ, will, along with the rest of the body, judge the whole world, as well as judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).
The cross was only bad news to those hearing the Gospel of the Circumcision – at least in the sermons recorded in Acts – and a shameful thing which needed to be repented of *in order* to be saved (Acts 2:22-38, Acts 3:13-15, Acts 7:52).	The cross is only good news for those hearing Paul’s Gospel, and is even something to glory in because it’s *how* we are saved (1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Galatians 6:14).
As far as their Gospel is concerned, Jesus gave His life as a ransom only for “many” – meaning only for those who obey this Gospel (Matthew 20:28).	As far as our Gospel is concerned, Jesus gave His life as a ransom for all – meaning all humanity (1 Timothy 2:6).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision	The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision
Exhorted to remain in Him, and seem to be able to fall away and not be able to be renewed to repentance, so appear to be able to lose their sort of salvation (1 John 2:28, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-27), although since this is not the same sort of salvation that Paul primarily taught about, anyone who doesn't experience this sort of salvation will still experience the *general* salvation of Paul's Gospel (even if not the *special* salvation connected with his Gospel).	If we died with Christ – and if we did, we can't un-die – we *will* live with Him, since He cannot disown His own body. Yes, we can "fall from grace," so to speak – which basically just means placing oneself under the bondage of religion and rules, such as the law, and, because of doing so, missing out on enjoying the freedom Christ gave us – and it might be that we can also lose out on reigning with Him by denying Him in order to avoid suffering, but either way, we still remain His body, and He won't amputate and disown His own body parts, and body parts can't amputate themselves either (Galatians 5:1-4, 2 Timothy 2:11-13). Besides, Paul said that if we're called, we *will* be justified and glorified, and didn't include any qualifications in that verse, so any passages in Paul's epistles which seem to teach otherwise *must* be talking about something else (Romans 8:30).
Abraham being justified by works given as an example (James 2:21-23).	Abraham being justified by faith rather than by works given as an example (Romans 4:2-3).
Gentiles will be blessed by Israel's rise in the future (Isaiah 49:6, Zechariah 8:22-23, Acts 3:25).	Gentiles are currently blessed by Israel's "fall" (Romans 11:11).

Now these aren't just minor variations in terminology; these are obviously completely different messages for two completely different groups of people. Unfortunately, if one isn't being honest with Scripture, and insists on trying to make these major differences between Paul's teachings and the teachings in the

Circumcision writings say the same thing, because their preconceived doctrines force them to have to believe they mean the same thing, they're just not ready to interpret the rest of Scripture, and should not be teaching anyone from the Bible. In fact, not only is this concept so extremely important for believers to grasp, it's also so central to understanding what the Bible is saying and who a particular passage is relevant to that one can't properly interpret much of Scripture at all without beginning from this perspective. Even something like evangelism will be a confusing task for those who don't understand that "the Great Commission" (a label that isn't actually even found in the Bible) wasn't meant for the body of Christ at all. Instead, rather than teaching all nations to be observing *all* things that Jesus commanded His disciples, and baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (which, as I already mentioned, is a whole different baptism from the one that Peter did with water, since the baptism he's recorded as having performed in Scripture was specifically *"in the name of Jesus Christ,"* and would also be a command Paul would have been disobeying when he stopped baptizing people in water if it was meant for everyone to do) as the Israel of God will be called to do in the future (when the dispensation of the grace of God is complete and Israel has been saved[284] and finally begins their ministry to be a light to the Gentiles and salvation unto the ends of the earth as they were long ago prophesied to one day be, and when Gentiles will in fact only come to know God by following the Jews – which is how they'll finally get to be that kingdom of priests they were prophesied to one day become), we have a greater "commission" and "one baptism" (into the body of Christ), and are called to be stewards of the mysteries that were kept secret since the world began just as Paul was,[285] and can in fact currently help other Gentiles come to God even if we're not Jews, which is why it's imperative to truly understand this important topic.

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[284] And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: — Romans 11:26

[285] Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. — 1 Corinthians 4:1

And that brings up another point we should consider, which is the question of why Paul was even called for apostleship in the first place. There were already 12 apostles who were given the so-called "Great Commission" to go to the nations and teach them to observe everything Jesus had commanded and to baptize them in the manner He'd prescribed[286] (okay, technically only 11 apostles were given that command at that specific time, but it would have applied to Matthias too, after he was appointed the 12th apostle in order to replace Judas[287] – and no, there's no biblical basis for the idea that *Paul* was supposed to be the 12th apostle, as some claim, since he didn't fit the

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[286] Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. — Matthew 28:16-20

[287] And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. — Acts 1:15-26

qualifications for Judas' replacement that Peter listed at the time[288]), and as we learned from that list of differences in the above chart, there can *only ever be* 12 apostles in connection with the Israel of God, because there will only be 12 thrones for the apostles to sit on in the kingdom of heaven in Israel. This means that Paul didn't replace anyone from the 12 when he was made the apostle of the Gentiles, but if the existing 12 apostles *had already been commissioned* to go to the nations, why would God then appoint a *13th* apostle (Paul) to go to the nations instead,[289] rather than having the 12 do the job that Jesus assigned to them? The only way this makes sense is if the time of the 12 to go to the nations hadn't begun yet, and if Paul had a whole other ministry and message for the Gentiles of the nations than the ministry and message that the 12 will bring to the nations when the kingdom of heaven begins, when they've been resurrected from the dead after the Tribulation concludes.[290]

Even after learning all of that, however, some Christians will still want to say things along the lines of, "I follow Jesus, not Paul" (or worse, some like to say, "I worship Jesus, not Paul," even though literally *nobody* worships Paul), with some of them quoting Paul himself when he wrote, *"was Paul crucified for you?"*, pointing to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 where he corrected his

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[288] *Was Paul A Replacement for Judas?* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/mystery/was-paul-a-replacement-for-judas

[289] And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. — Galatians 2:9

[290] *Reasons We Ought Not to Follow the "Great" Commission* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/prophecy/mmlj/reasons-we-ought-not-to-follow-the-"great"-commission

readers for saying, *"I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas;"*[291] – often following their statement up by then saying they're only of Christ. The problem is, if they only took the time to read the whole passage, they'd notice that Paul condemns saying even, *"and I of Christ."* That doesn't mean we aren't supposed to follow Christ, as some will then accuse us of teaching when we point this fact out, but following Christ wasn't the point of the passage, which was simply about Paul condemning sects, meaning divisions, which had begun springing up within the local church in Corinth. Besides, Paul made it quite clear in the very same book that we *are* to follow him, when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* So yes, we still follow Christ, but those of us in the body of Christ follow Him by following the teachings He gave to us *through* our apostle: Paul.[292]

I should add, in a last-ditch effort to defend the idea of there being only one Gospel, I've heard it pointed out by some Christians that the words *"the Gospel"* technically aren't included in the original Greek text prior to the words *"of the Circumcision"* in Galatians 2:7 (which is true), and then asserted that Paul would have used those words there if he meant for it to be understood that he was referring to two separate Gospels, but based on the clear pattern of things that differ between the teachings Paul preached among the nations (including the exact words in the Gospel message he preached to them, and what those words mean) and the teachings that Peter and Jesus' other disciples gave to Israel (including the exact words in the Gospel message they preached

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[291] Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? — 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

[292] If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. — 1 Corinthians 14:37

to them, and what *those* words mean, especially in the four books commonly referred to as "the Gospels" and in the book of Acts), it should be clear by now that Paul being concise in that verse doesn't detract at all from the fact that there *are* at least two Gospels connected with salvation in Scripture.

Still, if somebody wants to somehow insist that there really is only one Gospel taught in Scripture after reading everything they just read in this chapter, I'd very much like to hear why they want Scripture to contain only one Gospel so badly. And it has to be a matter of wanting it to be true, since, at the very least, they have to not only admit that all of the passages we've looked at *can* be interpreted in such a way that supports the existence of two Gospels, but also that there's no passage in Scripture which actually outright says there's only one Gospel. But really, at this point it should be obvious to anyone who has been paying attention that even if I missed any other passages somebody might try to use in order to argue that the disciples *were* proclaiming the exact same news which is good during Jesus' earthly ministry that Paul later proclaimed to the nations (which was the news which is good about Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection, and how those who believe this news which is good are saved), those "proof texts" simply can't actually support their belief at all. And so, my challenge to anyone still trying to hang on to the idea that there's only one Gospel is to answer the various questions I've asked throughout this chapter, and to provide their refutations of every single one of the scriptural interpretations and arguments I've brought up in support of the existence of two Gospels, including an explanation of how they reconcile the extensive list of scriptural contradictions that would seem to exist if there *was* only one Gospel (based on the comprehensive list of differences I've laid out which only seem to make sense if there are indeed at least two Gospels). In addition, I want them to write down and send to me or to whoever sent them this book (or at least write it down for themselves to consider) **exactly** what they believe this one Gospel is and what someone has to do in order to be saved under it, both someone who lived prior to Christ's death and someone who lived after His resurrection

(leaving no details out, and including their scriptural basis for all of it). And if what someone had to do in order to be saved under this one Gospel was different before Jesus died than it now is after He was resurrected, they also need to explain how that different thing they had to do prior to Christ's death actually *is* the exact same thing Paul said the people of the nations that he declared the Gospel unto had to do in order to be considered saved (which includes believing that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day), which it would have to be if both proclamations of news which is good actually *are* the *exact* same Gospel message with absolutely *no* differences. So far nobody has been able to do all of the above after reading earlier editions of this book, as well as after reading any of my articles covering the same details I just went over in this chapter (a few have sent attempts at refuting a few points, but they all ignored the majority of what I wrote), and unless someone can, the idea of there being only one Gospel simply remains an assumption there's literally zero excuse for making.

All this does bring up a very important question, however, which is *why* there are two Gospels in the first place, and why Jesus *didn't* preach the same Gospel during His earthly ministry that Paul later preached to the nations. Well, the answer to that question is simply that He couldn't, because if He had, *nobody* would be able to get saved (at least not in the manner of salvation that Paul generally referred to). You see, as we've already learned, the Gospel Paul preached is Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection, and this event is the very basis of our salvation (and is, in fact, the only reason *anyone* can be saved when it comes to the type of salvation Paul primarily taught about). This means that if Jesus had preached the same message (that His death was going to be *for our sins*, meaning that His death would be the basis of our salvation) as His Gospel around Israel before He died, the spiritual powers of darkness behind His death would have undoubtedly gotten wind of this, learning the truth about how we're saved, and would *not* have had Him crucified after all, as

Paul explained[293] (and, in fact, would have done everything they could to keep Him from going to the cross, since they don't want any humans being made immortal and sinless and taking their rulership from them). Yes, humans technically killed Jesus, but it was the evil spiritual beings ruling the world behind the scenes during this age who drove them to it, but only because they thought it would put an end to His eventual usurping of their leadership over humanity. Little did they realize that they were played, since His death was the main reason He was born in the first place, but that fact was well disguised by His ministry to the Circumcision (in fact, while it's not the whole reason, it likely is still a large part of why God had a chosen people in the first place: basically, God plays the long game, and used Israel, and even the Gospel of the Circumcision, to distract the spiritual "princes of this world" from His bigger, hidden plans). And so, the answer to the question of why there *might* be two Gospels connected with salvation is itself yet another proof that there *have* to be two Gospels connected with salvation.

And with all that being said, you now know why you can be free from the bondage of trying to follow the Mosaic law, at least if you're a member of the body of Christ, because it just isn't meant for you.

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[293] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. — 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

Chapter 2: Death vs immortality

As we've already discussed, Jesus spoke about a place called hell, but just as it is when it comes to the topic of the various Gospels, most Christians are unaware of many scriptural facts regarding the various "hells" as well (yes, there are multiple "hells" referred to in the KJV as I've already mentioned and as will soon be demonstrated), not to mention about death and heaven too, as you'll soon discover. Most Christians assume that anyone who doesn't "get saved" before they die or before Jesus returns will be punished for their sins by ending up being tormented without end in an inescapable torture chamber called hell (which most believe is also a reference to a place called the lake of fire), and perhaps the most commonly quoted verses in the Bible used in order to prove the popular doctrine of never-ending torment in hell are these two parallel passages:

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. – Matthew 18:8-9

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth

not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
– Mark 9:43-48

There are a couple factors here that almost nobody ever considers when reading these two passages, however. First of all, there's nothing in the text which tells us anyone will actually *remain* in the hell fire Jesus warned about in those passages. Yes, they say that the *fire* is "everlasting" in less literal Bible translations such as the KJV, but they don't say that the time spent in said hell fire will be never-ending, and insisting that these two passages mean any humans will be trapped in said fire without the possibility of ever leaving it requires one to read their doctrinal presuppositions about never-ending punishment into the text (it's also important to once again keep in mind that the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are generally – if not always – figurative terms in these less literal Bible translations which use the words, and that they rarely, if ever, actually mean "never-ending," as I'll demonstrate a little later in this book, although as I already hinted at in the last chapter, anyone who has read the whole Bible and was paying careful attention while doing so should already be well aware of this fact, since it's actually made *extremely* obvious in *many* passages throughout the Bible versions that commonly use these words).

That's not all, though. Jesus also didn't say that anyone would even be conscious or suffering while in this hell fire. Of course, the fact that He didn't say anyone would be conscious or suffering doesn't necessarily mean they won't be. It simply means we can't determine these things based on these two passages alone, since they just don't say one way or the other, but we can look to other passages in Scripture to find out. And this is where the passage in Mark comes in handy, because it gives us the key to finding the answer to this question (the mention of the "undying" worm and unquenchable fire gives it away). You see, these warnings by Jesus were actually referencing a prophecy in

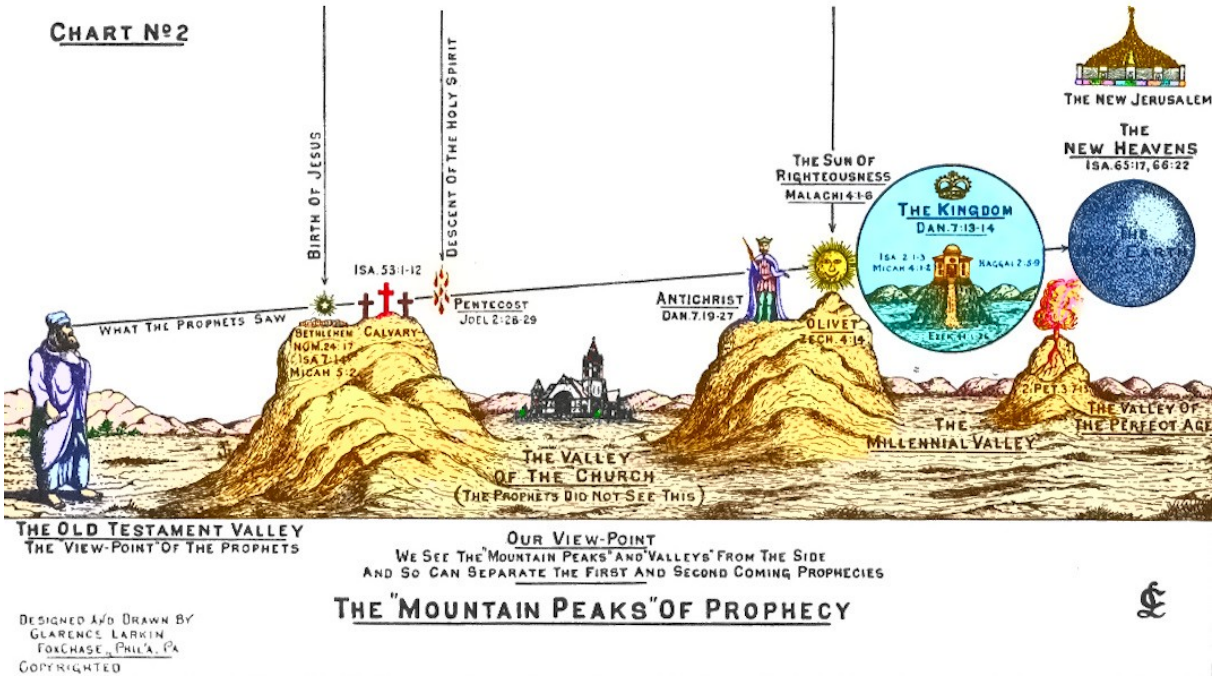
Isaiah 66:23-24, which said: *"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."*

Few people who read this prophecy ever seem to notice it, but there's a word in there which tells us that Jesus wasn't talking about ghosts (for lack of a better term) who are suffering consciously in an ethereal afterlife realm, that word being "carcases" – meaning corpses, or physical dead bodies – which are being looked upon with abhorrence (meaning contempt or aversion) by all flesh (meaning any living human, since ghosts wouldn't have flesh, so this can't take place in some sort of afterlife realm) that sees them either being consumed by worms or by fire on a physical planet in the future.

I should probably also quickly point out that verse 22 of Isaiah 66 tells us this prophecy actually takes place on the New Earth after the Great White Throne Judgement rather than on our current planet,[294] but Jesus' references to this passage in connection with people still living on *this* earth at the time the judgement He was referring to takes place also tells us this prophecy has a double fulfillment of sorts, or really that it needs to be interpreted with the "Mountain Peaks" of prophecy in mind, which refers to a method of interpreting certain prophecies where there can be prophetic "valleys," meaning events taking place "within" a specific prophecy, but which were not explicitly mentioned within said prophecy and which the prophet himself is not necessarily even aware of, yet which are later revealed to us in *other* prophecies, with these prophetic "valleys" being situated between the prophetic "mountain peaks," meaning the events that the prophet actually *did* foresee and foretell within said prophecy.

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[294] For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. — Isaiah 66:22



For example, while Jesus' earthly ministry and reign as King of Israel was foreseen and foretold in various prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures, the church called the body of Christ and the current dispensation of the grace of God were entirely unknown to the prophets recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. From their perspective, all they could see was one unbroken ministry of a Messiah coming to save and lead Israel during one unbroken period of time on earth, because they couldn't see the "valley of the church" hidden between the "mountain peaks" of Jesus' first and second time on earth, with those "mountain peaks" even seeming like one "mountain" to them from their "vantage point." And this can even happen within a single sentence in a

prophecy, as demonstrated in Luke 4:14-21[295] where Jesus stopped reading Isaiah 61:1-2[296] before the end of the sentence in verse 2 of Isaiah's prophecy, because the part of that prophecy about *"the day of vengeance of our God"* hadn't begun at that time yet, since that part won't begin until the Tribulation, shortly before His Second Coming. So with all that in mind, it's important to always consider whether a prophecy might have multiple fulfillments, or even a prophetic "valley" between portions of it, when trying to interpret any prophecy in the Bible.

Now, I have heard it claimed that, while the majority of the passage in Isaiah 66 actually *is* referring to what happens on earth, the passage all of a sudden begins talking about an afterlife state of souls when we get to the part about the worm and the fire (or, perhaps, that the worm and fire part of the prophecy have a double-fulfillment, both on a physical planet *and* in an afterlife realm), and that this means whoever ends up in this particular "hell" will be dead, but will then continue on as a conscious soul in an afterlife realm to be tormented by "fire" of some sort (however that's supposed to work without matter to combust), and by a "worm" (whether referring literally to an actual spiritual

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[295] And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. — Luke 4:14-21

[296] The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; — Isaiah 61:1-2

being that will somehow gnaw on their soul, or perhaps referring figuratively to simply being tormented by guilty memories of past sins, as I've heard it asserted by some who want to pick and choose for themselves which parts of this prophecy are literal and which parts are figurative rather than interpret the whole passage consistently) in another "hell" one enters in the afterlife. But since there's absolutely nothing in the text that could have possibly led anyone reading it at the time it was written to interpret it as meaning it isn't simply physical carcases being consumed by actual fire and worms (especially since there hadn't been anything written in the Hebrew Scriptures that outright spoke of a conscious afterlife punishment), this is clearly an assumption they've read into the passage based on a pre-existing doctrinal bias, and so to insist that this is what the passage definitely has to mean without first considering everything else I'll be covering in this book would be pure eisegesis.

But what *was* Jesus warning us about, then? Well, He wasn't warning *us* about anything, because He wasn't talking to *us* to begin with (unless, again, you happen to be Jewish). As we already learned from the first chapter of this book, His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day aside, Jesus' earthly ministry and messages were technically to *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"* not to Gentiles (and please go read the first chapter of this book if you haven't already, because understanding the contents of that chapter is a requirement for understanding pretty much *any* of the Bible). But even if we're keeping that truth in mind, we still have to ask what Jesus was warning about in those passages, and the answer is that He was warning His Jewish audience about the possibility of missing out on enjoying something figuratively referred to in the less-literal Bible translations as "everlasting life" for a thousand years in Israel, pointing out that they might instead end up as a corpse in a valley outside Jerusalem, known as the Valley of the Son of Hinnom[297] (often referred

[297] Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. — Jeremiah 7:32

to today as “Gehenna,” based on the Greek translation of this location in Israel), to be burned up and/or devoured by worms in rather than being buried under the ground as all Israelites would prefer to be the way they’re interred (although, because Israel largely didn’t accept Jesus as their Messiah and as the Son of God, the kingdom coming fully into effect at that time has been delayed, so His warnings are now more applicable to the generation of Israelites who will

be alive at the time of the Tribulation,[298] with it turning out that Jesus' audience was more at risk of ending up in "hell" after the Great White Throne Judgement instead – presuming this "hell" and the lake of fire are the same thing, of course – but nobody Jesus spoke to could have known their type of salvation would be put on hold prior to Paul revealing it was being removed from them, at least

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[298] And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. — Matthew 24:3-34

until the final Gentile enters the body of Christ, at which point the prophecies about Israel's salvation will begin coming into effect again, and, in fact, will finally be completely fulfilled).

I should also say, I've heard it suggested that "unquenchable fire" is actually always used figuratively in the Hebrew Scriptures as a symbol of destruction referring to a form of national judgement (but even if it isn't *always* used that way, it's definitely *sometimes* used that way, such as in 2 Kings 22:17;[299] 2 Chronicles 34:25;[300] and Isaiah 1:31,[301] to name just three of *many* such examples – and just as a quick but relevant aside, it's also important to know that something being said to "not be quenched" in Scripture doesn't mean it never stops "burning," whether it's a literal or a figurative "burning," but just means that it won't stop "burning" until the appointed time, as those passages I just referenced in the footnotes should make obvious). This interpretation would seem to include the 587 BC fall of Jerusalem, if it is indeed the case that the fire which is not quenched is referring to a national judgement (you will have to look that one up for yourself, if you aren't familiar with what I'm referring to there and are curious, since I don't have the time to go into detail on it here), but it likely then would have also found a second fulfillment in AD 70, at least as far as Jesus' warnings using the term go, considering the fact that the whole city of Jerusalem was burned, and the corpses in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom outside the city apparently ended up incinerated in that fire or consumed by worms in the valley at that time as well, or so I've been told by

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[299] Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. — 2 Kings 22:17

[300] Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. — 2 Chronicles 34:25

[301] And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them. — Isaiah 1:31

certain people at least. And if that is the case, it could theoretically mean that Jesus' warnings about "hell" might not even be relevant to anyone alive today. That said, the lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgement would still be something to be concerned about in that case, of course, even if this is what Jesus meant in His warnings, and also presuming there isn't yet another fulfillment for certain people after the Tribulation ends as far as that warning goes (which is what would have to be the case if any of this *was* fulfilled in AD 70, as some people claim it was, because anyone who has studied history can see that the prophecies related to the Day of the Lord were *not* all fulfilled around AD 70,[302] the way some Christians claim they were, considering the fact that the nation of Israel is not currently ruling the world from the land of Israel as Scripture says they will after the Tribulation ends, especially since we now know from what we learned in the last chapter that the body of Christ *is not* "spiritual Israel," although it would take too many chapters to go into any further detail on that topic, so I'll leave it at that).

Either way, though, it's important to remember that Jesus wasn't speaking English, so when He gave these warnings, His listeners didn't hear the English word "hell" come out of His mouth when He spoke the words recorded in those verses we began with. Instead, they literally just heard Him say "the Valley of Hinnom" in their own language, specifically the Greek word γέεννα, as already mentioned (which itself is a translation of the Hebrew phrase גֵּיא בֶן־הִנֹּם/"gah'-ee bane hin-nome'" – literally meaning "the Valley of the Son of Hinnom" in English – or, more precisely, a transliteration of גֵּיא־הִנֹּם/"gah'-ee hin-nome'" – literally meaning "the Valley of Hinnom" in English – which is what the name of that location in Israel seems to have been shortened to by the time Jesus walked the earth; and even if Jesus was speaking Aramaic rather than Hebrew or Greek, they still would have simply heard Him say "the Valley of Hinnom" in that

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[302] For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. — Matthew 24:21

language, based on how the Greek Scriptures, meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to today as "the New Testament," rendered it, at least in the original Koine Greek), and they would have – or at least should have – known this is referring to an actual location on earth that Jeremiah said would be a place of future judgement,[303] and those who understood Scripture would have realized that Jesus was connecting the warning of judgement in the book of Jeremiah to the warning about corpses in the book of Isaiah, letting them know where Isaiah's prophecy would take place (at least prior to the creation of the New Earth).

This is why the English word "hell" is one of those False Friends I mentioned in the first chapter, because the word originally had no inherent meaning of "inescapable torture chamber" whatsoever, even though that's how it's come to be used by most people today. Instead, the noun basically just meant "hole" or "pit" when used literally, or "a place where something is hidden, covered, or unseen" when used figuratively, with the verb form of the word referring to covering or hiding something (for example, to "hell a body" would mean to bury a body underground, and "helling a house" would refer to covering, or thatching, a house).

That's not to say the English word "hell" is a bad translation in the KJV and other less literal Bible versions which use it. In fact, it's actually a perfectly fine translation, *so long as* someone studying the Bible realizes that it's strictly a *figurative* translation when it's used in these particular Bible versions. For example, the Greek word γέεννα (again, *literally* just meaning "the Valley of Hinnom") is translated *figuratively* as "hell" in these Bible versions at least partly because a valley is a long depression, meaning an elongated "hole" in the ground, so "hell" is being used in these verses as a form of synecdoche (which is

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[303] Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. — Jeremiah 19:6

a figure of speech where a term for a part of something is used to refer to the whole), since this "hell" only refers to the *first half* of the Greek word (the "hole," or "valley," half of γέεννα), with the *second half* (the "of Hinnom" half of γέεννα) simply being implied by the term (this is similar to the way someone might just say "the Leafs" as synecdoche for "the Toronto Maple Leaf Hockey Club," because it's often much faster to use just one or two words in place of something's full name). So technically, when someone says "hell" in reference to this particular biblical location, they're really just referring to "the hell/hole/valley of Hinnom" in Israel in a shortened, synecdochical manner, even if they themselves might not actually realize that's what they're doing, since they might not be aware of the facts we just covered.

Now, some people will try to disagree with what I just wrote, claiming that some Jews refer to the Valley of Hinnom (or "Gehenna") in a figurative manner to speak of a realm in which people will be tormented consciously after they die, so as to support their argument that Jesus was using the word γέεννα as a warning about what those who don't get saved before they die will experience while dead, but there are a couple problems with Christians using this argument, especially to support the doctrine of never-ending torment (problems which exist on top of the fact that most Jews who do use the term "Gehenna" this way don't believe anyone will *remain* in said "location" or "state" permanently, which means that for a Christian to argue for a very specific Jewish usage of the term – while ignoring the *actual* usage of the term when it's used this way by the people who *do* use it this way – is really to redefine the term to fit their own preconceived ideas, which means they have no actual basis for using it to defend their position to begin with). First, whether or not the Valley of Hinnom really was sometimes used figuratively to refer to a negative afterlife realm back during Jesus' time on earth (and I'm not familiar with any proof that it actually was used in this manner at that particular time – and I did look for proof prior to writing this), there's nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures to indicate it should be used that way, so to claim Jesus meant it that

way wouldn't be an argument based on what Scripture actually says so much as it would be an argument based on extrabiblical Jewish mythology, which isn't something that anyone should be basing their theology on,[304] nor does it seem like something that the One who corrected people for teaching unbiblical theological concepts as truth by saying things like "have ye not read...?"[305] and "it is written..."[306] would do. And secondly, we already know that the only humans who end up spending time in this particular "hell" will be carcases, which means it *has* to be referring to that actual valley in Israel, so it really wouldn't matter if some Jews in Jesus' time were ignoring the Hebrew Scriptures and referring to the valley figuratively in that manner anyway, because this fact tells us that Jesus wouldn't have meant it that way at all.

Everyone Jesus spoke to desperately wanted to enjoy living in Israel when the kingdom of heaven finally begins there, and the idea that Jesus' audience members might be dead during that thousand-year time period, or that they might even have ended up weeping and gnashing their (quite physical) teeth because they'd been forced to live in figuratively "darker" parts of the world instead,[307] if the kingdom had fully begun on earth while they were still alive, would have been a grave threat for them indeed (in addition to everything we learned in the last chapter, the fact that Jesus said many will be coming from the

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[304] This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. — Titus 1:13-14

[305] But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; — Matthew 12:3

[306] But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. — Matthew 4:4

[307] And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. — Matthew 8:11-12

east and the west to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven also confirms that the kingdom of heaven will be on earth, after those patriarchs have been resurrected from the dead, rather than in an afterlife realm called "heaven," as does the fact that one could *"enter into the kingdom of God with one eye,"* as Jesus stated,[308] so the "outer darkness" will obviously have to be on earth too). And the "outer darkness" can't be referring to hell, at least not the hell we're discussing now, because that particular hell will be within the borders of the kingdom of heaven since it will be in a valley inside Israel (at least, based on everything we've covered, we have no scriptural basis for assuming otherwise at this point, especially since that's what the Greek word that the English word "hell" in these passages is translated from literally means), so it makes sense that being cast into the outer darkness would simply refer to being exiled from Israel, if one happens to be alive at that time, and missing out on getting to live in the kingdom of heaven during those thousand years. However, for those who are somehow still skeptical, if Jesus *was* trying to get all of the above across, I'd like you to tell me what He would have needed to have said differently in order to convince you of this.

Before moving on, though, I also need to ask, if we're to believe that encountering a fiery judgement means being tortured, or even just punished, without end, why did Jesus then wrap up this warning by saying that *"every one shall be salted with fire,"*[309] and why do so many of the references to fiery judgements throughout the Hebrew Scriptures refer to fire purifying Israel and making things right, and never to any Israelites being tortured without end in said fire, as well? (And the odd passage that could theoretically be interpreted as referencing individuals being burned up don't say they'll be suffering, but

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[308] And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: — Mark 9:47

[309] For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. — Mark 9:49

rather that there won't be any part of them left after the fiery judgement is complete,[310] also contradicting the most popular doctrine of salvation.)

But still, if this "hell" *is* a reference to the lake of fire, as most Christians believe it to be, wouldn't that mean the people who end up in it will have to be suffering in it without end, contrary to what Isaiah wrote? I mean, the Bible says that unrighteous sinners will be tortured consciously in the lake of fire, and that none of them can ever leave that location, doesn't it? Well, let's take a look at what the Bible says about the lake of fire to determine whether that's actually the case or not:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. – Revelation 20:7-10

This is the *one-and-only* passage in the Bible which suggests that anyone will suffer without end in a location specifically referred to by name as the lake of fire (I know, there are other passages you're assuming are referring to suffering in the lake of fire without end, but none of those passages actually use that name in them, and as you'll soon learn, are actually referring to something else entirely), and I trust you noticed that it's only the devil, the beast, and the false prophet who are said to be tormented there *"for ever and ever."* No other humans (in fact, no humans at all) are said to be suffering that fate in this

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[310] For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. — Malachi 4:1

passage. Yes, Revelation 20:15 does say *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"* too, but you'll notice that it doesn't say how long any of *these* people will remain in it for, or even that they'll be alive while they're in it (much less that they'll be suffering), and to insist that the humans who are said to be cast into it in that verse will *not surely die,* as mortal humans normally would when set on fire, but that they'll somehow remain alive, even though there's nothing in the text which even implies this will happen, is the epitome of eisegesis (remember, this takes place *after* they've been resurrected from the dead for the Great White Throne Judgement, meaning they'll be existing in the same kind of biological bodies they had before they died when they're judged and cast into the lake of fire; they won't be resurrected with immortal bodies at that time, because immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in Scripture,[311] so they'll die a second time when they're cast into the lake of fire, just as any other mortal human would today when set on fire). This also means that "the beast" and "the false prophet" in this passage can't be references to humans, since the beings who will go by those titles will be cast *alive* into the lake of fire,[312] which means the lake of fire is going to exist here on earth, not in another dimension that ghosts exist in, and there's nothing anywhere in the Bible to indicate that any humans who might go by these titles will be immortal (which they couldn't be anyway since, again, immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in Scripture), so the reference to "the beast" and "the false prophet" who are being tormented in the lake of fire pretty much have to be talking about spirits

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[311] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? — 1 Corinthians 15:53-55

[312] And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. — Revelation 19:20

who possessed certain humans rather than talking about the actual humans who will also go by those titles (presuming "the beast" and "the false prophet" who deceive the world during the Tribulation aren't simply spiritual beings the whole time, and that no humans will actually go by those titles at all). Simply put, presuming there are humans who will go by those titles, they'll be cast alive into the lake of fire, at which point they'll die and burn up, leaving behind only the evil spirits who empowered them during the Tribulation, to be bound to the lake of fire for a very long time (similar to the way other spirits are currently bound[313] in another version of "hell"[314] translated from the Greek ταρταρόω/"tar-tar-o'-o" rather than from γέεννα, and which is sometimes instead transliterated as Tartarus, depending on your Bible version – and we know this is indeed another version of "hell" because Jude said they're chained up "under darkness" rather than in the valley under the sun in Israel which the "hell" sometimes known as Gehenna currently is). And if they're simply spiritual beings the whole time, with no possessed humans involved, then they themselves will be cast alive into the lake of fire and remain bound to that location for a very long time (presumably along with the other spiritual beings who are currently bound in the "hell" known as Tartarus, who will likely also be judged at the Great White Throne as well, if not at the same time the beast and false prophet are cast into that location).

This also means that if the warnings by Jesus about the "hell" sometimes known as Gehenna *were* a reference to the future location of the lake of fire (which I actually agree that those passages were indeed referring to), since Isaiah told us that only dead bodies would be spending time in there (at least as far as its human inhabitants go), we can say with quite some certainty that no humans in the lake of fire will be alive or suffering in there, at least not for any longer than

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[313] And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. — Jude 1:6

[314] For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; — 2 Peter 2:4

it takes for someone to die after being set on fire (and this would fit perfectly with what we know anyway; the lake of fire is called the second *death*[315] for a reason – if the "second death" could somehow be interpreted as being a reference to some form of never-ending torture, with one's supposed "spiritual death," whatever that means, actually being a prior "death" to this one, it should actually be called the "third death," because everybody who ends up there will have also died physically at some point prior to experiencing this fate, and if one's "first death" is actually a reference to their biological death prior to being physically resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgement, the second death would just be more of the same as the first death, which is biological death – which tells us there's no good reason at all to interpret the "second death" as referring to being tortured in fire, but rather that it should simply be interpreted as meaning to literally die a second time in said fire).

As for *why* I personally believe that the lake of fire will be located in the Valley of Hinnom in Israel (at least during the thousand-year period of time that the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel), there are a couple reasons. The first is because I've noticed that the passage almost immediately prior to the reference in Isaiah to the "undying" worms and unquenchable fire is a statement that implies this will take place at least partly on the New Earth,[316] as I already mentioned (although we do have to keep the "Mountain Peaks" of prophecy in mind here as well, as I also already mentioned, since we know that Jesus' warnings were about the period of time when the kingdom of heaven will exist in Israel on our current planet, even if Isaiah himself may not have been aware of that fact), and it seems unlikely that there would be two places for burning corpses on the New Earth (a place called the Valley of Hinnom and a place

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[315] But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. — Revelation 21:8

[316] For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. — Isaiah 66:22

called the lake of fire) after the Great White Throne Judgement takes place. And similarly, we know that "the beast" and "the false prophet" will be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the Tribulation, 1,000 years before the New Earth is created, and the similar point that it seems unlikely there would be two places for burning corpses in the kingdom of heaven when it's located in Israel on our current planet would apply here too, and so it does make sense that the valley in Israel referred to as "hell" in the KJV will indeed be the future location of the lake of fire, at least prior to this planet's destruction and the creation of the New Earth.

Before moving on, though, I should also point out, in addition to the fact that we have no basis for believing any humans will be conscious or suffering in the "hell" (again, simply meaning "hole," or valley, in this case) that the lake of fire will be located in, or even for believing they'll never be resurrected from their second death to go live on the New Earth at some point (which is also not a reference to an afterlife state, since nobody going to live on the New Earth will die a second time the way those cast into the lake of fire will, but is just a reference to a whole new planet to replace ours after our current planet is destroyed[317]), there's good reason to believe that not every human judged at the Great White Throne will even end up in the lake of fire to begin with. This idea might sound odd to some Christians, but John's statement about those whose names aren't written in the book of life ending up in the lake of fire would seem to be entirely unnecessary if there weren't going to also be some people judged at that time whose names *are* written in the book of life, especially if the judgement itself were going to prove that they deserved to end up in the lake of fire, as most Christians assume will happen. And remember, this judgement isn't about whether one has "gotten saved" or not. Instead, John tells us that the judgement people will face at the Great White Throne is going to be solely about

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[317] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. — 2 Peter 3:10

their works[318] (this also means that they'll be judged based on whether their evil acts "outweighed" their good deeds rather than whether their actions were sinful or not, since not only are "evil" and "sin" two entirely different things – unless you believe that animals can sin[319] – but also because all sin was taken care of some 2,000 years ago by Christ), saying in Revelation 21:8: *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* Of course, most Christians will claim that "the unbelieving" being the second category of people who are said to end up there proves that anyone who doesn't "get saved" before they die will end up in the lake of fire, but since John said this judgement is based on works, if "the unbelieving" referred to those who didn't "get saved," it would also mean that believing is a work, which I doubt most Christians agree is the case. The fact that "the unbelieving" is the *second* category rather than the first – *in a list* of different categories of people who end up there – also tells us just how unlikely it is that John was simply referring to those who didn't choose to "get saved" before they die, since if everyone who fails to "get saved" is guaranteed to end up in the lake of fire, the rest of the list would seem to be entirely unnecessary to begin with (although it's true that, while those in the body of Christ can't lose their salvation – since Paul told us that anyone God calls for this type of salvation *will* be glorified – those Israelites who are given the sort of salvation that Jesus and His disciples preached about while He

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[318] And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. — Revelation 20:12

[319] And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. — Genesis 37:33

walked the earth do seem to be able[320] to lose their type of salvation,[321] so perhaps the rest of the list technically applies strictly to them, but either way, "the unbelieving" can't simply refer to those who didn't get saved prior to their death, because otherwise it wouldn't even need to be included on the list to begin with, since it would go without saying based on the fact that they were being judged at the Great White Throne in the first place).

The fact that he also says "all liars" will end up in the lake of fire, when every single human who has made it to the age where they can communicate has lied at some point in their life, also makes the rest of the list entirely superfluous, I should add, if it means that everyone who has ever told a lie will end up in the lake of fire, as most Christians claim (it stands to reason that this simply refers to those who make a lifestyle out of habitual lying, such as politicians and religious teachers, for example, since otherwise the rest of the list just wouldn't have been necessary at all). Anyway, at least as far as Gentiles go, Jesus Himself seemed to imply that certain non-Israelites will be resurrected for this judgement yet not end up condemned themselves, but rather will condemn certain Israelites who missed out on the resurrection of the just[322] (and they won't have been saved the way the body of Christ or the Israel of God are, or

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[320] For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. — Hebrews 6:4-6

[321] For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. — Hebrews 10:26-27

[322] The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. — Matthew 12:41-42

else they would have been resurrected much earlier and missed this particular judgement altogether). And so, I would suggest that it's probably only the worst of the worst who will end up in the lake of fire, with everyone else, likely including most of your loved ones, continuing on to live on the New Earth, even if not in immortal bodies (at least to begin with).

But don't worry, this interpretation isn't teaching salvation by works for those who might get to avoid the lake of fire after being judged at the Great White Throne, because those who would avoid the lake of fire at this judgement wouldn't actually get saved at that time, since A) they missed out on the type of salvation which involved enjoying "eternal life" in Israel during the thousand years that the kingdom of heaven existed on our planet prior to this judgement, and B) they aren't going to be quickened when they go live on the New Earth – at least not right away – so this isn't the sort of salvation which Paul taught isn't by works either, because that particular salvation is all about being made immortal. All that being said, even if everyone who gets judged at the Great White Throne *does* end up in the lake of fire, we already know that it's only the spiritual beings known as the devil, the beast, and the false prophet who are said to remain in the lake of fire *"for ever and ever,"* or who are said to be tormented in it, so there's no reason to believe that any human whose name isn't written in the book of life will be alive or suffering in the lake of fire, or even that they can't ever eventually be resurrected from their second death the way they were from their first death, and then go on to live on the New Earth (whether in an immortal body or otherwise).



A picture of the Valley of Hinnom/Gehenna, which is the “hell,” or “hole,” that Jeremiah and Jesus warned about (and which is where the lake of fire will be located in the future, at least to begin with), as it exists in Israel today. [Photograph of “hell” taken by Deror avi (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valley_of_Hinom_PA180090.JPG). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Creative_Commons).]

Now, some Christians reading this will already be thinking that, if the “everlasting life” Jesus spoke about just refers to getting to live in Israel for a thousand years, wouldn’t this mean we won’t actually have lives that never end? That isn’t the best conclusion to draw from this fact, however, since we don’t actually need verses about “everlasting life” to tell us we’ll eventually be in a state where we’ll never die to begin with, because it isn’t figurative verses about “everlasting life” (or “life eternal”) which promise us this anyway, but rather it’s verses about our impending immortality which teach us this fact (and

not all Israelites will be made immortal at the time they experience "everlasting life," as we've already covered, but will have to wait until a future time for the quickening of their bodies to occur). Of course, this all makes particular sense when we consider the fact that, even in less literal translations such as the KJV, Jesus Himself said that having "life eternal" simply figuratively means *"that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,"*[323] which tells us that the term "life eternal" isn't inherently referring to never dying anyway (at least for those He was ministering to during His time walking the earth). At the end of the day, though, while almost no Christian seems to consciously realize it, most of them are *already* interpreting "everlasting life" and "life eternal" in a qualitative, figurative manner rather than in a quantitative, literal manner, since, aside from believing what Jesus said "life eternal" means there, most of them also believe that all humans continue to live on without end after they die anyway, which means that being given "everlasting life" or "life eternal" isn't required to have life that is literally, or quantitatively, everlasting or eternal (meaning a life that never ends), at least according to the theology of Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul, and hence "everlasting life" or "life eternal" can't actually mean to never die, if they're correct. Think about it, if we're already "eternal" beings, in the manner that most Christians believe we are, then "life eternal" or "everlasting life" *can't* literally be talking about how long we continue to exist, since we're all going to continue existing without end regardless of whether we have "life eternal" or not, according to the most common viewpoint. And so, most Christians *already* interpret terms like "life eternal" and "everlasting life" in a qualitative manner, and understand that they're both actually simply a figure of speech connected with salvation rather than literally referring to how long one continues to exist (at least in the less-literal Bible translations that use the terms), even if they hadn't fully realized it until they read this. (And if "everlasting life" is a figurative term in these less-literal Bible translations, it

[323] And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. — John 17:3

makes sense to conclude that references to "everlasting punishment" must be figurative as well; and they indeed are, as I'll prove a little later in this book.)

Of course, the fact that we still have to *"put on immortality"* in order to fully experience the salvation Paul wrote about means we're *not* inherently immortal or "eternal" beings (in fact, Paul tells us that Christ Jesus is the *only* human to *currently* have immortality[324] – no, I don't believe this passage was talking about the Father, since otherwise it would seem to mean that Christ Himself, as well as the angels and other spiritual beings, could die at this point, so it appears it has to be a passage about a human and how that human[325] is the *only* human who is currently immortal), but few Christians ever really stop to think about these facts particularly deeply, and so they just assume that we *are* inherently "eternal" and immortal, even if it's just our souls which they assume are somehow naturally immortal.

The simple truth, however, is that immortality *isn't* something we're born with. We have to be *given* immortality, and it won't be truly given to any of us until a very specific time in the future, which is all the proof one should need that no human can possibly suffer without end in the "hell" that the lake of fire will be located in, as the following points should make clear:

- Immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in Scripture (only those who are finally experiencing salvation physically – in living bodies, with

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[324] I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. — 1 Timothy 6:13-16

[325] For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; — 1 Timothy 2:5

most of them having been resurrected from the dead first – will have *"put on immortality,"* or will have been made immortal, and whenever someone is made immortal it can then be said, *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*, as far as they're concerned, because death will have been swallowed up in victory for them).

- Those who are going to be resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgement haven't experienced salvation yet, so they'll be raised as regular, mortal, biological humans.
- Regular, mortal, biological humans who are set on fire burn up and die, presuming they aren't rescued from the fire first.
- There's absolutely nothing in Scripture that tells us God will keep resurrecting people in the lake of fire perpetually so they can die over and over again without end after they've died a second time (which would make the lake of fire also the third and fourth and fifth deaths, and so-on-and-so-forth, rather than just the second death, which is all the Bible refers to it as in that context), and to insist that He will is quite clearly eisegesis, since there's just nothing in the text that even implies it. (This also means that those Christians who have tried to deny a second resurrection of those who will die a second time in the lake of fire so they can be saved, by telling me, "Scripture doesn't specifically say the words, 'Those who die a second time in the lake of fire will also be resurrected a second time so they can be made immortal,'" can't then turn around and say, "There's a second and third and forth resurrection, and so-on-and-so-forth, so humans can suffer without end," since they've already denied that Scripture says a second resurrection will take place at all.)

But even if humans can't suffer in the "hell" that the lake of fire will be located in, if we're "eternal" beings, the way most Christians assume we are, we must still be able to suffer in another version of "hell," which the unsaved will experience as ghosts after they die, right? This is what most Christians believe, anyway. And because of this, while *"ye shall not surely die"* might be the first

recorded lie the devil told,[326] it's now being taught as truth by many people in the Christian religion who are trying to convince us that death isn't actually death at all, but is instead actually life ("eternal life," even), and that it's really a friend bringing us to finally be with the Lord rather than an enemy that needs to be destroyed.[327]

Based on all the sermons where I've heard preachers say things like, "When your heart stops beating, you won't actually die; instead, you'll move on to the next stage of your life, the place where you'll spend the rest of eternity, and the location you'll end up living in from that point forward depends on whether or not you choose to accept Christ before you pass on to that final destination," it's clear they've (at least temporarily) forgotten that nobody remains dead, since there's still a resurrection of the dead in the future, prior to the Great White Throne Judgement (multiple resurrections, in fact, since for there to be a "first" resurrection,[328] there has to also be a subsequent one, and we're told that there indeed is one, in the passage immediately after the verses referring to the "first"

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[326] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: — Genesis 3:4

[327] The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

[328] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. — Revelation 20:5-6

resurrection[329]), so the supposed afterlife "location" which one ends up in while they're dead *couldn't* be their final destination (presuming there even was an afterlife, of course). But in addition to this, it also demonstrates that they're unaware of the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures[330] tell us the dead know nothing,[331] meaning they aren't conscious at all (many Christians will do all sorts of theological and mental gymnastics trying to prove that these assertions made in Ecclesiastes don't literally mean what they say, but there had been no passages in Scripture prior to those which said the dead *are* conscious, so there's no basis for the idea that anyone who read these statements at the time they were written could have possibly understood that the writer instead meant the dead actually *do* have knowledge – although, for those who believe in the immortality of the soul, if Solomon *was* trying to get across to us that the dead *don't* have knowledge, I'd like you to explain what he would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you that he actually *did* mean they don't have knowledge). Even in the Greek Scriptures, death

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[329] And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:7-13

[330] For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. — Ecclesiastes 9:5

[331] Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. — Ecclesiastes 9:10

is compared to sleep,[332] not to being awake in an afterlife existence (outside of one very misunderstood story in the book of Luke, which I'll discuss shortly). The book of Acts didn't say Stephen died and went to heaven, for example.[333] While his spirit was returned to God – not as a conscious being, though, because our spirit is just the breath of life that generates a conscious soul while in a body[334] and isn't conscious itself, since it's actually our soul that *is* our consciousness, and spirits and souls aren't the same thing[335] – the book of Acts says that he himself went to sleep, not that he remained awake.

Scripture also says that David and others fell asleep[336] – referring to their actual persons being asleep or unconscious in death – not that just their bodies decayed while they themselves remained conscious (when Scripture speaks of a person dying, it doesn't just say their body died while they themselves continued to live; instead, it says that they themselves have died, and that the

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[332] These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. — John 11:11-14

[333] And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. — Acts 7:59-60

[334] And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. — Genesis 2:7

[335] For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. — Hebrews 4:12

[336] For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: — Acts 13:36

location of their very person is now "in the grave"[337] or "in the dust,"[338] in the very same place that everyone ends up,[339] including all animals as well,[340] in fact, and there's no scriptural basis for reading these verses in any other way, at least not that I'm aware of – besides, if the immortality of the soul actually *was* a scriptural concept that Israelites believed is true back in "Old Testament" times, they themselves wouldn't have implied in Scripture that the dead are unconscious and that they aren't located in any other place than the ground). Similarly, bodily resurrection is likewise compared to waking up from sleep in Scripture,[341] and not to a person being returned to their body to continue to be awake as they supposedly still were while they slept as well.

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[337] Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. — John 5:28-29

[338] Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. — Isaiah 26:19

[339] For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. — Ecclesiastes 9:1-5

[340] For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. — Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

[341] And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. — Daniel 12:2

It's important to remember that consciousness, at least for biological beings such as humans, can cease to exist, since one can be rendered unconscious, either by going to sleep, by fainting, or by being knocked out (and when someone is unconscious, they are no longer conscious, meaning they are no longer aware of themselves and their surroundings, which means their consciousness has temporarily ceased to exist, which is something I can't believe I have to explain, but somehow many people I've discussed this with seem to miss this fact, so here we are), and if we can lose our consciousness under those common circumstances, with it ceasing to exist while we're alive (which means we aren't in a never-ending state of consciousness), there's no reason to believe our consciousness could return after we die without a living and active brain to bring it back into existence the way our brains do when we awaken from unconsciousness, thus regaining consciousness. To make this really clear, let's say that somebody was sleeping, and hence had no consciousness existing at that point (and before someone brings up REM sleep and dreaming, the subconscious processes of a physical brain that cause us to dream while we're asleep aren't the same thing as the consciousness we have while we're awake, nor is there any reason to believe the neurological processes that generate dreams can occur without a living, biological brain; and one doesn't dream the whole time they're asleep anyway – in fact, we only dream about 20% of the time we're asleep at night, so for approximately one third of our lives, give or take, we aren't conscious at all), or was even knocked unconscious with a hard object or sedated for surgery. If they were to suddenly die right then while unconscious (and this hypothetical person is not in a state of REM sleep, and hence isn't dreaming in this scenario, just to remove any doubt), would their consciousness just pop back into existence at the point of their death? There's absolutely no reason to think it would, and the idea that death can recreate a consciousness that had stopped existing (as would be the case if this happened) really makes no sense at all.

But getting back to Scripture, it's also important to remember that the first time those in the body of Christ are said to meet the Lord is going to be in the air[342] in our newly quickened bodies (while living members of the Israel of God will do so at the Second Coming, and dead members of the Israel of God[343] will do so at the resurrection of the just, 75 days after the Tribulation ends – and, again, please compare the numbers in Daniel 12:11-13[344] to the numbers in Revelation 13:5[345] if you aren't familiar with the 75 day difference between the end of the Tribulation and the resurrection of the just, because this is an important difference which proves that the quickening of the body of Christ takes place prior to the Second Coming, or at least prior to the resurrection of the just), which is the point from when we're said to finally *"ever be with the Lord"* (and not from a previous point such as our physical death, which would be when those in the body of Christ *actually* began to *"ever be with the Lord"* if the immortality of the soul were true). In fact, the blessed hope[346] we're told to comfort one another with[347] isn't that the dead get to live happily with the Lord as ghosts in another dimension called heaven, but is rather the expectation that the dead in Christ will eventually be physically resurrected,

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[342] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:17

[343] As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. — Psalm 17:15

[344] And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. — Daniel 12:11-13

[345] And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. — Revelation 13:5

[346] Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; — Titus 2:12-13

[347] Wherefore comfort one another with these words. — 1 Thessalonians 4:18

and that all of us in the body of Christ (both those still living and those newly resurrected) will then be quickened and caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,[348] which is when we'll finally be in the heavens. (And the reference to *"them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* in verse 14 is just talking about the spirits of the dead members of the body of Christ that had "returned to God"[349] now coming back to rejoin their bodies, and isn't meant to imply that they were already enjoying being *"ever with the Lord"* in heaven, since our spirits aren't actually conscious, and the verse said *"them also which sleep in Jesus,"* not "them also which are awake in an afterlife in Jesus" anyway; remember, it's our souls that are our consciousness, generated by a brain in a body which is being kept alive by our spirit, and our soul can't exist so long as our spirit is not residing within our physical body, keeping our brain alive.) It's important to remember that the reason Paul even brought this up to begin with was to comfort those who had lost loved ones to death. If the immortality of the soul were true, he would have instead needed to have written something more along the lines of, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which are awake in an afterlife in Jesus are with Him now, enjoying the bliss of heaven, which is where you'll go to ever be with the Lord when you sleep as well. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

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[348] But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

[349] Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

Of course, Paul also makes it quite clear that the immortality of the soul can't be true when he wrote, *"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,"* in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, as well as when he talked about all the dangers he faced while evangelizing,[350] and pointed out that there would be no reason for him to do so if there were no resurrection from the dead, because if there was no resurrection, then nobody could be saved, in which case he might as well just go live life without worrying about evangelizing. This wouldn't be true if those who are saved go to another dimension called heaven when they die. The fact that we don't is why he could make that claim: because without the physical resurrection we would have absolutely no hope at all, since we would cease to exist for good (we wouldn't even have the hope of continuing on as ghosts in another dimension called "heaven" with God, since those who died in Christ would have "perished," meaning they're no longer existing at all, and have no hope of ever existing again either, according to this passage), which was basically the entire reason Paul wrote that chapter in his first epistle to the Corinthians to begin with.

[350] I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. — 1 Corinthians 15:31-32

In addition, we know that not only has David himself not gone to heaven, at least not as of the time Peter made that speech recorded in Acts 2[351] (which was after Christ's resurrection and ascension, which means we also have no reason to believe he's ended up there since then), but that nobody other than Christ Himself had either as of the time John wrote that assertion in his commentary in the book of John,[352] which was also after Jesus ascended into heaven (Jesus' "red letters" quote should probably end at verse 12 based on the fact that verse 13 says the Son of man was in heaven at that point, which we know Jesus wasn't at the time He had that discussion with Nicodemus, so everything from verse 13 to 21 presumably had to have been John's personal commentary on the topic, written after Jesus had left the earth; it's important to remember that the book of John was a theology book rather than a history book and, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, used historical quotes of Jesus to prove theological points instead of primarily being a historical record in and of itself the way the three Synoptic Gospels were, and that John often added his own commentary to the book, even though this commentary would have indeed been inspired by God), so it seems pretty obvious that life in heaven is only for those who have been made immortal, and isn't for those who are currently dead.

In fact, if people were to remain conscious after death, God would cease to be their God while they waited for their physical resurrection, since He is not a

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[351] Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. — Acts 2:29-35

[352] And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. — John 3:13

God of the dead, but of the living,[353] which would make things strange for people in the supposed afterlife if they no longer had a God (although, if the immortality of the soul were true, that would be a good explanation as to why the dead[354] do not praise God,[355] or even remember that He exists,[356] since He'd no longer be their God while they were still dead). Strangely enough, though, some Christians actually try to use this statement to support their view that the dead remain conscious, mistakenly thinking that Jesus' statement meant the dead aren't actually dead, but are actually still alive. If they just took the time to examine the context of the whole passage in the book of Luke,[357] however, they'd discover that it was really about how the Sadducees, who didn't

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[353] For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. — Luke 20:38

[354] The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. — Psalm 115:17

[355] Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. — Isaiah 38:17-19

[356] For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? — Psalm 6:5

[357] Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. — Luke 20:27-38

believe in a physical resurrection of dead bodies in the future, were trying to trip Jesus up with a question about who a hypothetical person would be married to after being resurrected from the dead during the impending kingdom in the next age, when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel for 1,000 years (although it's translated as *"that world"* in the KJV; as already mentioned, the word "world," at least in the KJV, doesn't always mean "planet" or "earth," but in many cases[358] – including this one in Luke, since it was translated from the Greek αἰών here as well – it's a synonym for "age," meaning "a long period of time with a definite beginning and end," which is why most Bible versions translate αἰών as "age" rather than "world" in this passage). To put it simply, they weren't asking about a ghost in an afterlife dimension and whether or not she'd have to be polygamous in that imaginary realm, but were asking their question about her various marriages in order to make the idea of physical resurrection seem ridiculous. However, Jesus corrected them by not only pointing out that those people who are going to be resurrected from the dead at the beginning of that "world"/age will be immortal like the angels and hence will not be married anymore at that time (because procreation, which was normally done by married people in Israel, isn't something immortal beings are meant to do, as we know from Genesis 6 – look up the Nephilim if you aren't familiar with what I'm referring to, because that's too big of a tangent for me to explain at this point), but also by using the fact that the Lord could not legitimately claim the title of *"the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"* as Moses revealed Him to be, if the dead weren't going to be physically resurrected someday, because He's technically not the God of those who are currently dead, but is instead only the God of the living (Jesus was using prolepsis in that statement – prolepsis, again, being a figure of speech which means "calling what is not yet as though it already were" – in order to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will definitely be resurrected

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[358] Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: — Galatians 1:4

someday, because otherwise that statement about them[359] would have been a lie since it would mean they'll never exist again, when in fact *"all live unto him"* already, considering the fact that, as far as God is concerned, they've already been physically resurrected, at least from His timeless perspective – meaning, because God ultimately transcends space and time, He not only exists in our time, but He's also already existing at the point in time when these three patriarchs will be resurrected as well).

The passage just can't be read as saying the three of them were actually still alive at the time that Jesus made that statement. Verse 37 of Luke 20 ("*...that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush...*") makes it very clear that Jesus is talking about the fact that these three patriarchs would eventually be physically resurrected, not that they're actually still alive in another dimension (He didn't say, "that the dead are living in another dimension"; He said, "that the dead are *raised*," referring to a future resurrection). Jesus' whole point is that, if they aren't going to be raised from the dead to live again, God could not be said to be their God, because He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. If they were actually still alive in some afterlife realm, God would have still been their God from a literal perspective rather than just a proleptic perspective at that time (and they could still thank and praise Him, contrary to what the book of Psalms says), but Jesus' whole point was that, without a physical resurrection, He *couldn't* be their God, since they're dead and will never exist again if they aren't going to be resurrected. Because they *will* be resurrected, however, God actually *can* be said to be their God, even if only from a proleptic perspective at present, at least as far as those of us who are bound by time are concerned.

There's just no way to read verses 37 and 38 as meaning anything other than Jesus saying that those who have "gone to sleep" are indeed dead and unconscious until their resurrection, because the only way that Moses'

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[359] Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. — Exodus 3:6

statement about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could possibly be used as proof of a physical resurrection from the dead in the future is *if* the three of them have ceased to live and consciously retain knowledge for the time being. If the three of them are actually still alive in an afterlife dimension somewhere, and if Jesus' statement about God being the God of the living rather than the God of the dead was actually Him trying to prove the idea that God is still their God because they're actually still alive somewhere, then the resurrection of the dead would be entirely unnecessary for God to be their God, and Jesus' argument couldn't possibly help prove a future resurrection at all, which means they have to no longer exist as conscious beings for now or else Jesus' entire argument proves nothing as far as what the Sadducees were challenging Him on goes. Of course, Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:31-32 makes this even more obvious, since Jesus is recorded in that book as saying, *"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,"* making it clear that His statement about God not being the God of the dead, but of the living, is entirely about bodily resurrection (when Jesus said, "the living," He could *only* have been referring to living in a physical body in the future and not to ghosts currently "living" in an afterlife realm, based on both this passage in Matthew and the one we looked at in Luke).

However, before moving on, if you still believe in the immortality of the soul after reading about Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees, I'd like you to explain how, exactly, Jesus' argument about God not being the God of the dead, but rather of the living, could possibly prove a future resurrection if His statement meant that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually *are* still alive in an afterlife realm somewhere. Because, unless you can do so, this statement by Jesus seems to be definitive proof that the dead aren't actually conscious, and that no other passage in Scripture which one might believe teaches a conscious afterlife can possibly actually be intended to be interpreted that way, which means *all* the

other "proof texts" people use to try to prove the immortality of the soul *have* to be interpreted in a different manner from the way most people traditionally interpret them.

And speaking of dead "Old Testament" saints, one of those "proof texts" is the story of the appearance of Moses and Elias (also known as Elijah) on "the Mount of Transfiguration,"[360] which many Christians use to try to argue that the dead are indeed still conscious. But aside from the fact that this would make Jesus guilty of the sin of necromancy if He was talking to the ghosts of these two dead men[361] (and Jesus never sinned, so it's clear that this couldn't have been what was happening there), we know that this was simply a vision to fulfill the prophecy[362] made immediately before this passage that they would *"see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"*[363] (which is exactly what happened when they had that vision of Jesus in the glorified form He'll exist in when the kingdom of

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[360] And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. — Matthew 17:1-3

[361] When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. — Deuteronomy 18:9-12

[362] For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. — 2 Peter 1:16-18

[363] Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. — Matthew 16:28

heaven comes fully into fruition in Israel in the future), because Jesus outright said that it was just a vision.[364]

And before someone tries to use Saul's visit to the witch of Endor to prove the immortality of the soul, whatever the witch saw (remember, Saul didn't see anything here), she described it as *"gods ascending out of the earth,"*[365] so this was far more likely to have been a spiritual being of some sort than actually being Samuel (although the way this sort of thing was performed back then, from what I've been led to understand, involved a witch looking into a pit and pretending to speak to the dead in the pit, so I suppose it's possible that God temporarily resurrected Samuel from the dead in that pit, but that wouldn't prove the immortality of the soul either since he wouldn't have been dead while in that pit).

Those aren't the only passages they misuse, though, to try to prove the immortality of the soul. For example, many like to also claim that Paul said, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Aside from the fact that this isn't actually what Paul said at all (his actual words in 2 Corinthians 5:8 – at least as translated in the KJV – were, *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"*), if you look at

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[364] And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. — Matthew 17:9

[365] And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. — 1 Samuel 28:13-14

the context of what he said in the previous verses,[366] and also remember that a physical resurrection in an immortal, glorified body is what Paul was, and the living members of the body of Christ currently are (or at least should be), looking forward to, you can see that he was figuratively comparing our current mortal bodies to earthly houses, and saying that he was looking forward to no longer being "at home" in his mortal body, but instead wanted to be at home in his glorified *"house not made with hands."* When Paul talked about "houses" and "homes" in these verses, as well as when he referred to being clothed there, he was talking about physical bodies, with the *"house not made with hands"* being a reference to his future immortal body, not to him existing as a ghost in another dimension after he dies. And so, when he wrote that he was *"willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,"* he couldn't possibly have been talking about hoping he'd die so he would be with Jesus, since he specifically wrote in verses 3 and 4 that he was *not* hoping for death *at all* (when he wrote that he wasn't looking to be *"naked"* or *"unclothed"*), but rather that he was hoping to be given an immortal body, or to be *"clothed upon"* (*"with our house which is from heaven,"* as he explained in verse 2) so that *"mortality might be swallowed up of life,"* confirming that this whole passage is about mortal bodies vs immortal bodies rather than about existing as ghosts in an ethereal afterlife dimension, and that he simply meant he was looking forward to trading in his mortal body for his future immortal body, which won't happen until the Snatching Away, which is what those of us in the body of Christ call the event when *we specifically* will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (and

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[366] For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. — 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

which should not be conflated with the Second Coming, which is when Jesus returns for the Israel of God instead, about seven years later, give or take).

This is similar to the way they misuse Paul's quote that, *for him specifically at that particular time* (it's important to note that this verse isn't talking about believers in general, but was about Paul's unenviable circumstances at the time he wrote these words), "*to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"* to try to prove that he believed his death would bring him immediately to be with Christ in heaven, once again ignoring the context of the verses before these words, not to mention the verses after them as well, and the context of the surrounding verses make it pretty obvious that the "gain" Paul was referring to there would be a gain to the furtherance of the message he was preaching while in bonds, which his martyrdom would surely accomplish[367] (the idea that the "gain" referred to going to heaven as a ghost is reading one's presuppositions about the immortality of the soul into the passage). I'll admit, verses 22 and 23 in the KJV aren't the easiest for people today to understand (17th-century English isn't something modern people always find easy to grasp), and some people will assume that by, *"yet what I shall choose I wot not,"* Paul meant he hadn't yet decided which option he was going to select, as if it was up to him. But whether

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[367] But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: — Philippians 1:12-23

he lived or died wasn't actually up to him at all – it was up to the Roman government (at least from a relative perspective, although it was ultimately up to God from an absolute perspective). Literally all Paul was saying there is that he wasn't going to let it be known whether he'd personally rather continue living as a prisoner in bonds, which seemed to be helping the word to be spread more boldly, or whether he'd prefer to die and let his martyrdom help the cause even more than his state as a prisoner was doing, and that he was pretty much "stuck between a rock and a hard place" either way (which is basically all that *"in a strait betwixt two"* means), since his only options at that point appeared to be equally undesirable for him as an individual, which is why he then went on to say that he'd prefer a third option over either of the seemingly available two options, which was *"having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,"* because if Christ were to come for His body while Paul was still alive, he wouldn't have to suffer through either of the two options, but would instead get to depart the earth without dying, to *"ever be with the Lord"* in the heavens in an immortal body, which is a far superior option to living as a prisoner in a mortal body *or* to being put to death. He couldn't possibly have been referring to dying and being with Christ in an afterlife when he wrote, *"having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ,"* since he'd just finished telling his readers that he *wasn't* going to say whether he'd rather live or die, and that *neither* of the two likely options were particularly desirable for him (although he did conclude that, regardless of his preference, it seemed he was going to continue living for the time being anyway[368]). Now, some Bible translations do make it look like he simply couldn't decide whether he'd prefer to live or die, but he outright said that his desire was "to depart," so those translations don't actually make any sense if "to depart" meant "to die." Besides, he'd already told the Corinthians that he *didn't* want to be *"unclothed,"*

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[368] Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. — Philippians 1:24-26

meaning he didn't want to die, but instead wanted to be *"clothed upon"* with the immortal body that he'll only receive when he's quickened, so either way, the traditional interpretation of this verse just doesn't work. Bottom line, there's simply no excuse for interpreting it in a way that contradicts the rest of Scripture, which the teaching that Paul would live on after his death and *"ever be with the Lord"* from that point rather than from the time the body of Christ is caught up together to meet the Lord in the air does in spades. It's easy to get confused about verses like this if you ignore the context of both the surrounding verses and of Scripture as a whole, but once someone comes to realize the truth that death is actually death, and that *"ye shall not surely die"* is a satanic lie, they can then begin to interpret these passages in ways that are consistent with the rest of Scripture.

Christians don't only misquote Paul in order to try to prove the immortality of the soul, however. Many also misquote Jesus as well, making Him out to have said, "If you die in your sins, where I go, you cannot come" (I can't tell you how many times I've heard Christians think they're quoting Jesus by using those exact words, but it's a lot). This isn't what Jesus said at all, though. He actually said, *"I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come"*[369] (or at least, that's how the KJV renders it). First of all, this was a proclamation of fact, not an if/then proposition, as many misunderstand it to be (it helps to notice the plural "ye" in Jesus' statement, since He was talking to, and about, unbelieving Pharisees at the time,[370] prophesying that all those Pharisees hearing that statement would indeed die in their sins). Now, yes, in a follow-up statement (in John 8:24) He did say, *"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,"* but aside from what I already pointed out (that the Pharisees to whom Jesus made

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[369] Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. — John 8:21

[370] The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. — John 8:13

the first prophetic statement definitely *would* die in their sins), this doesn't help prove the immortality of the soul either. All it proves is that the Pharisees couldn't follow Jesus to heaven (which isn't an afterlife realm at all, as I'll discuss in more detail soon) – presuming that's even the destination He was referring to – but instead they'd die while seeking to be saved by their Messiah when they needed Him most (almost certainly a reference to their desire to be delivered by their Messiah from the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 when it finally happened to them about forty years later, and how they'd seek their Messiah in vain at that time, and would die in their state of sin while looking, although not even the writer of the book of John would have known that this is what Jesus meant).

Likewise, they misread passages such as Revelation 6:9-11[371] to defend the idea of the immortality of the soul as well, but if this passage were meant to be read literally it would mean that martyred ghosts are all trapped underneath an altar rather than enjoying life in heaven, and that these ghosts can wear physical clothing. This passage – taken from a very figurative book of the Bible – is obviously meant to be interpreted figuratively, with the "souls" of the martyrs no more literally talking to God than Abel's soul was talking to God from the dirt in Genesis 4:9-10[372] (which would have been just as unusual a place for a soul to reside, if the immortality of the soul were true, as it would be for a soul to reside underneath an altar until its resurrection), especially when taking everything else we've just covered into consideration.

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[371] And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. — Revelation 6:9-11

[372] And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. — Genesis 4:9-10

Some also attempt to argue that the reference to the Gospel having been preached to them that are dead, as 1 Peter 4:6 mentions,[373] means the dead must be conscious. At this point it should go without saying, based on all the passages we've already looked at, that there's no question the dead are unconscious, so any passages one brings up to try to argue that they remain conscious have to be interpreted in light of the facts we've already covered, which means that the people mentioned in this passage who had the Gospel preached to them had to have still been physically alive at the time it was preached to them, meaning the Gospel was preached to them, and they then died at a later point.

In addition, some Christians also like to quote Hebrews 9:27[374] in order to argue for the existence of a conscious afterlife, because they believe it means that each individual will experience their judgement immediately after they die. This verse can't be saying that at all, however, because we know that the judgement of individuals who have died won't take place until after they've been physically resurrected from the dead at the Great White Throne[375] (presuming they aren't in the body of Christ, in which case they have an entirely different "judgement,"

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[373] For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. — 1 Peter 4:6

[374] And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. — Hebrews 9:27

[375] And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:11-13

so to speak[376]), so anyone who tries to use this verse to prove an afterlife is forgetting this minor detail. On top of that, though, this verse can't actually be talking about humans as a whole at all, because that would contradict the rest of Scripture if it was, considering the fact that many people were recorded as being resurrected throughout the Bible who later would have died a second time as well, prior to their judgement (unless you believe that everyone raised from the dead throughout the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures other than Jesus are still physically alive today), not to mention the fact that not every human *will* die,[377] as they'd all have to if we're interpreting the whole verse consistently, so whatever this verse is talking about, it can't mean that humans only die once, or that they're all guaranteed to die either, as some claim, thus confirming that pretty much *all* of the traditional interpretations of the verse are incorrect. So what is this verse talking about? Well, considering the context of the chapter is high priests and sacrifices and being forgiven of sins after the

[376] But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. — Romans 14:10

[377] Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, — 1 Corinthians 15:51

death of another,[378] not to mention the fact that the death of any people who *aren't* high priests wouldn't fit the context of the chapter at all, it makes sense to conclude that the word "men" in verse 27 is referring to specific men and not all

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[378] Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. — Hebrews 9:1-28

humans in general. And while we should be able to figure it all out just by looking at what the KJV on its own says, it is still useful to know that the existence of the Definite Article before the word "men" in the verse in the original Greek also backs this up, making it clear that the writer of Hebrews had to have meant, "it is appointed unto **the** men once to die," referring only to the death of certain men rather than to the death of all humans. So what was the point of this verse? Well, it was actually just a callback to the death of certain high priests as mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures (specifically in the books of Numbers[379] and Joshua,[380] as any Israelite reading a book called Hebrews back when it was written should have recognized), specifically the high priests of Israel – including Jesus, of course. Under the Mosaic law, whenever a high priest died, there was a judgement which resulted in the freedom of certain Israelite sinners, as mentioned in those passages in the books of Numbers and Joshua, and Jesus' death as high priest resulted in the freedom of even more Israelites, which is all that this verse is getting at.

Still, other Christians will also point to a certain type of passage that they read their assumptions regarding the immortality of the soul into, in order to claim Scripture teaches the doctrine, such as the prophecy to Abram (Abraham) in Genesis 15:15, for example, which says, *"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in*

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[379] And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. — Numbers 35:25-28

[380] And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled. — Joshua 20:6

peace,"[381] and if one weren't aware of everything we've just covered, and they assumed that there is an afterlife realm which the dead end up in, it's easy to see how somebody could read that assumption into this statement, concluding that his ancestors are in this afterlife realm, and that he would eventually join them there as well. However, there isn't anything in the verse that actually says his fathers were in any sort of afterlife realm at all – the idea that an afterlife realm is where they were located is nothing more than an assumption one has to read into the text based on doctrinal presuppositions – and based on what we've now learned, they couldn't possibly have been in one, since we now know that the dead are simply unconscious in the grave. And this fact is also confirmed in the second half of the verse, which tells us that the grave is exactly where they were, giving us the location of his fathers which Abraham would eventually go to, when it says, *"thou shalt be buried in a good old age."* What most people don't realize is that this verse is using a figure of speech known as a Synonymous Parallelism, which is where the second part of a passage in Scripture confirms, and even clarifies, what the first part is saying, using slightly different wording, in this case by telling us that Abraham would end up being buried with his ancestors after he'd lived to an old age, which means that these sorts of passages are simply talking about physical death and burial, and that they can't be used to defend the doctrine of the immortality of the soul at all.

I've also heard certain Christians claim that when Job said, *"But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost,"* and when he then asked, *"and where is he?"*, that he was wondering where the dead are residing while remaining in a conscious state. But the truth is, he was simply speaking rhetorically to point out that the hypothetical dead man no longer exists, since he made it very clear in the next few verses that he believed the dead are indeed gone, at least until their future resurrection, by answering his own rhetorical question, saying, *"As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth*

[381] And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. — Genesis 15:15

down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."[382] This response by Job to his own question – along with his later statement that he was looking forward to seeing God with his own physical eyes after his resurrection,[383] and not that he was looking forward to doing so in an afterlife realm – should make it pretty obvious that he didn't believe anyone who is dead is actually still awake or living at the time they "sleep."

And some Christians also try to argue that the prophecy which says, *"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee,"* in Isaiah 14:9-11 proves that there's a conscious afterlife which some people might suffer in as well, but when you consider the facts we've already looked at, and also consider the original Hebrew this passages was written in, it should be

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[382] But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. — Job 14:10-15

[383] For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. — Job 19:25-27

pretty obvious that the English word "hell" here is being used as metonymy for "grave" (at least in Bible versions that use the word "hell" in this passage; many use a transliteration of "sheol" instead, since "hell" is translated from the Hebrew word שְׁאוֹל/"sheh-ole'" in this passage in the KJV), as the inclusion of the word "grave" in verse 11, not to mention the references to worms – which are creatures that consume corpses – should also make pretty clear. This passage was simply using the figure of speech known as personification (something done multiple times in Scripture,[384] including in this very book by the same prophet[385]) to taunt a human who will be known as "the king of Babylon" in the

[384] Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together — Psalm 98:8

[385] For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. — Isaiah 55:12

future[386] (and who will also go by the label of "the beast" during the Tribulation; it would take too much space to get into all the details but, no, the being referred to as "Lucifer" in that passage in the KJV isn't Satan, as most people have mistakenly assumed it is because they haven't read the whole

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[386] For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. — Isaiah 14:1-22

chapter particularly carefully and have accepted the Catholic tradition about the identity of the "king of Babylon" in this chapter, although the passage may be partially talking about the spiritual being who will also be called "the beast" at that time as well, depending on the specific verse in the passage, but either way, neither of these beings are Satan), pointing out that even someone as proud and powerful as this king ends up in the same place that nearly everyone else ends up in (the grave). And since we already know that the dead are unconscious, the reference to the other dead kings speaking to him is just more figurative language, letting this very human king know that he'd end up in the same place as them (unless you believe the other dead kings mentioned in the passage are sitting on literal thrones and ruling over an afterlife realm called "hell," but I'm trusting that you can see just how figurative this whole passage is, and recognize that the word "hell" in this passage is obviously not referring to the inescapable place of conscious torment which most Christians believe in, especially considering the fact that nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures had ever threatened never-ending torture – much less torture in fire – prior to this prophecy, including in any other passages which used the word "hell" in them, so there's no way that anyone who read it when it was written could have possibly interpreted *this* passage as talking about never-ending torment in fire either).

Some people will also bring up verses such as Psalm 139:8[387] and Amos 9:2[388] to try to prove that the Bible teaches an afterlife existence (with the word "hell" in both verses in the KJV also being translated from שְׁאוֹל; although it is, of course, transliterated as "sheol" in many other Bible versions as well). Based on everything we've already looked at, however, the usage of שְׁאוֹל in these verses can't mean that ghosts actually exist consciously in this "location," at least not

[387] If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. — Psalm 139:8

[388] Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: — Amos 9:2

without contradicting everything else we've now learned. And if you read the verses in the context of the passages[389] they're a part of,[390] it becomes obvious that שְׁאוֹל is simply being used figuratively in these verses to refer to hidden underground caverns in order to tell us that there isn't anywhere in the universe that God isn't, and that it wasn't being used to teach the concept of an afterlife realm called "sheol" or "hell" at all.

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[389] O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. — Psalm 139:1-12

[390] I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name. — Amos 9:1-6

However, the main passage that Christians try to use to defend the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the story of the rich man and Lazarus,[391] and this is really the *one and only* passage in the *entire* Bible that can possibly be used to even *try* to defend this doctrine, at least as far as I can find, since it's the *only* passage in Scripture which actually seems to suggest that the dead might really be conscious (I don't count the passage about the king of Babylon we looked at as actually suggesting this, since anybody paying attention when reading it can see that it's obviously very figurative), and this is quite problematic for the popular doctrine, all things considered, especially since it only *seems* to suggest that the dead might really be conscious, and only when we take it at face value, because when one looks at the details of the passage a little closer, as we're going to do, it quickly becomes apparent that it isn't saying this at all. This passage in the book of Luke does use the word "hell" in the KJV (although many English Bible versions use the transliteration of "hades" instead, because this particular "hell" was translated from the Greek ᾅδης/"hah'-dace" in the KJV, which also happens to be the Greek translation of the Hebrew word שְׁאוֹל that we

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[391] There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. — Luke 16:19-31

just looked at in Isaiah 14), but it's obviously about a whole other "hell" than the one where the lake of fire will be located, since that one is going to be a physical "hole" (or valley) here on earth, and this one appears to refer to an afterlife realm of some sort (at least if one takes this story literally), which means it doesn't seem like much about that "hell" can be applied to this one, and vice versa (although there actually is a connection one can make between the two, at least in this case, which I'll explain shortly). And so, even if this passage were meant to be taken literally, it couldn't be used to prove never-ending torment the way some Christians try to use it, because Revelation 20:13 tells us that anyone who is in the version of "hell" translated from the Greek ᾅδης will eventually leave it when they're resurrected from the dead so they can be judged at the Great White Throne,[392] and then possibly cast into the version of "hell" known as the lake of fire to die a second time, and since the "hell" translated from ᾅδης is also said to be cast into the lake of fire, according to the very next verse[393] (which I believe is referring figuratively to being the only place people will die, or at least the only place where the dead will be located, from then on), and because something can't be cast into itself, figuratively or otherwise, we know that this particular "hell" and the lake of fire can't possibly be the same thing. (This also means that anyone in the "hell" that's translated from שְׁאוֹל in the Hebrew Scriptures will also eventually leave it, because it's the same "hell" being referred to in this passage in Revelation, which we know from the fact that Acts 2:27[394] – which translated "hell" from the Greek ᾅδης in the

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[392] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:13

[393] And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. — Revelation 20:14

[394] Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Acts 2:27

KJV – was quoting Psalm 16:10[395] – which translated "hell" from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל in the KJV.)

At the end of the day, though, all the passages we've already covered make it quite clear that the dead can't be conscious, which means there's absolutely no way Jesus could have possibly meant for this story in the book of Luke to have been interpreted literally, at least not without contradicting the rest of the Bible (not to mention basic common sense about how consciousness works, as we've also already discussed), since to do so would mean the rich man and Lazarus actually *were* alive while dead, contrary to what all the passages we just looked at say. Besides, if we were to interpret this story literally, we'd have to believe that Lazarus was sitting inside Abraham's chest, that there's actually physical water and fire which intangible ghosts can interact with, and that there's even gravity which they're subject to, somehow keeping them from floating over a "great gulf," even though there's no matter there to be affected by gravity, since ghosts wouldn't be made of the same sort of "material" that the living are made of (and this also brings up the question of how they even got to their respective sides of the supposedly uncrossable chasm, if this story were describing an actual afterlife realm, and why one couldn't exit this "hell" the same way they entered it in order to re-enter it on the other side, especially since we know that everyone in the actual, literal "hell" translated from ᾅδης one day *will* "exit" it in order to be resurrected). Not to mention, if we did take the story literally, we'd have to believe that the rich all go to a place called hell when they die, while the poor all get saved, since there's literally zero indication in this story that Lazarus was a believer. The reason Jesus said Lazarus went to "Abraham's bosom" seemed to be entirely because of his suffering as a beggar, not because He'd accepted Christ as his Saviour or anything like that – and likewise, the reason the rich man was said to be suffering in "hell" was because he got to

[395] For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Psalm 16:10

enjoy good things during his life,[396] and not because he rejected Jesus (there was no indication that either Lazarus or the rich man had ever heard of Jesus, or even that Lazarus was a particularly virtuous man who kept the Mosaic law, if you want to try to look for other possible reasons for him getting to enjoy a better afterlife than the rich man in this story; in fact, Jesus didn't explain *anywhere* in the story how to experience the positive afterlife that Lazarus got enjoy, or what to do in order to avoid ending up in the "hell" that the rich man in the story ended up in – aside from, perhaps, obeying the Mosaic law and other teachings within the Hebrew Scriptures[397] – which you'd think He would have done if this *was* meant to be a warning about how to avoid a negative afterlife in order to experience a positive one). The fact of the matter is, no Christians actually believe *any* of that, which means they're already basically interpreting the story entirely figuratively to begin with (not to mention reading numerous assumptions into the text in order to make the story fit with the theological traditions they learned from their religious teachers), so they should really just finally acknowledge that it's 100% figurative, since they already read it that way anyway (even if they haven't realized that they're doing so), meant to convey a message that had nothing to do with an afterlife at all, and everything to do with potentially missing out on getting to enjoy life in the kingdom of God when it begins in Israel, just like most of Jesus' other warnings were about, especially in light of everything else we've covered about the state of the dead. Jesus was basically just using this figurative story to let his audience know that the kingdom of God would be taken from the religious leadership in Israel,

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[396] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. — Luke 16:25

[397] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. — Luke 16:29-31

meaning the covetous Pharisees who were listening to him tell this story,[398] as well as the chief priests, which the purple and fine linen on the rich man tells us he represented in this story, and that it will be given to other, "lesser" Israelites[399] – meaning Jesus' "lowly" disciples,[400] along with other Israelites who are among *"the least of these,"* currently scattered among the nations,[401] possibly not even realizing yet that they're actually Israelites – who will form *"a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* in the land of Israel at the time they're resurrected from the dead at the resurrection of the just, or if they've "endured to the end" and survived the Tribulation, especially if they're among the

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[398] And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. — Luke 16:14

[399] Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. — Matthew 21:42-45

[400] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. — Acts 4:13

[401] And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. — John 10:16

144,000 Israelites spread among the nations who will be sealed at that time[402] (and the fact that some Israelites will miss out on enjoying life in the kingdom at that time is the connection between the two "hells" I mentioned earlier, since this is a story meant to convey that the religious leaders will miss out on enjoying life in the kingdom when it begins in Israel, with ending up dead in the "hell" known as the lake of fire for a period of time being at least one of the possible things that will keep them from it). Please note that I'm not insisting this is a parable, however (even though it almost certainly is one[403]), because if I did, some Christians would argue that it *can't* be a parable based on the fact that Jesus mentioned someone by name in the story, and because He'd never done so in any other parables before. And while this is a really weak argument, rather than get into that whole debate I'll just say, since we know that basically nothing Jesus said in this passage can be read literally anyway, parable or not, it's still entirely figurative, and leave it at that.

So, rather than going to literal afterlife realms called heaven or hell after we die, Scripture instead tells us that death is a return:

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[402] And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. — Revelation 7:1-8

[403] All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: — Matthew 13:34

- The body returns to the dust,[404] meaning to the ground.
- The soul returns to "hell,"[405] meaning to nonexistence. The phrase *"shall be turned into"* in Psalm 9:17 in the KJV is simply a poetic translation of the Hebrew שׁוּב/"shoob," which literally means "is returned to," telling us that one's soul does a U-turn back into some place or state referred to as the "hell" which is also transliterated as "sheol" in other Bible versions, since this "hell" is also translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל. This verse just tells us that our sense of feeling and our consciousness (our "soul," in other words) returns to the nonexistence from whence it came, which is all that most of the passages in the KJV which talk about people going to a place called "hell" after they die are referring to, be it passages where "hell" is translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל or from the Greek ᾅδης (for those who aren't aware, there's no such "thing" as a soul, per se, but rather "soul" is just a word that's used in the Bible as metonymy for our sense of feeling and/or our consciousness; for example, Scripture tells us that the "soul" of the flesh is in the blood, although the KJV translates it as *"the life of the flesh is in the blood,"*[406] but if you dig a bit deeper you'll discover that the word "life" there has the same root word translated as "soul" twice more in the same verse – נֶפֶשׁ/"neh'-fesh," which is the Hebrew word that's also translated as ψυχή/"psoo-khay'" in the Greek Scriptures – telling us that our sense of feeling and consciousness is dependent upon our blood while we live in these mortal bodies, which can be demonstrated by the fact that, when one loses blood to a part of their body, they lose feeling in that part of the body until the blood rushes back into it, or by how when someone

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[404] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. — Genesis 3:19

[405] The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. — Psalm 9:17

[406] For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. — Leviticus 17:11

loses enough blood they'll lose consciousness and die, which could be why the KJV translators used "life" as metonymy for "soul" in that verse). Oh, and before someone brings up the fact that Psalm 9:17 is talking about "the wicked," keep in mind that it still tells us they'll *return* to "hell," which means they had to have come from there to begin with. So regardless of who this particular verse is talking about, it still means that the "hell" which people "end up in" after they die can't be what most Christians assume it is because it tells us that they've already "been there" before, figuratively speaking, meaning their consciousness/"soul" didn't exist at one time, and it will return to that state of nonexistence again in the future, with their "soul" being figuratively "hidden or unseen" at that point, which is why it's said that one's soul is in "hell" when one dies (and which is why the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל and the Greek ᾅδης are also both sometimes translated as "the unseen" instead of "hell," depending on your Bible version).

- The spirit returns to God Who gave it,[407] although not as a conscious entity, since human spirits aren't conscious on their own without a body. "Soul" (feeling and consciousness) is an emergent property of combining a human spirit with a body – as happened in Genesis 2:7[408] – just like combining the colours yellow and blue results in the colour green (our spirit *is* our "breath of life" in that verse in Genesis, with the word "spirit" being translated from the Hebrew רוּחַ/"roo'-akh" and its Greek equivalent πνεῦμα/"pnyoo'-mah" in the Bible, which also literally mean "breath" or "wind," and which are also translated that way at times as well, including in that verse I was just referring to, but it doesn't experience consciousness when it's not inside a physical body).

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[407] Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

[408] And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. — Genesis 2:7

This presents quite a dilemma for the popular view, of course. If the type of "soul" most Christians believe in was existing consciously in an actual place called hell and the "spirit" was with God, would the "soul" of an unsaved person suffer in a fiery location while the "spirit" enjoyed being with God in heaven? Remember, Scripture doesn't discriminate between "saved" and "unsaved" spirits when it says they return to God upon death (to claim that only the saved spirits return to God is to read one's presuppositions into the text, especially since the same book that tells us our spirits return to God when we die also tells us that everybody ends up in the same place when they die). And what does that say about us if our spirit and soul could go to separate places but are both conscious (are we made up of two conscious beings that can be split up when we die, yet only one will be punished for sin in hell while the other is in heaven with God)? This is just one more reason why the common view makes no sense. Instead, it's better to believe what Scripture actually says: that "souls" can actually die[409] (simply meaning that our consciousness ceases to exist when we die, as we've now learned). On top of that, if those who are saved "go to heaven" as soon as they die, then death isn't really an enemy to be defeated (and, really, destroyed) at all, as Paul told us it is,[410] but is instead actually an ally finally bringing us to God (and causing us to *"ever be with the Lord"* before the time Paul said this would actually occur), with our eventual physical resurrection just being icing on the cake rather than being the actual cake itself that it's supposed to be (the resurrection and/or quickening of our human bodies has become nothing more than a small side note in most of Christendom, when it's what we're actually supposed to be looking forward to).

There's an even more important reason to reject the idea of the immortality of the soul, however, and this is the fact that one can't join the body of Christ

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[409] Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. — Ezekiel 18:4

[410] The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

while truly believing in the doctrine. You see, when Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 what the Gospel was that his readers believed when they were saved (referring to the special "eternal life" type of salvation that involves being immersed into the body of Christ), he wrote that not only did they come to believe that Christ died for our sins, but also that He was buried (or that He was entombed, depending on your Bible version), and that He rose again the third day (or that He has been roused the third day, depending on your Bible version). Now, every Christian out there will claim to agree that these words are true, but few of them actually understand what they mean, and can you really believe something that you don't understand? Yes, all of us who call ourselves Bible believers agree that the words "Christ died for our sins" and "He was buried" are true, but how many Christians *actually* agree that "**He** was buried"? Most Christians believe that *His body* was buried, but they also believe that **He Himself** *went somewhere else altogether* (meaning they believe He went to another dimension called "hell" – or "hades," depending on their preferred Bible translation – as a conscious being for those three days, even if it was in a part of "hell" known as "Abraham's bosom," which many also believe is referred to as "paradise," based on a misunderstanding of another passage that I'll discuss shortly). The problem is, Paul didn't say that only Christ's body died. What he said was that "**Christ** died"; and he didn't say that only Christ's body was buried while He Himself went somewhere else, but rather that "**He** was buried," which means that **He Himself** was placed in the tomb, not that He Himself went somewhere else while His body was placed in the tomb (*"He was buried"* is a passive statement as far as Christ's person goes, so even if you believe that Christ Himself actually ended up in the tomb temporarily as a ghost, the wording of that passage can't be interpreted to mean He followed His body to the tomb from the cross as a ghost, and then went somewhere else from there after His body was buried, or even just remained in the tomb as a ghost for three days, because the way the verse is worded tells us that He had no involvement in being buried at all, other than passively having it happen to Him; so unless his pallbearers also had some sort of mystical object or magical

spell which they used to drag Him into the tomb as a ghost after He died – which wouldn't fit with what John 19:30 says, since it says He *"gave up the ghost,"*[411] not that He *became* a ghost – it can't legitimately be said that "He was buried" unless He *was* His body and nothing more at that point). Paul didn't just randomly include the words *"He was buried"* in this passage for no reason (all Scripture is inspired by God,[412] and every word God inspired to be written down is meant to be there,[413] which means every word is there for a reason, rather than just being arbitrarily thrown in there by the human writer as would be the case if those who believe in the immortality of the soul were correct). If Christ's (and not just His body's) burial wasn't a crucial part of what Paul said his readers believed when they were saved, he would have just written that "Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day," and left those particular words about His burial out altogether, since mentioning that fact would have then been entirely superfluous (not to mention deceptive, at least to anyone who takes the words written there seriously). There's a reason that Paul included the words *"He was buried"* as something he claimed those who experience the special "eternal life" sort of salvation he wrote about have to believe, and the reason is that we have to believe (which means we have to first understand) what those specific words actually mean. (And for anyone who might still be skeptical, if Paul *was* trying to tell us it's important to believe that Christ actually did lose consciousness when He died – just as He would have every time He went to sleep, unless you believe He remained fully aware of Himself and His surroundings when He slept as well – and that **He Himself** was buried rather than just His body while He went elsewhere, I'd like you to tell me

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411 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. — John 19:30

412 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: — 2 Timothy 3:16

413 The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. — Psalm 12:6

what Paul would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you of this.)

And before someone tries to protest, saying that Jesus had the power to resurrect Himself, which means He must have been conscious, pointing out Jesus' claim in John 10:18 that He had power to take His life again,[414] the word "power" in this verse in the KJV, translated from the Greek ἐξουσία/"ex-oo-see'-ah," is just referring to the sort of right that someone in a position of authority has to have an action they wish to be completed actually be performed (and, in fact, the word literally just means "authority"). For example, just because a king is said to have the "power" to tax the citizens of his country doesn't mean he personally goes to every single citizen of the country and forces them to give him the money directly; it just means that he has the legal authority to expect they'll pay their taxes. Likewise, Pilate had the "power"[415] (also translated from the Greek ἐξουσία) to crucify Jesus, but that doesn't mean he physically performed the actual crucifixion himself with his own strength (if he did, the Greek word δύναμις/"doo'-nam-is" – which *does* refer to strength or ability in the Bible[416] – would have been used in the original Greek in John 19:10-11 instead, as well as in John 10:18 if Jesus meant He actually had the ability to resurrect Himself from the dead), but instead he had his soldiers do the actual deed under his legal authority (and so, what Jesus said just meant: *"I have the right to lay [my life] down, and I have the right to receive it again,"* and He did receive it

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[414] No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. — John 10:18

[415] Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. — John 19:10-11

[416] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. — Matthew 6:13

again, when He was woken from His sleep by His Father[417]). Likewise, when Jesus parabolically said in John 2:19 that He would raise His body three days after His death,[418] it's important to remember the fact that *"He was buried,"* and that any passage we read about His resurrection *has* to be interpreted in such a way that it doesn't contradict this crucial part of what Paul said his readers believed when they were saved, which means that Jesus could *only* be referring to raising His body in the sense of getting up off the slab in the tomb after His God and Father[419] resurrected Him from the dead (which is Who the Bible says actually raised Him from the dead anyway[420]). The context of this passage in John wasn't about His ability to resurrect Himself to begin with; if you read the whole passage, you'll see that it was simply about how the fact that He wouldn't remain dead would be a sign to the people who heard Him.[421]

Of course, some will now ask, "But doesn't 1 Peter 3:19 say that Jesus preached to spirits in prison while He was dead?"[422] Well, no, it doesn't. He didn't preach

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[417] For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. — 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

[418] Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. — John 2:19

[419] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: — Ephesians 1:3

[420] Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) — Galatians 1:1

[421] Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. — John 2:18-22

[422] By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; — 1 Peter 3:19

to the spirits until *after* His body was quickened/made immortal (which obviously couldn't happen until after His body was resurrected from the dead), as we can see from the verse before that one.[423] But regardless, Peter said He was preaching to spirits, not to souls. Since, as we already learned, the spirits of dead humans return to God in heaven (just as Jesus' spirit did when He died,[424] unlike His soul, which instead was said to have figuratively gone to "hell,"[425] demonstrating once again that human spirits and souls are not the same thing), the spirits He was preaching to couldn't have been humans, which means they must have instead been disobedient spiritual beings, exactly as Peter said they were.[426] They weren't the spirits of humans, but rather were the spiritual beings who sinned in Noah's time[427] by breeding with humans (and creating the

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[423] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peter 3:18

[424] And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. — Luke 23:46

[425] Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. — Acts 2:27-31

[426] By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. — 1 Peter 3:19-20

[427] And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. — Jude 1:6

giants who became mighty men of renown,[428] also sometimes referred to as the Nephilim), and who were then locked up in the version of "hell" sometimes known as Tartarus[429] because of their sin. Besides, all passages have to be interpreted in light of Christ's burial anyway, so it goes without saying that any attempts to argue that Jesus was actually conscious while He was dead are nonstarters because of that fact alone, and that any passages we think might imply He was actually still alive have to be interpreted accordingly.

But is it really so important that we should care what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ died and was buried? Well, yes, very much so! It's only when we realize that Christ *actually* died and that **He Himself** was buried that we can truly appreciate His faith in going to the cross. You see, He knew that, unless His Father resurrected Him, He would have remained dead (meaning He would have ceased to exist permanently), and, as Paul explained in Romans 3:21-23,[430] *this* is the faith that ultimately saves us: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by *faith* ***of*** *Jesus Christ* [*not* "by faith **in** Jesus Christ"; this is all about *Christ's faith*, not our own] unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."

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[428] And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. — Genesis 6:1-4

[429] For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; — 2 Peter 2:4

[430] But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; — Romans 3:21-23

Unfortunately, because almost no Bible believers *actually* believe that Christ *truly* died for our sins and *really was* buried, instead believing that only His body did and was, while He Himself lived on and went somewhere else altogether, none of these people can be said to have been baptized into the body of Christ yet, since they haven't truly believed what Paul said those who experience the special sort of salvation he wrote about will believe at the time they're saved.

And while this might seem like a bit of a tangent at first (even though it's an important aside which is actually quite related to what we just discussed), I should also point out that coming to understand that Jesus actually fully and truly died brings one to the realization that most Christians have misunderstood the nature of God (for lack of a better term) as well, thinking that God is one being made up of three beings rather than being only *one* being[431] (however that's supposed to work – and before someone claims they believe God is actually *not* one being made up of three beings, but rather three beings sharing one essence, they refer to their "three-in-one" deity as "He," not "Them," thus demonstrating that they either don't know how English works or that they don't know what the logical result of their doctrine is). Because, while the Bible says that there are actually *many* gods[432] out there in the universe[433] (it would be difficult for our heavenly Father to be the God of gods if there were no other gods out there for Him to be the God of[434]), it also tells us that there is only **one**

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[431] And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: — Mark 12:29

[432] For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) — 1 Corinthians 8:5

[433] God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. — Psalm 82:1

[434] For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: — Deuteronomy 10:17

Almighty God[435] (who created all the other gods), and He has no equals or co-equals. Can Almighty God have a God above Him? Nearly everyone I've asked this question to has immediately and rightly answered "no" (and the one person who answered "yes" when I asked him this question needs to learn how numbers work, because if Almighty God had a God above Him, there would then be *two* "Almighty" Gods: 1) Almighty God, and 2) the God who exists *above* Almighty God), but as we've already seen, Scripture tells us (in many places, actually[436]) that Jesus has a God[437] – His Father.[438] This means that, while any title His Father has can also now be applied to Him[439] (the English word "God" is just a title, after all, and is not His name, similar to the way "President" is a title and not an actual name), especially when speaking and acting on His Father's behalf as His Father's icon (or image[440]), and hence He can now be referred to as God *representationally* (just as I can show you a picture of my wife and honestly say, "This is my wife," even though it isn't *literally* my wife since I didn't marry a photograph), Jesus can't actually be the Almighty God *literally* like His Father is, because the Father is above Him,[441] and nobody is above –

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[435] And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. — Genesis 17:1

[436] Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. — John 20:17

[437] The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. — 2 Corinthians 11:31

[438] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, — 1 Peter 1:3

[439] But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. — Hebrews 1:8

[440] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: — Colossians 1:15

[441] Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. — John 14:28

or even beside, meaning equal to[442] – the Lord God Almighty (Who is differentiated from "the Lamb"[443] – referring to Jesus – in the Bible anyway, which should also make this pretty obvious).

And so, even though at this point (post-resurrection and quickening of Christ) one might be able to call Jesus *a* "god," or even be able to legitimately call Him "God" from a relative or representational perspective[444] – since Matthew 28:18 says that *all* power in heaven and earth has been given to Him[445] (meaning authority, in this case, once again being translated from ἐξουσία), and Acts 2:36 even says that He's also now been made "Lord" by God as well[446] – Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:6 that, *to us* (meaning to those of us in the body of Christ, which is who Paul was writing to), "there is but *one God, the Father.*"[447] I trust you can see that Paul didn't say, "to us there is but one God, the Father and the Son," which means there's just no way to fit the Son into the title of God in that verse without ignoring the rules of grammar, not to mention the point of the passage it's included in. And likewise, even though the Father is Lord from an absolute perspective, He's temporarily given Jesus the title (and authority) of Lord, so, *to us* in the body of Christ (even if only from a relative perspective), Jesus is the one we currently refer to as Lord (and not someone we refer to as God in addition to Lord, since Paul told us in this verse that, *to us* in the body of

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[442] Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. — Isaiah 44:6

[443] And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. — Revelation 21:22

[444] And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. — John 20:28

[445] And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. — Matthew 28:18

[446] Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. — Acts 2:36

[447] But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. — 1 Corinthians 8:6

Christ specifically, the Father is the *only* one we view as God – which makes sense, considering the fact that the Father really *is* the only God from an absolute perspective anyway, being the only one who can be called Almighty God). Besides, as verse 5 of that chapter says, there are *"lords many,"* so if this passage meant that Jesus is God because He's been given the title of Lord for the time being, then all the other lords would also be God too. (And as for why I keep saying that Jesus is only "Lord" temporarily, it's because 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that He'll eventually give up His reign, after He destroys death.[448])

This is similar to the way that Jesus said, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,"* in John 17:3. Based on the rules of language and logic – particularly when it comes to the definition of the word "only" – there's just no way to make *"thee the only true God"* include anyone other than the person being referred to by the singular word "thee" (σέ/"seh" in the original Greek) in that verse (not to mention anyone other than the person being referred to as "the **only**..."). Jesus would have had to have said something along the lines of, "thee and me, the only true God," or perhaps, "us, the only true God" (and then left out the second half of the verse altogether), in order to be included as a part of "the only true God" there. And yes, some Christians do try to argue that, because Jesus is mentioned in the second half of the verse, this fact then somehow makes Him a part of "the only true God." But since the verse doesn't say, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who is also the only

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[448] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. — 1 Corinthians 15:22-28

true God," this is just reading one's preconceived theological beliefs into the verse, especially since He separated Himself from the label of "the only true God" by saying "and" in between *"the only true God"* and *"Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (telling us that "Jesus Christ" exists *in addition* to "the only true God" as *a separate individual* from that God, and not as another part of that God). You see, to use a bit of math to clarify things, when someone states that *somebody else* is the *only x*, and doesn't include themselves or anyone else in that *x* in the statement, there's just no way to then try to argue that said person actually meant that *they* are *also* the *only x*, even though they didn't say that in their statement at all, and anybody who tries to claim otherwise is demonstrating that they either don't understand how language and logic work, or are outright lying (even if only to themselves). Still, if you disagree, please show us how anyone other than the God and Father of Jesus Christ can be squeezed into the label of *"thee the only true God"* without contradicting any rules of language or logic.

Besides all that, the power (authority) which God gave to Jesus couldn't have been given to Him at all if He was already ontologically *the* capital-G "God," because then He'd already have had all the authority that was given to Him, since you can't be given something that you already possess. And just as with His assigned authority, if He was already capital-G "God," He couldn't be *made* Lord either, because He'd already *be* Lord from an ontological perspective.

But even beyond the fact that the traditional, "orthodox" Christian doctrine of the deity of Christ is simply illogical and unscriptural, as I mentioned already (at least from an absolute perspective, even if we could technically say we believe in the deity of Christ from a relative perspective, since any being referred to as a god can be said to be *a* "deity" as well, even if there's only *one* capital-D "Deity"), the bigger problem is that one can't even join the body of Christ while truly believing in this doctrine (because, again, it means they don't believe Christ actually fully died for our sins, and was buried, but that only His

body did and was; God can't die, so if one believes that Jesus is God, they can't believe that Jesus truly died, nor can they believe that **He Himself** was buried), so I would posit that the reason it's become one of the most important ideas in the Christian religion is because Satan wanted to make sure that as few people as possible could become a part of the body of Christ and take his reign from him during the future ages, and so when he created the counterfeit religion which has come to be known as Christianity today, in order to keep people from believing the truth of the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, he made sure it was a part of one of the primary doctrines.

In addition, it's likely that belief in the traditional, "orthodox" doctrine keeps one from enjoying the sort of "eternal life" that one experiences under the Gospel of the Circumcision as well, because belief that Jesus is the Son of God is required for salvation under that Gospel, and the traditional doctrine teaches that Jesus is "God the Son" (really nothing more than a title for a certain part of God; and yes, logically, that is what it has to mean, despite any protestations to the contrary by Christians who might be familiar with their official – albeit unscriptural – "orthodox" creeds and what the so-called "heresies" declared by the supposed leaders of the religion are) rather than the actual Son of God (Jesus can't be both God and the Son of God at the same time, because, based on the rules of language, that would make Him the Son of Himself). Scripture speaks of the Son of God[449] and the Spirit of God,[450] but never "God the Son" or "God the Spirit." It's important to remember that Scripture puts a lot of emphasis on the fact that Jesus is the Son *of* God, and on how one must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (particularly those saved under the Gospel of

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[449] And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. — 1 John 5:20

[450] Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. — Romans 15:19

the Circumcision[451]), so much so that claiming He has an identity not found in Scripture – "God the Son" – is teaching another Jesus.[452]

Now, some like to claim that the traditional Christian doctrine regarding the deity of Christ and the other teachings connected with it is all "a mystery" which isn't meant for us to understand, but nowhere in the Bible do we find this assertion made, so they have no scriptural foundation on which to lay this claim. Besides, if it *is* a "mystery" that can't be understood, what basis do we have for believing it in the first place? Was the idea that Jesus is God prophetically told to be true to those Christians whose viewpoint on this topic won at Nicaea[453] (yet with how the concept is supposed to work, exactly, never actually being explained, as is made clear by the fact that nobody seems to be able to do so without resorting to teaching ideas that are considered heretical to "orthodox" Christians[454])? I don't recall that claim ever being made by any Christians. In fact, the reason the traditional doctrine came to be accepted by the Christian religion as truth is because the position won in a vote, not because any actual prophets at the Council of Nicaea revealed the doctrine to be true, which means that trying to defend the doctrine by calling it a "mystery" doesn't help the position at all.

Ultimately, belief in any of the traditional "orthodox" doctrines seems to mean one hasn't fully believed Paul's Gospel and has not joined the body of Christ, and if something is an important teaching or practice (or is considered

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[451] But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

[452] For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. — 2 Corinthians 11:4

[453] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea

[454] *St. Patrick's Bad Analogies* by the LutheranSatire YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/KQLfgaUoQCw?si=BdKHKkilmA7N7dH7

to be an "orthodox" tradition) among the majority of the followers of the Christian religion, it's generally safe to assume it's a doctrine of demons and that the opposite is true instead (particularly if it's a major tradition, doctrine, or practice taught by Rome – for whom never-ending torment in "hell," the immortality of the soul, and the deity of Christ are all extremely important doctrines). While Jesus' statement that *"strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"*[455] was technically referring specifically to the Gospel that Jesus was teaching to the Israel of God, it is still true that very few people (relatively speaking), including Christians, ever join the body of Christ, so it likely still counts as a trans-dispensational (or trans-administrational) truth, which means that there's no way a religion with as many followers as the Christian religion has – more than a quarter of the human population of the planet at the time this book was last updated – can possibly be the "narrow way" that few find. Really, when it comes right down to it, there's almost nothing that the Institutional Church gets right about God or Scripture. Although some denominations do occasionally stumble upon parts of certain truths seemingly accidentally, it's extremely rare, and no one denomination within Christianity ever seems to get more than a few things at most somewhat right – and even then, they rarely understand even a small portion of the full implications of the parts they sort of appear to grasp. It seems (from a relative perspective, at least) that Satan works hard to keep people in these denominations from joining the body of Christ, and also to use these churches to keep the rest of the world from learning spiritual truth as well. Paul's remonstration against Israel in his epistle to the Romans that, because of them, *"the name of God is being blasphemed among the nations,"*[456] is today almost better applied to those in the Christian religion who give the world

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[455] Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. — Matthew 7:13-14

[456] For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. — Romans 2:24

contradictory messages about God that keep people who think about these things from believing in such an apparently confused deity, telling people that God loves everyone unconditionally, as long as they meet certain conditions; that you are saved by grace alone and not by any actions of your own, as long as you act now and choose to become a Christian before you die; and that God is the Saviour of all humanity, yet will fail to save most of the humanity He's supposedly the Saviour of, who will actually be tormented in "hell" without end (or will at least be burned up and permanently cease to exist if certain other Christians are correct) rather than be saved. Thanks to these lies, those who are able to recognize the hypocrisy hear these things and think, "The god of the Christian religion says one thing but apparently means something else altogether, so why would we want anything to do with this seemingly dishonest deity and contradictory religion?"

This isn't to say that everyone who uses the label of "Christian" will definitely miss out on "eternal life," however (although a pretty large number of people who call themselves Christians very likely will[457]). A few of them might still experience life in the kingdom of heaven. It's just that, due to their ignorance, they are unknowingly under the Gospel of the Circumcision instead of the Uncircumcision.

So, while "orthodox" Christians aren't a part of the body of Christ and will miss out on heavenly blessings in the next age (and even in this age), an extremely small number of them might still get to enjoy the impending age here on earth if they follow the requirements of the Gospel of the Circumcision and don't try to mix that Gospel with Paul's Gospel, since it's either one or the other. But as far

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[457] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. — Matthew 7:21-23

as those of you who have now learned how to differentiate between the two Gospels go, you're ready to also dig deeper into the rest of Scripture with a framework that will make it that much more clear what else the leaders of the Institutional Church might not have taught you thanks to their pre-existing assumptions about what Scripture says.

And with all that in mind, the passages we've looked at so far in this chapter prove once and for all that Jesus is *not* literally – nor can He possibly be – Almighty God, which means that any other passages one thinks might prove the traditional doctrine that He is God *must* be interpreted from the perspective that He's only the *Son* of God instead. And, in fact, there *are* better interpretations for *every one* of the so-called "proof texts" that Christians use to try to prove their "orthodox" tradition, interpretations which *don't* contradict the passages we just looked at. And so, without getting into the details, we have to always remember that just because a passage might seem to imply Jesus is God, we've already learned that Jesus *can* be said to be God representationally, and that He indeed *is* a god (in fact, He's the second highest authority in the universe at this point, higher than any god out there other than His Father, which means one could also say that He's God from a relative perspective, even though only His Father is God from an absolute perspective), just as a passage that might be able to be interpreted as saying Jesus pre-existed His own birth as a human can, at most, be used to defend the doctrine that He was the first being created by Almighty God (presuming there isn't another, equally possible, interpretation, which there often is), so at most these passages can be used to defend those points. However, since what I've already written proves our perspective on God and Christ quite definitively, while I might add more about this topic in future editions of this book, I'm going to leave it at that for now. Still, there are a *lot* of studies out there which go into even more detail on the topic, so if you'd like to learn what our interpretations of the various supposed

"proof texts" for the traditional doctrine are, please read the articles listed on the webpage that I linked to in the footnote on the bottom of this page.[458]

And so, getting back to the original topic, everything we've now covered in this chapter should also really be all the proof anyone needs that the traditional doctrine of never-ending torment can't possibly be true either, I should add, since A) the dead aren't conscious, and hence can't suffer without end in the "hell" they end up in, and B) those humans who end up in the lake of fire will also be dead (or at least will be pretty quickly after arriving there, if they aren't already at that point), making them impervious to any suffering as well, which means that any of the "proof texts" you've been told teach *this* doctrine have to mean something else altogether too (and we'll take a look at those "proof texts" in a future chapter as well, in order to prove this once and for all). Still, if hell isn't a "place" where "unsaved" humans exist consciously after they die, then what about heaven? What and where is it, and how do people go there? Nearly everyone who believes in God has asked these questions at some point in their lives, but the answers they're normally given are generally vague guesses or unscriptural assumptions, unfortunately, or are simply statements insisting that we can't know for sure. The truth, however, is that Scripture actually answers these questions for us, and the answer is so simple that I can actually show you heaven right now (or at least part of it). How? Well, let's take a look at some of the passages of Scripture which tell us what heaven really is:

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
– Genesis 1:20

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[458] *One God, the Father* curated by Drew Costen: https://www.concordantgospel.com/deity

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. – Matthew 24:30

So when we see the word heaven, we can see that it's sometimes referring to the sky above us, where the birds and clouds are (earth's atmosphere, in other words).

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained – Psalm 8:3

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth – Genesis 1:14-17

As we've already determined, heaven is "above" us, but we can now see that it isn't only a reference to our atmosphere, but to outer space as well.

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. – Genesis 1:1

This tells us that there are only two overall "places" God created, which means there are only two places one can be: on earth, or in heaven. And if one is in the sky or in outer space, they're not on earth, which only leaves heaven for them to be in. (This also proves that "hell" isn't a literal *third* place one can be in or that God created, since He only created two places, I should add, because the "hell"/Valley of Hinnom is here on planet earth, the "hell" sometimes known as

Tartarus is also on this planet – underground on planet earth[459] – and the "hell" that dead humans are figuratively said to be in isn't actually a "place" at all, but is just a figure of speech for being "unseen," although it's also sometimes used as metonymy to refer to being in the grave, which would also refer to being underground on planet earth.)

And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. – Luke 24:51

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. – Acts 1:9-12

This also reaffirms that heaven is a reference to what is "up above" the ground we stand on. We can see that, after Jesus ascended up into heaven, the disciples were gazing up into the sky (heaven), as the angels also confirmed they were (while also confirming that a prophecy of Zechariah is about Him and when He'll one day return to the exact same spot He left from, which was the Mount

[459] For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; — 2 Peter 2:4

of Olives[460]). So, simply put, if someone wants to see heaven now, all they have to do is look up at the sky.

Most people, of course, think of heaven as a place the righteous dead go to, but you won't find any Scripture that tells you anyone goes to a place called heaven while dead (which makes sense, considering the fact that the dead are unconscious), thus making the word "heaven" another example of those False Friends found in the Bible that I mentioned in the first chapter. The truth is that only the living can go to heaven, at least in a conscious state, and those in the body of Christ *will* go there when our Lord comes for His body, and we'll finally *"ever be with the Lord"* there.[461] That said, heaven isn't a place you'd want to go right now in your current body (aside from a short trip there in an aircraft or a space shuttle), because one needs a quickened body that could survive and thrive out there if you were planning to stay long, considering the fact that you'd suffocate from lack of oxygen, or freeze to death, or die from radiation poisoning out there in the heavens without either an immortal body or some

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[460] Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. — Zechariah 14:1-4

[461] But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

sort of vehicle or structure to protect you from death (this is at least partly why Paul wrote that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"*[462] – we've already learned that flesh and blood *will* inherit the part of the kingdom of God which will be on earth, meaning the kingdom of heaven in Israel, so this was clearly only about the part of the kingdom that will be *in* heaven, not the part that will be sent *from* heaven). It also isn't the perfect, sinless place most people think it is,[463] at least not yet, since the devil and his angels haven't been cast out of heaven yet,[464] for one thing, although it will be pretty great for the body of Christ when we have our new bodies that can enjoy it out there with our Lord as we fulfill our impending ministry to the spiritual beings residing there. This means, by the way, that Christians who like to claim that God can't allow sin into heaven (which is not an assertion I've ever seen made in Scripture) seem to have forgotten that, if Satan needs to be cast out of heaven, it means sin has already been in heaven, as is also confirmed by the fact that the book of Job says he was there too.[465] Similarly, the claim they often make that sin can't exist in heaven because God can't look upon sin is also an unscriptural one, since the words *"to behold"* in Habakkuk 1:13, which they like to quote to try to prove this assertion (and which actually says, *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil"*[466]), are simply an expression in the KJV that means "to give attention to" or

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[462] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50

[463] Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. — Job 15:15

[464] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: — Ephesians 2:2

[465] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. — Job 1:6

[466] Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? — Habakkuk 1:13

"to look upon approvingly" (which is what the Hebrew word רָאָה/"raw-aw'" that "behold" in this verse is translated from means). Satan's presence in heaven, not to mention God's omnipresence and the fact that *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,"* as Proverbs 15:3 tells us (with "beholding" in this verse translated from the Hebrew word צָפָה/"tsaw-faw'," literally meaning "observing"), would make this a very problematic (not to mention contradictory) verse as well, if most Christians were correct about what that verse in Habakkuk meant. I should probably point out that this is obviously only referring to the sort of evil that falls under the category of moral evil rather than morally-neutral evil, since few people remember that not *all* evil is sinful, as I mentioned previously (the word "evil" just means "harmful," "calamitous," or "destructive," and not all actions that cause destruction or damage are inherently sinful, since otherwise it would mean that it was immoral to ever break anything, and that even popping a balloon would be a sin; simply put, the word "evil" in Scripture is basically just referring to anything that breaks something or causes suffering, whether with good intentions or bad – but we'll get more into that topic in the next chapter, where we'll learn a lot more details about both evil and sin, including their origin). Still, this does bring up the question of where people got the idea that the righteous dead go to a place called heaven in the first place from. There are a few reasons for this, but the main two reasons are verses that refer to God being in heaven,[467] as well as a misunderstanding of the word "paradise."

Since we know that the body of Christ will go to heaven, and also that people will be living with God in the New Jerusalem, most Christians have assumed that these references must be talking about a place the dead go, not realizing that these things both take place within the physical universe, experienced by living people, rather than in an ethereal afterlife dimension experienced by the dead

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[467] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. — Matthew 6:9

(the body of Christ goes to heaven to complete a ministry there, but not until after they've been resurrected from the dead and/or quickened; and the New Jerusalem later descends from heaven/outer space to the New Earth rather than being a place anyone who is dead goes to). That said, yes, God indeed *is* in heaven. He has a throne room (which can also be referred to *figuratively* as "heaven"[468]) and a throne somewhere out there in outer space, presumably in the city that will one day be called the New Jerusalem, while it waits to descend to the New Earth,[469] and it also seems likely that He manifests a part of Himself in some sort of manner that the spiritual beings there can perceive, but He ultimately transcends the whole universe at the same time.[470] (And just as a quick aside about God manifesting a part of Himself in a manner that the spiritual beings in heaven can perceive, there are some people who believe that because the Bible says God is invisible[471] and that nobody has ever seen him,[472] this must then apply to the celestial beings in heaven too – and some even insist that those of us in the body of Christ won't ever see God either, even after we're quickened and living up in heaven – and while it's possible that this interpretation of these passages is correct, I'd suggest that these verses were more likely written from a relative perspective, in that it's really only speaking of mortal humans who can't *currently* see God, because something being "invisible" to *us* doesn't mean that such things can't be seen by means *other* than the naked eye of a mortal human, or that something other than a human can't see it either, the way some animals can see things that are invisible to us;

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[468] For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: — Hebrews 9:24

[469] But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. — Galatians 4:26

[470] But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? — 2 Chronicles 2:6

[471] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: — Colossians 1:15

[472] No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. — John 1:18

besides, spiritual beings *do* interact with Him now anyway,[473] and one generally sees somebody that they're standing next to, not to mention the fact that Micaiah – who gave the prophecy about the spirits interacting with God[474] – said he saw God in the vision too,[475] so I think it's safe to say that we'll see Him as well, when we're in heaven, as will[476] the people residing[477] on the New Earth too.[478])

As far as the second misunderstanding goes, paradise is a reference to a future state of the earth where the tree of life will be,[479] both after Jesus returns and

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[473] And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. — 1 Kings 22:19-21

[474] And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. — 1 Kings 22:14

[475] And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. — 1 Kings 22:19

[476] And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. — Job 19:26-27

[477] And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. — Revelation 21:1-3

[478] And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. — Revelation 22:3-4

[479] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. — Revelation 2:7

also later on the New Earth,[480] which makes sense considering the fact that there would be no need to eat from the tree of life in an ethereal afterlife realm as a ghost in order to remain "alive," if the immortality of the soul were true. This means that Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross about being with Him in paradise[481] couldn't mean what most Christians assume it to mean, because paradise doesn't really even exist yet, at least not outside of the Jerusalem which is currently above as it waits to descend to the New Earth, I suppose (and anyone who wants to insist that Jesus was speaking about something other than a future state of the earth will need to provide some scriptural references with solid exegesis of those passages to prove that assertion, not to mention explain away all the proof we've already covered that the dead really are unconscious – and before someone brings up 2 Corinthians 12:4,[482] in light of everything we've just covered, this being a reference to Paul having a vision of the future splendours of the New Jerusalem on the New Earth, and not a reference to the supposed afterlife dimension we've now learned there's no basis for believing exists anyway, makes far more sense than any other interpretation I've ever heard). Since we have to interpret this verse in light of everything else we've just covered, based on the way it renders Jesus' statement, we're forced to interpret this verse in the KJV figuratively, meaning that, from the thief's perspective, it would feel like the same day when he woke up from his sleep and began to live with Jesus in paradise, either in Israel after Jesus returns, or on the

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[480] In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. — Revelation 22:2

[481] And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. — Luke 23:39-43

[482] How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. — 2 Corinthians 12:4

New Earth (and for those who think it would mean that Jesus was being less than truthful by speaking figuratively here, ask yourself if that means He was also being untruthful when He spoke figuratively to call Himself a door?[483]). This is also confirmed by Jesus' statement that He hadn't ascended to the Father yet in John 20:17,[484] not to mention the fact that we're told His "soul" went to "hell" when He died[485] (which simply means that His consciousness ceased to exist when He died), not to heaven (or paradise), and if Jesus did *not* go to paradise on that day (which He really couldn't have without time-travelling to the future when paradise finally exists on earth), the thief couldn't have been with Him there either, verifying that this could only be a prophetic statement about a time in the distant future when paradise begins on this earth or the New Earth. (And yes, I know that Jesus had been resurrected when He made that statement about not having ascended to the Father yet, but it's still not a statement He could have made honestly if He *had* ascended as a ghost, which we know He Himself didn't do anyway since His body was in the tomb and His "soul" was figuratively "residing" in "hell" while He was dead.)

I should say, there are also those who understand what death and paradise are, but who think this passage should be translated differently rather than interpreted differently. You see, there are no commas in the original Greek that this part of the Bible was translated from, so Luke 23:43 could just as legitimately be translated as saying, "Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be

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[483] I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. — John 10:9-11

[484] Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. — John 20:17

[485] For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Psalm 16:10

with me in paradise" (just like Paul used similar expressions in Acts 20:26[486] and Acts 26:2,[487] not to mention all the times expressions like this were used in various parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, such as in Deuteronomy 4:26,[488] 39-40,[489] and 5:1,[490] to list just a few examples), simply meaning the thief would be with Jesus in paradise, either in Israel after Jesus returns, or on the New Earth, in the future (lining up exactly with the malefactor's request that Jesus remember him *when He comes into His kingdom,*[491] telling us that he was expecting Jesus to either escape the cross or to be physically resurrected after he died – something even Jesus' disciples didn't believe was going to happen at that time, which means he might have been the first convert to believe in the resurrection if that was the case – and to inaugurate the kingdom of heaven on earth in the future regardless of whether He died or not, which makes sense considering the fact that no Israelite back then would have been expecting the kingdom to be anywhere *other* than in Israel, least of all in the "hell" also known as "sheol/hades" where Jesus and everyone else who died "ended up,"

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[486] Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. — Acts 20:26

[487] I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: — Acts 26:2

[488] I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. — Deuteronomy 4:26

[489] Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever. — Deuteronomy 4:39-40

[490] And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. — Deuteronomy 5:1

[491] And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. — Luke 23:42

so to speak, and which he would have had literally *zero* scriptural basis for assuming the kingdom was going to be located). That said, while we certainly can if we want to, without doing any violence to the original Greek, we don't actually have to change the punctuation at all in order to understand what Jesus was getting at since, regardless of where the comma is located, we still have to interpret this verse in light of the rest of Scripture, which means that whether we move the comma (as some translations do) and interpret Jesus' statement literally, or leave it where it is in the KJV and interpret Jesus' statement figuratively, the only possible valid interpretation (in light of what we've now learned about heaven, "hell," death, and immortality) is still the exact same no matter where the comma ends up (at least if we're taking the rest of Scripture into consideration), with the thief not ending up in paradise with Jesus until he's resurrected from the dead to live either in Israel or on the New Earth, so I'll leave it at that.

The fact of the matter is, nobody mentioned anywhere in the Bible was ever recorded as looking forward to an afterlife in a place called heaven, or as being afraid of being punished consciously in an afterlife realm called hell, nor had any Scripture prior to Jesus supposedly unveiling it to Israelites for the first time in Luke 16 ever even suggested that people would go to an afterlife realm to live happily or to suffer in while dead either (until Jesus told this story, anyone who based their theology entirely upon what the Scripture which was available to them at that time said would assume nobody is even conscious when they're dead, as we've already learned – and, as I mentioned when I discussed the supposedly figurative usage of the Valley of Hinnom to describe a fiery afterlife realm, it seems extremely unlikely that the Person who corrected people for teaching extrabiblical theological concepts by saying things like "have ye not read…?" and "it is written…" would suddenly turn around and teach a concept of an afterlife that is not only found *nowhere* in the Hebrew Scriptures, but which also seems to contradict everything the Hebrew Scriptures said about the state of the dead, as well as what he told the Sadducees about God being the

God of the living rather than of the dead, a few chapters later, as we've also already learned, which would mean God couldn't have been the God of Lazarus while he remained dead, if the "events" in this story actually took place), and the fact that the concept of an afterlife realm for ghosts wasn't ever taught in the Hebrew Scriptures should really tell you everything you need to know about the idea. What they *were* looking forward to was a physical, bodily resurrection in the distant future,[492] so figurative stories such as the one in Luke 16 have to be interpreted in light of this fact. The story of the rich man and Lazarus wasn't a new revelation to replace the scriptural doctrine of unconscious death until resurrection, so one has to figure out what it means without creating an entirely new theology that not only hadn't ever even been hinted at prior to it in Scripture, but that would also contradict other parts of Scripture, which also means that any scriptural references to the version of "hell" that dead souls are in can't be talking about a place any human will actually suffer in, and neither can any passages that talk about the lake of fire (at least they won't be able to suffer there any longer than it takes for a mortal body to die in that fire). And so, the simple fact is, every single person who dies goes to "hell" (meaning the "hell" used as a figure of speech for the state of being unconscious because one is dead) whether they're a believer or not. And only those who do understand and believe what it is Paul meant when he wrote that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, will get to go to heaven, but not until after they've been resurrected and/or made immortal, because the only way for someone who is dead to go to heaven would be to put their corpse on an aircraft or space shuttle, but they wouldn't enjoy it particularly much (although this does mean that someone who has died can technically be in heaven and "hell" at the exact same time, even if they couldn't know they were in either "location").

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[492] Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. — John 11:21-24

This also means that Enoch and Elijah didn't go to live in heaven rather than dying either (at least not the same "part" of heaven that Jesus is now living in, which is presumably the Jerusalem which is above), contrary to the way Christians assume they did, since whatever happened to them can't contradict what you've already learned from this book. Genesis 5:24[493] is not an easy verse to understand, but based on everything we've covered so far, we know that Jesus is the only human living in heaven (at least in the part of heaven outside of earth's orbit where certain humans will go to live eventually), so they couldn't have, which means that Enoch had to have gone somewhere other than heaven when he "was not" and was "taken by God." The most probable explanation is that he was simply "caught away" from a dangerous situation where he would have been killed, to live out the rest of his life in safety somewhere else, similar to the way Philip was "caught away" after baptizing the eunuch,[494] which seems to line up with the fact that the book of Hebrews includes Enoch in a list of people who lived by faith[495] while also saying that everyone in the list died without having received what they were promised yet.[496] And it's recorded

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[493] and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. — Genesis 5:24

[494] And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. — Acts 8:39

[495] By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. — Hebrews 11:5

[496] These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. — Hebrews 11:13

that King Jehoram received a letter from Elijah[497] after the time that Elijah was caught up in the whirlwind to heaven,[498] so, again, based on everything we now know about who is in heaven, this means that Elijah pretty much had to have been deposited somewhere else on earth to live out the rest of his life in safety too, just like Enoch, and that he then also eventually died, just like Enoch. There's also the factor of how one has to have been quickened in order to live

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[497] And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: Behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day. — 2 Chronicles 21:12-15

[498] And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. — 2 Kings 2:1-11

permanently in heaven/outer space, and 1 Corinthians 15 gives us a specific order of when each person will be "made alive"[499] (which refers to being made immortal, as I'll prove from Scripture a couple chapters from now), and outside of Jesus, nobody has been quickened yet, so they definitely can't be immortal yet and hence can't be living in heaven where Jesus is, but you'll learn more about this aspect of salvation in that upcoming chapter.

This all means, by the way, that it's also time to rethink the term "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of the heavens" (which is simply a reference to the future kingdom coming *from* the heavens to earth, specifically to Israel), since this might actually be more literally translated as "the kingdom of/from outer space," or perhaps simply "the kingdom from above."

And this also all means that you can now be free from the fear of either you or any of your loved ones suffering in hell, because you now know that nobody is conscious while dead, and that none of the biblical "hells" are anything even close to what we've been taught they are by our religious leaders anyway.

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[499] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. — 1 Corinthians 15:22-24

Chapter 3: God is still on Plan A

As promised in the last chapter, it's time to discuss the topics of evil and sin a little more in depth. As one learns more about the theology of those of us in the body of Christ (not to be confused with the theology of those in the Christian religion who have mistakenly appropriated our title), they're often extremely surprised when they discover our theodicy, meaning what we believe when it comes to resolving what's generally referred to as "the problem of evil." When they learn that we believe God is 100% in control of absolutely everything (because the Bible says that **all** things are indeed of Him,[500] not just *some* things, and that He works **all** things after the counsel of His own will,[501] not just *some* things), and that the evil which exists in the world is included in the "absolutely everything" (meaning the "**all** things") we believe Him to be in control of, they tend to be very shocked at first.

Of course, most people will argue that God *can't* be behind the evil in the world (despite the fact that He actually takes responsibility for the existence of evil,[502] not to mention for the existence of "**all** things," as we already learned) because they believe that would mean He must be evil Himself, or at least that He can't

[500] For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Romans 11:36

[501] In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: — Ephesians 1:11

[502] I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. — Isaiah 45:7

be very good or loving. And if you look at the problem from a "forward in time" perspective (meaning, if you begin with what you assume it would say about God if He actually is behind the evil in the world, especially the evil which exists in the form of unmerited suffering, and work your argument forward from there), it's easy to understand why someone would conclude that God just can't be behind it.

However, if you instead take a look at the problem from a "backwards in time" perspective (meaning you *begin* with the fact that evil, especially evil which includes unmerited suffering, exists in the world, and then work your way backwards to figure out why that is), you'll discover that none of the other possible reasons for the existence of said evil are any better (and that many are far worse) when you really break the options down. Because the fact of the matter is, the world *does* contain unmerited suffering – huge amounts of it – which is to say that people suffer for all sorts of reasons that they can't be directly blamed for, such as babies who are born with painful diseases, or people who lose their homes to unforeseeable natural disasters, or even people who lose loved ones to disease or accidents, among the vast number of other kinds of suffering that nobody chooses to endure.

And while it can be argued that "evil" doesn't have an ontological existence in and of itself, as some like to point out, and that the form of evil we experience as suffering technically only takes place in our minds (which means that, if we didn't care about the results of these events, we wouldn't suffer, and hence evil wouldn't exist in that form), the way our brains are wired means that these catastrophic events being experienced by our minds *do* still cause us suffering, so from that perspective, evil does still exist. But beyond that factor, there's also the definition of "evil," which is really just any action (or, I suppose, inaction) which is "harmful," "calamitous," or "causes damage or destruction," and these things not only *do* happen (so from that perspective, evil definitely *does* exist as

well), but the Bible says that God Himself does many of these things which bring about destruction[503] and calamity.[504]

Even after reading all that, however, most Christians will *still* deny that "**all** things" are indeed of God. And because of this, we have to ask them the question (although, even if they didn't deny what Scripture says, it's still a good question to consider): "What are the possible reasons for the existence of evil, especially in the form of unmerited suffering, in a universe created by God?" Well, the following nine options are the only reasons I can think of that could possibly answer this question:

1. **God doesn't want this suffering to occur (meaning He doesn't actually enjoy witnessing it happen), but it all happens against His will because He's powerless to stop it.** This option could only be the reason if God isn't actually omnipotent, which basically means He wouldn't actually be Almighty God, so it's not technically a valid option at all, but for the sake of completion, I'm including it in the list anyway.
2. **God does want this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering), which works out well for Him because He would technically be powerless to stop it if He didn't enjoy watching it happen.** This is just another variation of the last option which removes God's omnipotence altogether (while also making God out to not be good and loving either), so it's really just as invalid as the last one and doesn't even deserve consideration, so we'll leave it at that.
3. **God doesn't want this suffering to occur (meaning He doesn't actually enjoy witnessing it happen), nor does He will it to occur (meaning He**

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[503] And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. — Genesis 6:17

[504] Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? — Amos 3:6

isn't actively behind it in any way), and there's no ultimate greater good that comes out of the suffering, but while He has the power to stop it, He decides to just sit back and let it occur naturally anyway. This option maintains God's omnipotence, but it indicates that He isn't very good or loving, since He could have stopped it but chose not to, even though there's no good reason for letting it happen, and He doesn't even want it to occur to begin with.

4. **God doesn't want this suffering to occur (meaning He doesn't actually enjoy witnessing it happen), nor does He will it to occur (meaning He isn't actively behind it in any way), but while it would be within His power to stop it, the suffering (which must be naturally occurring in some way) somehow does work out for the greater good of those who experience it, so He simply sits back and lets it all play out.** This seems even less likely than any of the other options so far, when you really think about it. The idea that every single instance of unmerited suffering (out of the trillions of cases or more of it occurring throughout human history – not to mention throughout the history of animals, who also did nothing to deserve the suffering they go through, and yet they *do* suffer, as anyone who has ever owned a pet can attest) could possibly somehow work out for the greater good of every being who ever experienced it without God ultimately being behind it is statistically impossible (you'd probably have a better chance of winning the lottery jackpot every single week of your life than of this somehow happening to be the case), so this option isn't even worth considering.
5. **God does want this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering), and although He doesn't will it to occur (meaning He isn't actively behind it in any way), and while it would also be within His power to stop it, because the suffering (which must be naturally occurring in some way) somehow not only does work out for the greater good of those who experience it, but also because He enjoys watching us suffer in the meantime, He sits back and lets it all play**

out. This option has the same statistical impossibility as the last one, so it's also not worth considering, but it also has the additional problem of meaning God isn't good or loving, making it doubly untenable.

6. **God does want this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering), although He doesn't will it to occur (meaning He isn't actively behind it in any way), and while there's no ultimate greater good that comes out of the naturally-occurring suffering (other than God getting what He wants), and while He could stop it at any time, He sits back and lets it happen because He enjoys it.** This option would obviously mean that God isn't very loving, so it isn't really an option either if we're trying to maintain that God *is* loving, but I'm including it for the sake of covering all of the possible reasons that suffering might exist in a universe created by God.
7. **God does want this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering), and He even wills some, if not all, of it to occur (meaning He's actively behind some, if not all, of it), and while there's no ultimate greater good that comes out of the suffering for those who are experiencing it, He makes sure that some, if not all, of it occurs because He enjoys witnessing it (I say "some, if not all, of it" because some of it might also be incidental to His actively making it happen, but He must enjoy watching that particular suffering that He didn't cause too, or else He wouldn't let it happen as well).** This option would also mean that God isn't loving, and it definitely *would* mean He's evil, so it isn't really an option at all if we're trying to maintain that God is good and loving and not evil, but, like all the other options that don't really deserve consideration so far, I'm including it for the sake of covering all of the possible reasons that suffering might exist in a universe created by God.
8. **God does want this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering), and He also does will it to occur (meaning He's actively behind it) because He knows there's ultimately a greater good for all of us that will come out of the specific suffering He causes each of us**

to experience. This is getting close to the actual reason, but it would mean that God wouldn't actually be loving, so it can't quite be the answer we're looking for.

9. **God doesn't want this suffering to occur (meaning He doesn't actually enjoy witnessing it happen), but He does will it to occur (meaning He's actively behind it), because He knows there's ultimately a greater good for all of us that will come out of the specific suffering that He causes each of us to experience.**

As far as I can tell, those are the only logical options available to us as to why unmerited suffering occurs in a universe created by God (yes, it's possible there might be some slight variations of the above that I missed, but even if so, I don't think that any of them would be at all tenable without devolving the options into absurdity, and I definitely can't think of any that make sense and are also superior to any of those options, so I'm leaving it at that), and when you look at the suffering that exists in the world beginning from this perspective, it seems to me that option 9 is the only one that actually maintains God's existence, as well as not only His omniscience, omnipotence, and sovereignty, but also His good and loving nature, because it tells us that not only is He behind it, but that He's doing it for reasons that are in all of our best interests (although it's important to point out that option 9 can only be true if it's also true that nobody will actually be punished without end, since otherwise the majority of the suffering that people experience doesn't end up working out in their best interests after all).

Of course, when considering the above, or even when trying to think of an alternative option that I might have somehow missed which you do believe is superior to any of the options in that list, it's important to keep in mind that there's little-to-no moral difference between being omniscient and omnipotent yet choosing not to stop the unmerited suffering and actively being behind said suffering in some way, so if you're going to go with an option where God could

have stopped it but chose not to, you'd better have a good reason for that option which does work out for the greater good of all those who are experiencing it.

Now, as for the question of what the greater good actually is that might explain why God did it this way, the fact of the matter is, we could simply say that we don't know, and this would be a perfectly good answer to give (because, since option 9 is the only possible option that makes any sense, we could legitimately just trust that everything *will* work out for the best, even if we don't know how or why that is right now). That said, those of us who are in the body of Christ *do* have an answer which we believe to be true, one which is often referred to by us as "the contrast principle." Basically, the conclusion which most of us have come to is that one can't truly and fully appreciate good without first experiencing evil (referring to all the various forms of evil, of course, and not just suffering, although suffering is definitely included), and likewise, that we can't fully understand and appreciate God's love without having first experienced a lack of His love, or at least the feeling that we're not experiencing it (similarly, we would argue that we can't fully understand and appreciate His grace without first experiencing sin). If this doesn't seem to make sense at first, think about how one can appreciate the warmth of being indoors in a heated building after being outside in the cold much better than they would be able to if they'd never actually experienced cold weather (or vice versa, with being able to enjoy the cold generated by air conditioning if one lives in a part of the world which is always hot, and how they wouldn't appreciate that relief from the heat if they lived in a part of the world which was always cold). So basically, while it definitely isn't fun in the short term – as we experience the suffering – by the end of the ages we'll all thank God for the suffering He put us through, because we'll all appreciate our existence at that time much more than we could have if we hadn't ever suffered (so, with that in mind, we need to remember that God isn't doing this *to* us, but that He's actually doing this *for* us, even though we might wish He'd stop already in the meantime).

Of course, in response to this, the argument is often made that God could have simply created us with the necessary knowledge of good already present in our brains at our birth, and that He didn't have to make any of us suffer at all (or have to allow any of us to suffer, if you prefer). And while I have to think that He technically *could* have created us with whatever knowledge He wanted us to have already in our brains (He is God, after all), as it turns out, He *didn't* create us with this knowledge already in our heads. And since He didn't, He must have had a good reason for not doing so, which means we have to once again work backwards from that fact and ask ourselves what that reason is. And when you do so, since unmerited suffering still exists, everything I included in the list of options still stands as well.

The fact of the matter is, God didn't seem to create us with *any* conscious knowledge in our brains at the time we're born *at all*, but seems to instead want us to have to learn things as we grow, either through study or through direct experience (or, really, through a combination of both study and experience). As for why God did it this way, there could be multiple reasons, but one possible reason is that, if we didn't actually experience it ourselves, our understanding of both good and evil would simply be academic rather than experiential, and based on the way that God *did* create us (having to learn many things through experience), the most logical conclusion seems to be that experiencing suffering will lead to a better possible outcome or outcomes (with the appreciation of good likely being at least one of these outcomes, if we're right about the contrast principle) than simply having the knowledge already in our heads at the time of our birth could have.

Now, even after reading all of the above, some will *still* assert that, if this is true, then God must be evil, regardless of the points I've made that would suggest otherwise. But in light of the fact that God *didn't* create us fully formed with the knowledge of good and evil already stored in our minds, whether or not the contrast principle *is* why God did things this way, Him willing unmerited

suffering, among other forms of evil, to exist must still be the best possible way to do things. Think about it: Since we *do* exist in a universe where we're born without any knowledge, having to learn things as we grow, if God truly is sovereign, good, and loving, then the sort of universe we currently exist in, including all its suffering (merited or otherwise), *must* result in the best possible outcome for us, meaning the best possible outcome for all of us *must come* from living in a universe where we begin knowing nothing. And since it exists, this would also have to mean that evil and suffering are unavoidable in *this particular* sort of universe. Of course, the contrast principle could still potentially be a beneficial side effect of this sort of universe as well – or could perhaps be a required principle, based on the fact that the best possible way for us to get to the best possible outcome is to live in a universe of growth and learning and processes and suffering rather than one where we come into existence fully formed with all the knowledge we need already in our brains and with no suffering – but either way, since this is the way the universe is, and since we're assuming that God indeed *is* sovereign, good, and loving, because those nine options I listed are still the only logical possible reasons for the existence of unmerited suffering (outside of the possibility of God simply not existing, of course, but I'm writing about "the problem of evil" from within a theistic framework here), I would argue that we've now determined this assumption of theirs that God must be evil if He's actually behind this *has* to be incorrect (and, in fact, somewhat blasphemous) and that it's time for them to discard that idea. Because when we look at it from the "backwards in time" perspective, they're still stuck with those nine options and *only* those nine options, and so they'll have to decide which of them they want to believe.

And this is why those of us in the body of Christ are able to understand that God can cause (or create) evil without being evil, as long as the evil exists for good reasons. As I already mentioned, "evil" really just means "calamity" or "destruction" (or "that which causes suffering," as I've been using the term in this portion of the book) anyway, and we already know that evil can be done to

serve a greater purpose. And the potential "contrast principle" isn't the only good purpose it can be done for. As another such example (one which might be more applicable to humans right now), one could amputate a gangrenous limb – causing much suffering, unmerited suffering even, if the patient didn't do anything to cause the infection, which is the exact form of evil we've just been discussing – in order to keep it from spreading, ultimately saving the life of the patient. This is yet another proof that evil *can* be done to bring about a good outcome, and that doing or causing evil definitely doesn't mean that the one *doing* evil necessarily *is* evil, or even that evil acts are always immoral (and for those who would insist that this action isn't evil because it saves the patient's life, it still involves causing damage to a part of the patient's body, and causing suffering to the patient, so it still falls under the definition of "evil"). Now, some people, hearing this example, have claimed that this idea makes God out to be abusive, insisting this would mean that God was thinking, "Healing is so inherently great and desirable that I will get everyone in the world sick just so that I can eventually heal them," to which I would first respond by saying that bringing God down to a human level there – similar to the way Job did – isn't necessarily the wisest way to go, but also that, based on the fact that we *do* go through unmerited suffering, in light of the fact that the nine options I listed still remain the only options, it might be time for them to accept that perhaps it could be true that it *is* better for us to have experienced both the "sickness" and the "healing" than to not have experienced them, and that this isn't actually abusive at all, since it ultimately works out in our best interest; and, in fact, that it would really be less loving of God to *not* have done so.

And with all that in mind, I maintain that this solution to the problem of evil is really the only possible option, at least if you don't want to go with atheism as the reason behind the unmerited suffering that we all experience at one point or another in our lives (which is technically a tenth option, and you're free to believe that if you prefer, but that option gives us far less hope than option 9 does – in fact it offers no real hope that our suffering has any meaning at all –

so I'm sticking with option number 9 because I prefer an option that provides us all a promise of a better future, and also makes the unmerited suffering we all go through actually have meaning). However, if you think you *can* come up with another option that you believe I missed, one which actually *does* work as a better theodicy than option 9, please do let me know.

That said, it isn't just evil that God is responsible for. If Scripture is to be believed, He's ultimately responsible for "**all** things" (at least from an absolute perspective), which would also have to include sin too (unless sin somehow doesn't fall under the category of "**all** things"). This idea can seem confusing to most people when they first hear it, because it would seem logical that God doesn't want us to sin, and in fact He seems to tell people not to do so in Scripture. Well, the truth is, He *doesn't* want us to sin, and He does indeed tell people not to. But at the same time, He still wills us to sin. This might sound like a contradiction at first, but it's really not. Just as with the nine options I provided for solving "the problem of evil," it comes down to understanding the difference between God *wanting* something to happen (in the sense of enjoying something that might occur) and *willing* something to happen (in the sense of allowing, or even causing, something He doesn't necessarily enjoy, but knows needs to happen, to take place).

As an example, someone might not *want* to go to work on a given day, because they might prefer to lie in bed and watch TV, but they can still *will* themselves to go to work if they need to earn money to pay their bills. Simply put, someone (even God) can will themselves to do something they take no pleasure in and would prefer not to do if they recognize that the end result of doing that thing will be better than not having done it, as we just discussed. Some of you are now thinking, that's all well and good, as far as what God "wants" versus what He "wills" goes, but what about His commandments? Isn't it His will that humans obey them, meaning that we don't sin? Well, this comes down to not recognizing another difference, which is the difference between His absolute

will and His relative will (or, to put it another way, the difference between His preceptive will[505] and His providential will[506]), meaning the difference between His public commandments (or precepts[507]) and His hidden intentions (or plans). Not recognizing the difference between these two different types of "wills" leads Christians to believe that God never intended for people (beginning with Adam) to disobey Him in the first place, when the truth is that He secretly intended for people to rebel against His commandments all along. A great example of this is His commandment against murder.[508] God made murder a sin, yet He had the murder of Christ planned[509] from the foundation of the world,[510] knowing full well when He gave the commandment against murder that without it there would be no salvation for anyone (and I'm sure it should go without saying that God didn't actually enjoy seeing His Son tortured and killed, but He still *willed* it to happen because He knew it *had* to happen in order to accomplish His purposes[511] – and before anyone brings up Isaiah 53:10,[512] that's obviously a very figurative verse referring to God considering

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[505] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. — Matthew 7:21

[506] In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: — Ephesians 1:11

[507] *The Sovereignty of God* by Aaron Welch: https://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2015/09/the-sovereignty-of-god.html

[508] Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13

[509] Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: — Acts 2:23

[510] And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. — Revelation 13:8

[511] Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. — Luke 22:42

[512] Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. — Isaiah 53:10

Jesus' suffering and death to be a satisfactory ransom for sin,[513] since there's no way God would literally take joy in watching His Son be tortured for no reason other than the sake of taking pleasure in watching it happen, as though He's some sort of sadist, because that definitely *would* make Him evil if that was the case).

A less obvious, yet no less helpful, example (and one which explains how it all began in the first place) would be His commandment to Adam and Eve to avoid eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we consider the facts – that while He told them not to eat of it,[514] He all the while placed the tree right in the centre of the garden with nothing to make it difficult to get at (when He didn't have to place it in the garden, or even anywhere on the planet, at all if He really didn't want anyone to sin), made it look like good food and pleasant to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise,[515] and even placed the serpent right there to tempt them (since nobody is anywhere that God didn't specifically place them; and remember, being both omniscient and omnipotent and then allowing either something to happen or someone to be in a specific location is no different, morally speaking, than directly causing it or placing them there – although the story of Micaiah tells us that God *does* send spiritual

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[513] He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. — Isaiah 53:11

[514] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. — Genesis 2:16-17

[515] And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. — Genesis 3:6

beings to lead people astray in order to complete His purposes anyway[516]), not to mention the fact that, without eating it, humanity would not only never understand evil but would never truly understand the contrasting goodness

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[516] And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah. And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand. And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord? And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee. But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. — 1 Kings 22:1-37

either[517] (it wasn't called just "the tree of the knowledge of evil," it was called "the tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil") – it becomes obvious that God actually intended for them to disobey Him so that death and sin could enter the world (and, again, had already intended to have His Son killed prior to this, which would be a strange plan if He didn't also intend for sin and death to exist; God doesn't make contingency plans – each plan He makes is something that He fully intends to take place and that will indeed happen, so the death of His Son wasn't just something He had in mind to do *if* humanity happened to sin, but was instead a plan He fully intended to implement long *before* Adam ever sinned, and in fact the reason Adam sinned was so that humanity would be mortal in order that God could implement His plan).

And, of course, the main reason He even gave Israel the Mosaic law in the first place[518] was so that they would sin all the more.[519] It might seem hard to believe, and some even try to deny it by making the assertion – one which is not only found nowhere in Scripture but which is actually contradicted by it – that "God is not the author of sin," but the Bible actually tells us that God has not only

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[517] For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. — Genesis 3:5

[518] For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. — Romans 7:5-11

[519] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

purposely locked up His human creation in unbelief,[520] but that He has also purposely locked us up in sin,[521] in vanity, and in corruption[522] (meaning in decay, humiliation, and death), all in order that He can later set us all free (and He can't free us if we aren't first locked up).

This means that, while sin is still sinful, it's not something that surprised God, or even something that He didn't actually secretly intend to come into existence in the first place (again, for the purpose of revealing goodness and grace – since, again, without evil we could never truly appreciate goodness, and without sin we could never truly understand God's grace; contrast is often necessary to fully comprehend things, as we've already learned, and knowing this helps us come to understand that the existence of sin was actually necessary in order for God to complete His purposes).

Of course, some Christians will quickly quote what James wrote, saying, *"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."*[523] And it is true, God doesn't directly tempt anyone to sin. But we're talking about what God does from an absolute perspective in this chapter, in order to make sure that we're not only tempted to sin but that we do indeed sometimes give in to that temptation, and not

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[520] For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. — Romans 11:32

[521] But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. — Galatians 3:22

[522] For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. — Romans 8:20-21

[523] Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. — James 1:13-14

about the temptation itself (which happens only from a relative perspective). And if you believe that God wouldn't ever do something from an absolute perspective to cause someone to be tempted, you might need to read Matthew 4:1 a little more carefully.[524]

I should probably add, knowing the meaning of the word "sin" might help make what I'm saying seem a little less blasphemous to those reading this who are horrified by the idea of the necessity of the existence of sin. You see, the Hebrew verb חָטָא/"khaw-taw'," along with its Greek translation of ἁμαρτάνω/"ham-ar-tan'-o," which we often translate as "sin" in English (with the noun versions being חַטָּאָת/"khat-taw-aw'" and ἁμαρτία/"ham-ar-tee'-ah," respectively), is a word that simply means "to miss the mark" – for example, to not hit the bullseye on a target with an arrow, or to miss a target with a stone thrown from a sling – as the book of Judges made clear when it mentioned seven-hundred lefthanded men who "could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss,"[525] with the word "miss" in that verse being the same Hebrew word חָטָא that is translated as "sin" in other passages. So yes, Adam missed the mark (sinned) by failing to avoid eating the forbidden fruit, but God hit the bullseye perfectly when Adam missed the mark because that was His plan for Adam from the beginning, which means that even though God is responsible for sin from an absolute perspective, He didn't sin by ultimately being behind it all because He didn't miss the mark Himself at all, since sin and death entering the world through Adam's sin was His intended "mark" all along (and for those who insist that God would never give anyone a rule that He actually wanted them to break, if His plan *was* for Adam to sin, He *had* to make a rule for Adam to break or else Adam couldn't have fulfilled His intention that sin enter the world, although

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[524] Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. — Matthew 4:1

[525] Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss. — Judges 20:16

Romans 5:20 also tells us that God absolutely would do this anyway). This also means that, if Adam *hadn't* sinned, *God* would then have been the sinner instead, because it would mean He had failed to accomplish His intended goal of sin entering the world – and for those who want to insist that God's intended goal was a world where humanity never sinned, that would also make God a sinner because Adam *did* sin, which means that God would have also missed the mark if that sin-free world was actually His intended mark. And if His plan was simply to let Adam do whatever he wanted and to simply sit back and watch what happens, as some seem to believe, having no particular intended goal for the world at all, and the death of Christ simply being His contingency plan to use if Adam did happen to sin, that would still make God culpable for both the existence of sin and evil (since the nine options we just went over would be just as applicable here, considering the fact that God is omniscient and would have known even before He created the world that it would definitely happen, but also considering the fact that an omniscient, omnipotent being who doesn't stop evil from coming into existence – which God would have known would be the end result of sin coming into existence – is just as morally responsible as said being would be if they had directly caused it anyway), but His sovereignty would then also be a lie, as would be all the passages of Scripture that tell us He's completely in control and that **all** is of Him.

And Scripture *does* tell us that He's completely in control. In fact, the complete sovereignty of God and His purposes for creation from before it all began is one of the most important factors in Scripture, and is taught throughout the Bible. And while most Christians would claim to believe in His sovereignty, not very many actually do, because very few of them actually believe He has a good reason for causing absolutely everything that has happened in creation, and that He has had very specific plans for the ages (and for every one of the people living in each age) from the very beginning. Instead of knowing (and glorifying)

God as God,[526] which would involve them understanding that He *is* completely in control, placing everything where He intends it to be and subjecting **all** to His will, nearly all Christians believe that God really hoped Adam wouldn't actually sin (even though He would have known before creating Adam that he *would* sin, making this idea completely nonsensical and hence not worth considering), but that God is now on Plan B because Adam did end up sinning. They just don't believe Paul when he wrote in Ephesians 1:11 that God works **all** things after the counsel of His own will, not just *some* things. But the fact is that He really does, which means that everything about creation – be it good and evil, righteousness and sin, pleasure and suffering, faith and unbelief, and even the crucifixion[527] and the devil[528] (who was created the way he is today, contrary to popular opinion, since he's been a murderer,[529] and, to put it simply, a sinner, at least in his heart, from his very beginning,[530] for the purpose of getting Adam to sin and for bringing evil into the world in general[531]) – was all intended by God from before the beginning of creation. And this isn't just about God being able to see the future and then accounting for it in His plans either, because while God is

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[526] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. — Romans 1:21

[527] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. — 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

[528] By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. — Job 26:13

[529] Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. — John 8:44

[530] He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. — 1 John 3:8

[531] Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. — Isaiah 54:16

indeed able to see the future, He also *declares* what is going to be done from the beginning, and what He intends to be done *will* be done.[532] Which means that if God's intended "mark" truly was a world without any evil or sin, no evil or sin could have possibly ever occurred without God becoming a sinner Himself. To put it simply, everything that *has* happened and *will* happen occurs exactly as God planned it, because God is still on Plan A.

Of course, the idea that God planned *everything* makes many people extremely uncomfortable for another reason, which is that they really dislike the idea of predestination in general, since they just don't like the idea that we humans aren't ultimately responsible for our own actions. And so, in order to try to deny the biblical concept of predestination, they like to say things along the lines of, "God doesn't want robots," and claim that God gave us something called "free will." These people don't understand that, aside from being entirely unscriptural, "free will" is a complete impossibility from a purely logical and scientific perspective as well, and that it can't actually exist in reality at all.

You see, while everyone agrees that we can make voluntary choices, most people who teach the importance of "free will" also believe that the choices we make can't be predetermined ahead of time in any way. In fact, most people simply assume that the existence of our ability to make choices proves that we must have "free will," because they conflate that ability to make choices with "free will," but this isn't what the term "free will" means at all. The reason so many people make this mistake is because relatively few people have ever taken the time to try to figure out what the term *actually* means (not to mention why we make the choices we do). But those who have taken the time to determine the meaning of the term have concluded that it *has* to mean "a choice which is independent of any cause" rather than simply "a choice." This is because they realize A) that a choice is simply the act of selecting between two or more

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[532] Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: — Isaiah 46:10

existing options (regardless of whether the selection that's made was predetermined or not), which means that the ability to make choices simply can't be the definition of "free will" in and of itself, and B) that if a choice one makes has *any* cause at all, it means the choice was predetermined by that cause, since that's what it means to be subject to causality – and hence determinism – meaning the law of cause and effect. And so, because they don't like the concepts of either predestination *or* natural determinism, they insist (without any actual proof) that we *must* have the ability to make choices which are independent of any cause (and they give this ability the label of "free will"). This assertion of theirs ignores reality entirely, however, because even if our choices weren't predestined by influences outside the sphere of the physical universe (such as by God Himself[533]), every choice we make would then *still* have to be predetermined by our nurture and/or nature (meaning our life experiences and/or genetics). You see, while it might even *feel* to some people like our choices are independent of any cause, if a choice truly was (or even could be) uncaused, it would mean the choice one made was actually completely random (which I doubt any Christian would think is better than being predetermined). The bottom line is that, because an event (even an event such as making a selection between two or more available options) has to either have a cause or not have a cause, there's no way for any event (and hence no way for any choice we make) to be anything other than caused or uncaused (meaning anything other than predetermined or random), or at least nobody has ever been able to provide a third option that works within the limits of reality and logic (although, if you disagree, please let me know what that third option is), which is why "free will" is *actually* an entirely meaningless term altogether, in that it's a word used to refer to something that can't actually even exist, unless perhaps one is simply using it as a synonym for "random chance" (although I personally don't even believe in the existence of true "randomness," because I believe that even when it comes to our lack of ability to predict

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[533] A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps. — Proverbs 16:9

certain things when it comes to quantum mechanics – such as how long it will take for a single unstable atom placed in a controlled environment to decay, for example, which is something we can't predict under those circumstances, but can instead only determine the probability of it occurring within a given time – that God is ultimately still behind even those seemingly random events).

And yes, I am aware that the term *"freewill offering"* is used in many Bible translations, including the KJV,[534] but this *"freewill offering"* isn't the same thing as the so-called "free will" choices we've been discussing here. "Free will" (with a space between the two words), as we've already discussed, refers to a choice supposedly being made without being subject to causality, while the Hebrew term נְדָבָה/"ned-aw-baw'" that *"freewill offering"* is translated from in the Bible simply refers to a voluntary offering which wasn't required by God (as opposed to the types of offerings which *were* required, or commanded to be given, by God), as we can see from the fact that the same word is also translated as *"voluntary offering,"*[535] among other things,[536] in various other parts of the KJV. Now, we've already determined that any choice one voluntarily makes can only be caused or uncaused (meaning either predetermined or random), which means that the term "freewill" in the Bible simply *can't* have any connection to a supposed "free will" choice (if such a thing could even exist in the first place) unless you believe the performing of the *required* sacrifices and offerings

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[534] Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the Lord for a burnt offering; — Leviticus 22:18

[535] But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten: — Leviticus 7:16

[536] The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses. — Exodus 35:29

actually *was* predestined by God to be performed by those who chose to do so, meaning they had no ability to choose of their own supposed "free will" to *not* perform *those* particular sacrifices and offerings. Basically, it seems that the translators of the KJV just wanted a synonym for "voluntary" so as to not keep using the same word over and over again, and landed on "freewill," but the term "freewill" should never be conflated with the nonexistent "free will."

And so, even though these facts prove that the idea of "free will" is not only an unbiblical term (and again, that it should not be confused with what the KJV refers to as "freewill," which is something else altogether), but that the idea really makes no logical sense to begin with, some people *still* try to insist that a predetermined choice can't actually be a real choice at all, based on the fact that it was predetermined. But as I already mentioned, and as everyone I've ever discussed this topic with in the past agreed is the case at the time I brought it up, "making a choice" can indeed be simply defined as the act of selecting between two or more existing options, and this completely refutes the idea that a predetermined choice can't be an actual choice. I mean, let's break it down logically. If you were walking down a path and came to a fork in the road in front of you, forcing you to select one of two options – in the sense that you have to decide which of those two paths to walk down if you want to continue moving forward – and you selected one of the two paths and walked down it (regardless of which one you selected), based on the definition of "making a choice" that we just covered (which was "selecting between two or more existing options"), you'd have to agree that an option was indeed selected because you're now walking down one of the two paths, and hence a choice was indeed made. And so, if I could then somehow convince you that the option you selected *was* predetermined in some manner ahead of time (perhaps by someone else using some form of mind control to cause you to choose a specific path), you'd have to admit that an option was still selected (based on the fact that you're now partway down the selected path), which means that, by definition, a choice was still made regardless of *why* it was made. So even

without "free will," and *with* predestination (or determinism), choices are still choices. Simply put, choice and determinism (or choice and predestination) are not mutually exclusive, and hence the definition of "free will" *can't* simply be "the ability to make a choice." (Some people also go even further by insisting that love would be impossible without "free will," but that's just as ridiculous a claim, since the feeling we call "love" would still be something we felt whether or not we were predetermined to experience that feeling, because we still feel it regardless of the cause; and for those who understand that "love" can also be an action or a choice, whatever loving actions one chooses to perform for those we perform them for would still have taken place regardless of the cause of said action as well – and remember, we've already determined that the ability to make a choice is *not* the definition of "free will," and this would apply to loving choices as well – so yes, love exists even though "free will" doesn't.)

When Christians talk about "free will," however, what they're almost always really getting at is that they believe the fault for not choosing to believe and/or do the same things as them when it comes to matters of salvation lies entirely with the one making the choice, and that the choice couldn't possibly have been predetermined in any way whatsoever (and this goes for their views on why one sins in the first place as well, of course). There are other reasons too (such as self-righteousness and pride), but one of the big reasons Christians want to insist that "free will" exists is to make sure that God doesn't receive any of the blame for a person's refusal to choose to "get saved," and to make sure it's clear that the sinner in question is entirely to blame for whatever negative consequences this might result in (to put it simply, it's largely because they want to make sure that God is absolved of any responsibility for someone who doesn't choose to "get saved" ending up suffering without end in the unscriptural version of the lake of fire they tend to believe in; although, as you'll discover in the next chapter, our salvation ultimately isn't even based on any choices we make at all – and honestly, we should be extremely thankful for that

fact, based on just how bad the decision-making ability of most humans really is – but you'll have to wait for the next chapter to learn why I said that).

Since everything has to have a cause, however (because otherwise the thing happening would be uncaused, or random), the questions that really matter when discussing the topic of who deserves the credit or blame for a particular choice are:

1) What is the cause of the choices that people make?

2) Taking into account all the variables that were present at the precise moment a choice was made, could the person making that choice have actually made a choice other than the one they did; and, if so, how, as well as *why* would they have chosen differently if they could have?

In discussions with Christians on this topic, when asked those very questions, they'll often deflect by saying things along the lines of, "Nothing causes the choice except for the chooser." Of course, even if this tautological attempt at a non-answer was in any way meaningful, or was even demonstrably true in and of itself (which it certainly isn't; it's really nothing more than a confused and nonsensical assumption with no foundation, but one which they're forced to believe – pun intended – in order to continue holding on to the idea of "free will"), it tells us absolutely nothing about what really matters, which is *why* a particular choice is made, and it also ignores the second question altogether (on purpose, I'm fairly certain, even if just on a subconscious level, likely in order to avoid thinking about the topic from this perspective so that they couldn't possibly end up discovering that they might actually be wrong about it).

But even if we were to ignore all the passages in Scripture that tell us God is ultimately responsible for everything, and put the credit and blame for choices entirely on "the chooser" instead, we'd then have to ask, "What is a chooser?"

Well, a "chooser" is simply a person whose brain selects between available options, and one's brain is made up of (among other things) neural connections which are wired differently in each person by a combination of their life experiences and their genetics (their nurture and nature, in other words). The different layouts of the neural networks in each of our brains results in different choices made by each of us (because it's the specific neural network in each of our brains that decides which choices we each make), and none of us gets to choose the way our brains are wired, because we didn't get to choose the life experiences and genetics that caused our brains to be wired the way they are at the time it selects an option or options. This means that at the end of the day, if God didn't interfere, or isn't actually the one who decided what our life experiences and our genetics would be in the first place, it would ultimately simply be our life experiences and our genetics that determine what choices we make, which means that our choices would all be predetermined by our nurture and nature, and that we would still have no "free will" anyway. And so the answer to the question of whether, in a hypothetical parallel universe – with every particle and wave being in the *exact* same state and location in that universe as they existed in when a specific choice was made in our universe, including the particles that the atoms which make up the wiring of the brain of the person making the choice consist of – they could have chosen something different has to be, "No, they couldn't have." But if you believe they could have, I'd like to know not only *how* they possibly could have, but also *why* they would have (meaning, what would be different in this hypothetical parallel universe, which was 100% identical to ours in every way up until the point they selected the option they did, that would result in them selecting a different option from the one they did in our universe).

Although there's no scriptural or logical reason to do so, at this point some will try to avoid these facts by claiming that our mind isn't actually generated by our brain, but instead somehow exists on a deeper, "spiritual" level (some will also get into pseudo-scientific talk about quantum realities as well, although I can

guarantee you that few to none of them have any idea how quantum mechanics actually works, and that they've almost certainly only brought this concept up based on claims they've heard other people make). The problem is, aside from the fact that this is clearly both unscientific and unscriptural (as we already learned in the last chapter, human consciousness, or our "soul," is generated by an unconscious spirit powering a biological brain, and can't exist separately from a living human body), even if this idea somehow were true, it couldn't actually help support their ideas so much as simply push the problem back a level. You see, a supposedly "spiritual mind," whatever that's supposed to actually be, would still have to be "made" out of something (out of whatever it is that spirit, or whatever it is they're claiming a mind comes from, consists of) and would still have to make choices based on what *its* "neurological structure," so to speak, would then be made up of, and so the questions of why a particular option was selected over another, and whether another option could have actually been selected instead (and why it wasn't), are still the relevant questions that need to be answered, even if this could somehow be the case. Basically, to simply stop at "the chooser" without finding out what "the chooser" consists of and why "the chooser" selects the particular options they do is essentially to say that a specific "chooser" is simply either naturally good or naturally bad (or perhaps naturally intelligent and/or wise, or naturally unintelligent and/or foolish).

Some Christians (especially when discussing the topic of "free will" when it comes to salvation) have also said things like, "It isn't about the ability to choose something else, but about the inner motives of the heart. Some people choose to not get saved because they are lovers of themselves and not of God. They don't want to let go of their way of life, and so they don't want to believe and be saved. It's a choice that reflects the inner motives of the person." This assertion is actually sort of close to the truth because, yes, most people *do* prefer to love themselves over God. However, aside from the fact that our salvation (at least the type of salvation Paul taught about) has nothing to do with our actions or

our way or life in the first place, this assertion doesn't help their arguments anyway, because all it does is tell us the nature of "the chooser" while ignoring the question of *why* the nature of "the chooser" is what it is, meaning why "the chooser's" biological brain – or even their supposed "spiritual mind," if you prefer to believe in such things – is "wired" the way it is at the time an option is selected. And since that "wiring" is ultimately responsible for any choices "the chooser" makes (which it has to be, unless you can provide another cause that works within the realm of reality), the ultimate blame (again, presuming God doesn't interfere) would then be on that particular selfish and/or evil nature (meaning the evil "wiring" of their brain, be it a "spiritual" or physical brain, or even a combination of both) that they weren't even responsible for having in the first place. And if it really does come down to just that nature, it means they still couldn't have ever made any other choices than the ones they did since that would go against their nature, which means any choice was ultimately predetermined by that preexisting selfish and/or evil nature which they had no say in being given to them, because said nature (meaning said evil "wiring" of their brain which resulted in said choice) was generated by their life experiences and genetics. So really, this argument actually helps prove that "free will" would be impossible even if God *wasn't* predetermining everything.

On a somewhat related note, I've also heard some Christians suggest that, while God doesn't predetermine everything Himself by manipulating every particle in existence in order to control every detail of the universe that way (including the particles that the brains which make our decisions ultimately consist of), He still gets all of His will fulfilled because He's smart enough to be able to manipulate events within the universe to ensure people do His will. How He'd do this without controlling the very particles that make up the physical universe, I'm not sure (perhaps He only manipulates certain particles, to make sure certain things happen, but stops short of controlling the particles that ultimately make up the human brain), but even if He isn't directly controlling the particles that ultimately make up the human brain, if He's controlling enough details in the

rest of the universe to ensure His will is done, He'd still technically be manipulating the brain, even if only from the outside, and if His will ends up being done (as the people who suggest this idea believe happens), then He's still making sure that the brain of the person making the choice does end up making the choice He wants them to make (since otherwise His will wouldn't end up getting fulfilled). And so the end result of this idea is *still* predestination by God, because regardless of how the action that God wants completed ends up happening (whether it be via direct control of the brain or via manipulation based on events happening externally to the brain), the action would still end up happening based on God's control, and hence the action was still predetermined by God.

I've also heard some Christians – when that first question about the cause of the choices people make is asked in regards to why some people don't choose to get saved – simply reply saying, "It's because they would not," thinking that mangling Jesus' statement in Matthew 23:37[537] somehow answers this question. They don't seem to realize that they're giving an answer to an entirely *different* question there, however, while ignoring the actual question altogether. "They would not" is an answer to the question, "Would they or would they not choose to get saved?", but it doesn't answer the question, "*Why* would they not choose to get saved?" We already know that "they would not," since we already know they haven't (which is why we asked the question in the first place), but we still want to know *why* they would not, and to simply say, "It's because they would not," is a circular answer which doesn't answer the *actual* question at all. Of course, logic and linguistics aren't a particular strength of the kind of people who give this sort of answer, so some of them might not even realize just how much of a non-answer this is, but I suspect most of them are aware that they're simply evading the question because they want to avoid the actual answer.

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[537] O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! — Matthew 23:37

This all means that there are two options and only two options, which are that either A) our choices are predetermined – by one's nurture and/or nature, and, perhaps, by outside influences such as God – or B) our choices are random. As I already said, nobody has ever been able to provide me with a third option, and until they do, those remain the only two options available for us to work with (although, as I said, I don't even believe that the second option is actually possible either, but because I personally can't scientifically prove that God is the hidden variable behind quantum events, and also because, even if *true* randomness *doesn't* exist, quantum mechanics still provides us with events which are *effectively* random due to being unable to predict them precisely, so I included it anyway), which means that even though we *do* all have a will, our wills can't be said to be free (particularly before we're saved – can a slave to sin[538] be said to be free?), and so it's time to recognize that "free will" is not only a completely illogical and unscientific concept, but that it's entirely unscriptural as well, which means that it's time to throw the idea away and accept that God really *is* fully in control. And don't worry, this doesn't mean we're robots. Because, considering the fact that the Bible refers to us as merely clay in God's hands,[539] well, calling us robots would actually be giving us too much credit.

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[538] For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. — Romans 6:20

[539] Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? — Romans 9:19-21

Chapter 4: In Christ shall all be made alive

While we now know from what we learned in chapter 2 that no humans are going to suffer consciously in any of the biblical "hells" as a form of judgement (at least not for any longer than it takes to die a second time in the lake of fire, presuming one doesn't die before being cast into that particular "hell"), even though none of the passages we looked at in that chapter prove that anyone will remain dead in the lake of fire without end, none of them prove that the people who do end up there will ever be resurrected from it either, much less that they'll then experience the salvation Paul primarily wrote about – meaning being quickened (aka being made immortal) and sinless – which brings up the question of why I've hinted that this will be the case more than once already in previous chapters. Well, the answer to that question is found all throughout Paul's epistles (and, I should add for those who already understand that this will indeed be the case, *only* in Paul's epistles), where he taught that everyone will indeed eventually experience that particular form of salvation. Remember, as we learned in the first chapter of this book, one of the biggest causes of misinterpretations of Scripture regarding salvation is a lack of understanding of the fact that there are different types of salvation referred to in Scripture, and this doesn't only apply to the difference between the types of salvation connected with the Gospel of the Circumcision vs Paul's Gospel, but it also applies to the fact that there are different types, or perhaps we could say levels, of salvation *within Paul's Gospel itself*. As you'll learn while reading this chapter, there *have* to be two types of salvation within Paul's Gospel, because he both taught that everyone *will* be saved and also that everyone *won't* be saved when discussing his Gospel, which

means that there *has* to be a general salvation which everyone experiences as well as a special level of salvation connected with his Gospel which only a relative few will experience, in order for Scripture to not contradict itself (and it's very important that you pay close attention to the wording of a specific verse to determine which of those types of salvation Paul is referring to in it, or else you *will* walk away extremely confused). Of course, I'm sure you're wondering what those passages are, so I'm going to go over a number of them now, beginning with Paul's Gospel itself, which teaches us this (and that's really all the proof one should need). In fact, not only does the *"Christ died for our sins"* element of his Gospel teach this, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 also tells us that someone who believes in never-ending punishment can't actually be a member of the body of Christ, because they don't believe that sin has been dealt with, once and for all, through Christ's death for our sins (even if perhaps only proleptically at present, meaning the penalty for sin is now guaranteed to be eliminated in the future for anyone for whose sins Christ died), and hence hasn't truly believed Paul's Gospel (if anyone believes that a person can be punished without end because of their sins, they haven't understood what it means that *"Christ died for our sins,"* and you can't truly believe something if you don't actually understand its meaning). On top of that, though, it also means that someone who thinks a person can only be saved by choosing to believe (and/or choosing to do) something specific isn't in the body of Christ either, because it isn't our belief (or any of our actions) that ultimately saves us, but rather it's simply Christ's death for our sins, along with His subsequent burial and resurrection on the third day, that saves us (just in case it isn't obvious, I'm referring specifically to the general sort of salvation which applies to everyone when I discuss verses 3 and 4 of 1 Corinthians 15, and not to the special "eternal life" type of salvation referred to in verses 1 and 2, which only a relative few – those who actually do understand what Paul's Gospel means and truly believe it – will get to enjoy; when it comes to this passage, it's important to keep in mind that *both* types of salvation are being discussed in those four verses). To insist that one has to choose to believe something specific in order to

experience the general salvation which results from what he said happened in verses 3 and 4 is putting the cart before the horse, since faith, or belief, in what Christ accomplished is the cart bringing us into the special "eternal life" form of salvation written about in verses 1 and 2 (known as membership in the body of Christ, which involves getting quickened earlier than everyone else, among other special rewards and "inheritances," or "allotments" – and which, again, is a form of salvation that not everyone will experience), while the general salvation of all humanity because of Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day, is the horse.

I should say, while "the salvation of all humanity" *isn't*, strictly speaking, Paul's Gospel *itself* – since Paul's Gospel is technically just those combined elements that he said he taught the Corinthians (Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection on the third day) – because the salvation of all humanity is *the end result* of Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection on the third day, **it means that the salvation of all humanity *because of what Christ accomplished* is this Gospel's main point**. And so, while there are other details about his Gospel which also need to be understood in order to be considered a member of the body of Christ (such as what it means that "**He** was buried," as we already discussed in a previous chapter), it *can* legitimately be said that "the salvation of all humanity *because* of what Christ accomplished" is *essentially* Paul's Gospel, even if it's not *technically* Paul's Gospel (again, of course, referring to the general salvation that everyone eventually experiences, meaning being made immortal and sinless, and not the special "eternal life" sort of salvation which only the body of Christ will get to enjoy in heaven, or even the other "eternal life" sort of salvation, which the Israel of God will enjoy in the kingdom of heaven for 1,000 years).

Despite all this, it's been stated by many people that 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 was talking only about those in the Corinthian church who believed Paul's Gospel (or at least only about people who believed Paul's Gospel in general), and that it

didn't include the rest of humanity anywhere in its words, and, in fact, that the "for our sins" part of this Gospel was *only* referring to the sins of those specific Corinthians who believed that the words in Paul's Gospel are true (or at least only referring to the sins of those who believe his Gospel in general). And while it is true that this part of the chapter *was* about what the Corinthian believers specifically believed, what they specifically believed wouldn't actually make any sense if "our sins" wasn't referring to the sins of all humanity.

I mean, aside from the fact that he *didn't* tell them something along the lines of, "Christ *can* have died for the sins of you Corinthians specifically, but only if you happen to believe that He died for your sins, making it so that He did die for your sins, even though He didn't actually die for your sins at all if you don't believe He did" (which would have to be the case if this passage was only about the sins of the Corinthian believers rather than the sins of all humanity), why would he have called this the good news (Gospel) he brought to them if it wasn't already news which is good for his audience at the time he spoke it to them in person, before they even believed it? (This is why it's *called* good news/a Gospel to begin with: because it's good news whether someone believes it or not, or even hears it or not – it couldn't be called good news if it's something that has to be believed in order to avoid a never-ending punishment, especially never-ending torture, since it could then only be called potential good news, or Paul's Potential Gospel.) The statement that "Christ died for our sins" would have to already be good news to anyone Paul told this fact to *before* he even spoke the words to them if he wanted to be able to call it a Gospel in the first place, and not just news which *can* be good, but only if they happened to hear it and then also believe it's true, somehow turning it into good news for them (although not really particularly good news, since, statistically speaking, they were still pretty much guaranteed to lose most of their loved ones to never-ending punishment in the end, if modern Christians are correct).

I should also say, this is where the Calvinists are at least partly correct (or at least those Calvinists who don't say unscriptural and illogical things such as, "Christ's death for our sins was *sufficient* to save all, but *efficient* to save only the elect," because if something must be added to His sacrifice in order for someone to be saved – even something as simple as having to choose to believe the right thing – then His death for our sins was, by definition, *INsufficient* on its own to save anyone). The consistent Calvinists at least understand that, if we can't do anything at all to save ourselves, it can only be Christ's death for our sins (along with His subsequent burial and resurrection) that saves us, which means that anyone whose sins Christ died for *has* to be considered to be saved from at least some perspective (referring to their general salvation from a proleptic perspective, and not to the special "eternal life" type of salvation, of course), because otherwise His death for our sins accomplished absolutely *nothing* for *anyone* prior to someone hearing about His death for our sins and then choosing to believe that His death for our sins accomplished something for them too, thus making them their own (at least partial) saviours by turning Christ's *ineffectual* action (which, by definition, is what His death for our sins would be if it didn't have any effect on them on its own) into an action which – only *after* our contribution (such as the act of choosing to believe the right thing) – actually had an effect on them after all.

Where these Calvinists go wrong is in forgetting that the words Paul specifically said he spoke to the Corinthians when he first evangelized to them in person were *not* "Christ died for **your** sins" (or even "Christ died for the sins of the elect," which is what most Calvinists basically believe he meant). Instead, he wrote that the words of good news he told them in person were: "Christ died for **our** sins." If he only meant that Christ died for the sins of the Corinthians and himself specifically, it would mean He didn't also die for the sins of anyone else, including the believers in Rome or Galatia or anywhere else for that matter (and that He didn't die for your sins either). But let's say that he just meant "the sins of the elect," or even "the sins of believers in general" (to make this point

clear to those who aren't Calvinists as well), when he said "our sins." Well, since it's not like believing that Christ died for our sins could then make it a fact that he died for their sins specifically, but only after believing it (since He only died once), this means He had to have at least died for the sins of anyone in Corinth hearing this proclamation of good news *before* Paul spoke those words to any of them. And so, unless every single Corinthian Paul spoke to believed his words, if Christ's death for our sins (along with His burial and resurrection, of course) is the only thing that saves us (which it is, since anything we had to add to that in order to be saved would mean we helped save ourselves), it would mean that Paul was lying to anyone who *didn't* believe that Christ died for our sins when he spoke those words to them, because that statement would have to include everyone hearing him say those words rather than just the listeners who also believed those words were true (since it would mean that Christ *didn't* actually die for their sins after all, considering the fact that anyone whose sins Christ died for *has* to be saved – again, referring only to our general salvation here, and not to the special salvation of believers). Not only that, it would mean *we* were *also* lying anytime we explained that the good news includes the fact that Christ died for our sins, at least if anyone who heard us didn't believe it either (unless, perhaps, what one *actually* has to believe in order to be saved is that Jesus died only for the sins of Paul and the Corinthians he spoke to – and that everyone in Corinth he preached his Gospel to got saved – and not that he actually died for you or anyone else, but then we'd have to ask what the basis of our own salvation really was in the first place if it *wasn't* Christ's death for *our* sins too). Now yes, the statement that "Christ died for **your** sins" *is* technically true, no matter who we say it to, because they'd still be included in the "all humanity" that gets saved by Christ's death for our sins. But regardless of how true the statement is, it isn't the Gospel message, so if you're evangelizing, please be careful to share the *actual* Gospel message that one has to believe in order to be able to be said to have joined the body of Christ, which includes the good news that Christ died for **our** (all humanity's) sins.

Because yes, Christ's death for our sins actually *had* to apply to *all* humanity (and hence guarantee the general salvation of all humanity), as Paul also made clear when he expanded on all this later in the same chapter by writing that just as *"in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."*[540] Many Christians assume that Paul was simply referring to being resurrected here (based on the fact that the main point of this chapter is the resurrection of the dead), but we know that everyone who Paul said will be "made alive" includes those who will never die,[541] such as the members of the body of Christ who will still be living at the time they're caught up together in the air to meet the Lord when He comes for His body,[542] not to mention the members of the Israel of God who will still be alive at the Second Coming and who will remain alive – thanks to the tree of life – until the time they're finally also made immortal, so being "made alive" (translated from a future-tense variation of ζῳοποιέω/"dzo-op-oy-eh'-o" in the KJV, which is the same Greek word that "quickened" is translated from – and which, yes, literally just means "to be given life," but which is almost exclusively used figuratively[543] in the Bible[544] to refer to being made immortal[545]) obviously

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[540] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

[541] Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. — 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

[542] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

[543] For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. — John 5:21

[544] But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. — Romans 8:11

[545] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peter 3:18

can't simply be referring to resurrection (which is an entirely different word, translated from the Greek word ἀνάστασις/"an-as'-tas-is" instead) because not everyone Paul said will be "made alive" will actually die and be resurrected (yes, that the dead will be physically resurrected *was* Paul's main point in this chapter, but he used his Gospel to prove this point, and in doing so ended up covering details that went far beyond just resurrection, including elements that apply to those who *won't* be resurrected – because they'll never actually drop dead – as well).

And since the "in Adam" half of the verse is about the end result of his sin as it applies to *everyone* (and not just those people who will actually literally die), it stands to reason that, *"even so,"* the "in Christ" part is about the end result of His death for our sins as it applies to every one of us as well, which can only be the quickening of our mortal bodies (since, as Paul explains later in the very same chapter, being made immortal is what we're looking forward to as far as our salvation goes,[546] and that being made immortal is how the death Adam brought us all is ultimately defeated, which also means that any human who is made immortal will then be experiencing the final stage of their own salvation as it pertains to Paul's Gospel). That, combined with the fact that not everyone will end up as a corpse prior to being "made alive" – confirming that the *"for as in Adam all die"* part of the verse can only be referring to being made mortal, meaning being in a state of slowly dying because of what Adam did – tells us Paul was simply explaining that, for as in Adam all are dying (mortal), even so in Christ shall all be quickened (made immortal). The Present Active Indicative tense in the original Greek of the verb translated as *"die"* in this verse in the KJV also makes this clear, I should add, making *"in Adam all die"* in the KJV a

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[546] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? — 1 Corinthians 15:53-55

figurative translation of a Greek phrase which literally means "in Adam all are dying" (meaning all are in a state of mortality and are slowly dying).

Of course, most Christians assume that one can't be "in Christ" without first having made a conscious decision of some sort to end up there, leading them to also assume that only those who choose to be "in Christ" (or only those who are elected by God to be "in Christ," if said Christian is a Calvinist) can be made alive/quickened (and hence be saved), and they then read that assumption into this verse when trying to interpret it. But aside from what we've already covered about the meaning of Paul's Gospel (which should be enough, in and of itself, to prove that everyone has already been guaranteed general salvation, and can, in fact, already be said to have been saved from at least a proleptic perspective), if you read it carefully you'll notice that not only does it not actually say one has to make a choice to end up "in Christ" in that verse, it isn't even talking about being "in Christ" from a positional perspective to begin with. (The reason most Christians conclude that one has to *choose* to be included in the "in Christ" part of this verse is generally because they're assuming the sort of salvation Paul was writing about here is either the special "eternal life" sort of salvation he also taught about that involves membership in the body of Christ – and which isn't a form of salvation everyone will experience – or the "eternal life" type of salvation Jesus spoke about during His earthly ministry which involves membership in the Israel of God – which is a type of salvation where one *does* have to do something specific if they want to experience it, and which is also not a form of salvation that everyone will experience, although whether[547] one does end up experiencing that sort of salvation[548] is just as

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[547] No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. — John 6:44

[548] And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. — John 6:65

predetermined[549] from an absolute perspective as the special salvation of those in the body of Christ is[550] – not realizing that Paul was writing about an entirely *different* sort of salvation here.) If that's what Paul had been getting at, he would have written, "for as **all in Adam** die, even so **shall all in Christ** be made alive." Thankfully, that's not what he actually wrote at all. Instead, the way he carefully worded it ("for as **in Adam all** die, even so **in Christ shall all** be made alive") lets us know that Paul was using a parallelism there to tell us that **everyone** affected by the action of the first Adam is, *"even so,"* also equally affected by the action of the last Adam[551] (referring to Christ Jesus, who is also compared to the first man by being called "the second man" in the same chapter[552]), and completely outside of their own desire or will. The slight difference in wording might not seem important to most Christians (and those who don't want to accept the possibility of the salvation of all humanity will automatically insist it doesn't matter, without even taking the time to think about it), but it makes all the difference in the world when you realize that God didn't simply inspire Paul to just throw words onto the page haphazardly, but rather that He made sure Paul laid the words out the way He did in order to make certain it's clear that, just as nobody had any say in experiencing the effects of the first Adam's action (mortality and, in most cases, physical death, aside from the relatively few people who will experience their quickening without having died), *even so* they also have no say in experiencing the effects of the last Adam's action (eventual immortality) either. Basically, the order of the

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[549] Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. — John 15:16

[550] Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. — Romans 8:30

[551] And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. — 1 Corinthians 15:45

[552] The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. — 1 Corinthians 15:47

words God chose for Paul to use tells us that "in Adam" and "in Christ" simply mean "because of what Adam did" and "because of what Christ did," and are not positional terms at all in this passage, but are rather causal terms.

The fact that Paul wasn't referring to being "in Adam" or "in Christ" from a positional perspective there is also backed up by what he wrote in Romans 5. Of course (even if most Christians don't realize this fact, never having thought it over particularly carefully, although this really is the only way their soteriology could possible work based on the way our brains work), in addition to assuming our salvation is (at least partly) based on possessing a certain attribute that others don't have which allows us to fulfill a required action we have to do for ourselves in order to be saved (such as having enough natural wisdom and/or intelligence and/or humility and/or righteousness to be able to make a choice to believe the specific thing that ultimately saves us, for example, or at least having the natural ability and desire to build up that required wisdom and/or intelligence and/or humility and/or righteousness so one can make that specific choice), rather than our (general) salvation being based 100% on Christ's death for our sins, and His subsequent burial and resurrection (with no action taken on our part at all in order to contribute to our salvation, since us having to accomplish anything at all to ensure our own salvation – even if it was just managing to repent, meaning managing to choose to change our minds and believe the right thing – would be salvation based at least in part upon something we had to do ourselves, which would ultimately be salvation by works), most Christians also assume that the blame for our mortality, death, and sinfulness falls on each of us as individuals rather than on Adam as well, but that's not what Paul taught at all. You see, in addition to what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:22 about how we "all die" (meaning how we're all mortal) "in Adam" (meaning because of what Adam did), over in Romans 5:12, Paul not only confirmed that the specific thing Adam did to bring his descendants mortality and death was *his (Adam's) own* sin, but he also went on to explain that the reason *we ourselves* now sin is *because* of that mortality we inherited from

Adam, when he wrote in that verse: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."*

This is one of the most misunderstood passages in Scripture, and most Christians have assumed "for that" in this verse means "because," and hence have interpreted the last two parts of this verse to mean "and so death passed upon all men *because* all have sinned" in order to preserve their doctrine that we're ultimately to blame for our own mortality and death (and many Bible versions have even mistranslated this verse to say as much). But, aside from the fact that this would render the verse literally nonsensical (I can't see any way that the phrase "and so death passed upon all men *because* all have sinned" can legitimately follow "wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and still make any sort of sense at all, at least not based on any rules of grammar, not to mention logic, that I'm aware of), if we die because we sin, the first part of the verse would be entirely superfluous, and might as well be cut out of the verse altogether, since that part of the passage would tell us basically nothing about *why* we sin, making it entirely irrelevant (not to mention that it would also turn the words *"and so"* in the verse into a lie: the words *"and so"* are connecting the clause in the second half of the sentence to the part of the sentence that came before it, which means that what was written in the first part of the verse *has* to be the reason for the clause that comes after those words, yet there's no actual connection made between Adam's sin and our death and sin in the verse if that clause actually means "*because* all have sinned," since that places the responsibility on us rather than on Adam, contrary to what the words *"and so"* are telling us, as well as contrary to what Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 15:22 – which is that human mortality and death exist because of Adam – and Romans 5:12 can't contradict any other part of Scripture).

And so, if we break it all down we can see that A) Adam sinned (*"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world"*), B) his sin brought him mortality leading to eventual death (*"and death by sin"*), C) because of this, his mortality passed down to his descendants (*"and so death passed upon all men"*) – and for those who haven't figured it out yet, similar to the way the word "die" is used in 1 Corinthians 15:22, the word "death" is obviously being used as metonymy for "mortality" in this verse as well, since not everyone will literally drop dead before Jesus returns, as we already discussed – and D) **for that reason**, meaning **because of that mortality**, all of us descendants of Adam have also sinned (*"**for that** all have sinned"*), giving us a nice unbroken sequence of causes and effects (and giving a purpose to the word "that" in the verse, confirming that Paul literally meant *"for that [reason] all have sinned"*). But if we were to instead interpret the last two parts of the verse as simply meaning "and so death passed upon all men *because* all have sinned" we've suddenly lost the whole narrative, since this doesn't tell us *why* all have sinned the way the literal reading of this verse does, nor does it explain why Paul included the first half of the verse to begin with. "That all have sinned" *because* "death passed upon all men" answers that question, but reversing the order (making sin the cause and mortality – or even literal death – the effect rather than mortality the cause and sin the effect) just makes a mess of the whole thing, leaving us with the question of why we sin, which was a part of what Paul was trying to explain in the first place with this verse (and as for why mortality leads to sin, it's simply because, while we can have the strength to avoid sinning *some* of the time, being mortal makes us too weak to avoid giving in to sin *all* of the time). In fact, if our sin actually *was* the cause, the verse should have actually been written as: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin... but wait... that really doesn't matter at all, now that I think about it, since death actually passed upon all men because all the rest of us have sinned, and this had nothing to do with that one man, despite what I told the Corinthians in my epistle to them, so why did I even mentioned him here?"

And for those of you who are thinking "Original Sin" might be the answer to that question, aside from the fact that "Original Sin" isn't a *term* found anywhere in Scripture, it isn't a *concept* found anywhere in Scripture either. In fact, the basis for this strange doctrine is a misinterpretation of the very verse we've just been looking at, but I don't see anything in this verse which says we've inherited a "sin nature" from Adam (which is yet another term you won't find anywhere in Scripture, but which many Christians are forced to read into it in order to hold on to certain unscriptural doctrines they don't want to let go of), or even that guilt for Adam's sin has somehow been imputed upon us as well for some reason, as those who believe this doctrine claim is the case. Yes, being mortal causes humans to become corrupt and sinful very quickly, but the claims of those who believe in "Original Sin" can't actually be found in the Bible without heavily reading one's assumptions into this verse, and to do so would be pure eisegesis. Some people do attempt to use passages such as Psalm 58:3[553] and Psalm 51:5[554] to defend their doctrine of "Original Sin" as well, I should say, but the first verse is talking specifically about *"the wicked"* (who are differentiated from *"the righteous"* a few verses later in the same Psalm,[555] telling us this isn't talking about all humans, but is instead about those who are particularly bad; besides we know that newborn babies can't literally speak lies as soon as they're born, as the psalmist said they do, because they can't speak at all yet, so we know he's employing hyperbole there, meaning the verse can't be taken as literally meaning all humans start off wicked, but rather that the wicked begin their destructive path at a very young age), and there are so many possible interpretations of the second verse which *don't* turn Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 into a nonsensical lie, as would be the case if "Original Sin"

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[553] The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. — Psalm 58:3

[554] Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. — Psalm 51:5

[555] The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. — Psalm 58:10-11

were a valid concept, that it's utterly foolish to even *consider* it as a defence of the doctrine. For example, it could simply be more poetic hyperbole (which is a figure of speech David was known to employ in this book, unless you believe his tears could literally create a whole swimming pool on his furniture[556]), it could be using "in iniquity" and "in sin" as metonymy (which is a figure of speech used all the time in the Bible, as should be obvious by now) for "in a world full of sin," or it could even be referring to the possibility that he was born as a result of his mother having an affair similar to the one he's believed to be confessing he had with Bathsheba in this very Psalm (and which is what many people think the verse means, believing that the way he recorded his past treatment by others in Psalm 69:4,[557] 7-8,[558] 11-12,[559] and 20-21[560] indicates this as well – and yes, I'm aware that these were prophetically referring to Jesus, but they had a double-fulfillment, with the first fulfillment being what happened to David, even if only from a hyperbolic perspective in some cases), and these are just three possible interpretations (there are others I didn't get into here, which you can dig into for yourself if you're so inclined), so the concept of "Original Sin" really is a nonstarter.

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[556] I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. — Psalm 6:6

[557] They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. — Psalm 69:4

[558] Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. — Psalm 69:7-8

[559] I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards. — Psalm 69:11-12

[560] Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. — Psalm 69:20-21

And so, I maintain that the KJV actually got this correct, and that we should simply stick with what it actually says here and interpret it accordingly, in the sense that Paul meant *"and so death passed upon all men,* [and] *for that* [reason] *all have sinned"* (or, if someone really can't handle this verse without the word "because" in it for some reason, they still have to recognize the implied but unwritten words in there as well, making it mean: "because [of that death/mortality] all have sinned"), as this is the *only* interpretation which gives us answers to both the question of why we sin (while also explaining why Paul said, *"the sting of death is sin,"*[561] since the word "death" *has* to be metonymy for "mortality" in 1 Corinthians 15:56), as well as the question of why we're mortal and die (answers which don't end up contradicting 1 Corinthians 15:22 the way the more common translations and interpretations of this verse in Romans do, I might add), keeping the blame for our mortality, death, and sinfulness squarely on the shoulders of the *"one man"* Paul meant for us to understand it belongs on: Adam. (At least from a relative perspective, even if God was ultimately the one behind it all from an absolute perspective.)

And so, contrary to what pretty much all Christians have been taught, we ourselves don't die because we sin. In fact, Adam and Eve were the only humans who died because they sinned – or, rather, began to die/became mortal because they sinned. Yes, that's what God's warning to Adam, which is rendered figuratively in the KJV as, *"for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,"* meant. Remember, the expression *"thou shalt surely die"* was

[561] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. — 1 Corinthians 15:56

used in both Genesis 2:17[562] and in 1 Kings 2:36-46[563] in the KJV, and yet, based on the amount of time it would take to travel from Jerusalem to Gath and back (even on horseback, presuming my calculations are correct, although I challenge you to confirm this for yourself), there's no way that Shimei actually died physically the day he crossed the brook Kidron, as Solomon seems to have warned him that he would in 1 Kings. And he certainly didn't "die spiritually" that day either, as most Christians mistakenly assume the translation of "surely die" in the KJV means (an assumption they make because they recognize that this is obviously a figurative translation, based on the fact that Adam didn't physically drop dead on the day he sinned), which confirms that the popular "spiritual death" idea is a complete misunderstanding of the term "surely die" in the KJV. As far as Shimei goes, it just meant that he could consider his days to

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[562] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. — Genesis 2:17

[563] And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath. And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; and king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. — 1 Kings 2:36-46

be numbered as of the day he crossed the forbidden brook, because he essentially signed his own death sentence by doing so. And as far as Adam and Eve go, it basically meant the exact same thing, that they could consider their days to be numbered as of the day they sinned as well, just with a longer period of time before their eventual death sentence "played out." Simply put, Genesis 2:17 is just telling us that, to die, they began dying – meaning they gained mortality leading to eventual physical death – on the day they ate the forbidden fruit (which makes sense considering the fact that the Hebrew phrase מוֹת תָּמוּת/ "mooth ta'-mooth," translated as "thou shalt surely die" in both passages in the KJV, literally means "to die thou shalt be dying"; this also tells us that "to die" can't possibly be a reference to being punished in the lake of fire, by the way, because Adam didn't end up in that location the day he sinned either, so becoming mortal remains the best interpretation of this warning).

Understanding this also helps explain why Jesus was able to avoid sinning, as well as why we'll stop sinning once we're made immortal. Basically, Romans 5:12 also tells us that mortality is passed down from our human fathers, not our mothers, since it's Adam who is blamed for our mortality in that verse rather than Eve (who not only also sinned, but sinned before Adam did), as well as tells us that anyone with a mortal, human father *will* sin (presuming one doesn't die as a baby before they have an opportunity to sin). This is why Jesus had to be born to a virgin, because He would have been *guaranteed* to sin at some point if He'd had a mortal, human father. Of course, traditional Christians will say that the reason Jesus didn't sin is because He's God, and that only God in the flesh could avoid sinning so He could be the perfect sacrifice for sin, but what they're telling us when they say that, even if they don't realize it, is that we humans could then never be free of sin, not even after our resurrection, since we aren't going to become God, so that couldn't possibly be the reason (of course, if you've read chapter 2 of this book, you now know how impossible this explanation is anyway). Instead, the reason is because, not having a mortal father, He was in a state that was neither mortal nor immortal (it's not a term

found in Scripture, but because it's useful to have a label for this, I personally refer to existing in this state as being "semi-mortal," for lack of a better term that I'm aware of – although if you've read previous editions of this book, you might remember me using the term "amortal" instead, but I've since decided that "semi-mortal" makes more sense), which means that, while He wasn't yet immortal, which means being entirely incapable of dying – as we'll also be when we're quickened, just like He is now – the fact that He didn't have a human father meant that He *could* die but that He *wasn't slowly dying* the way we mortals are either, and not having mortality coursing through His veins, but rather having the Spirit without measure,[564] meant He was strong enough to avoid giving into temptation to sin (this combination of "semi-mortality" and having the Spirit without measure also kept Him alive, even on the cross, until He was ready to die[565] and willingly gave up His life[566]). This means that Adam – who, like Jesus, and like Eve, also had to have been in a "semi-mortal" state in order to be able to become mortal after sinning (and no, Adam and Eve couldn't have been immortal prior to their sin, because "immortal" means "incapable of ever dying") – theoretically could have also avoided sinning if the circumstances had worked out that way, although he didn't have the Spirit without measure like Jesus did, and ultimately gave in to temptation, leading to the mortality and sin that all of us now get to experience as well, thanks to being his descendants.

That Adam is ultimately responsible for our condemnation to mortality, death, and sinfulness is also backed up a few lines later in Romans 5 as well, in verses

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[564] For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. — John 3:34

[565] No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. — John 10:18

[566] And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. — Luke 23:46

18-19,[567] where Paul told us that, just as judgement to condemnation came upon all men because of the offence and disobedience of *one*, and not because of *their own* offences or disobedience, righteousness and justification of life will *also* come upon all men because of the obedience of *one*, and not because of *their own* obedience – which would have to include obedience towards any commands to do anything specific in order to experience (general) salvation, including commands to choose to repent and/or to believe anything specific – telling us that only two people are responsible for our current and future states, the first Adam and the last Adam, and that we're just along for the ride.

You see, when Paul wrote, *"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,"* he was using another set of parallelisms there, something he seemed to love using to prove this particular point in various epistles, where the "all" and the "many" in the second part of each sentence has to consist of no less than the exact same number of people who fall under the "all" and "many" in the first part of the sentences, or else the parallelisms would fall apart, as would his entire point itself. And for those who are wondering why Paul wrote "many" rather than "all" in verses 15[568] and 19 of this chapter, there are at least two reasons (there could be more, but I'm going to give you the most important reasons). First, verse 15 had to use "many" because not everyone will physically drop dead, as we already discussed. And second, Jesus was technically affected

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[567] Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. — Romans 5:18-19

[568] But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. — Romans 5:15

by Adam's sin to a certain extent as well, in that He too was condemned to die (even if voluntarily) because of Adam's action, since He had to die for the sins we now commit because we're mortal thanks to Adam if He wanted to save us (which is why He could be included in the "all" of verse 18). But since He Himself never sinned, verse 19 couldn't say "all" became sinners, which is why Paul instead wrote that *"many were made sinners,"* meaning every human other than Jesus (and other than Eve as well, who became a sinner because of her own action rather than Adam's, since she sinned before he did). And again, being a parallelism, all the people who *"were made sinners"* because of *"one man's disobedience"* will also have to "*be made righteous*" because of "*the obedience of one,"* or else the parallelism wouldn't work (and please re-read that carefully: Paul said that it's because of *"the obedience of one,"* and **not** because of **their own obedience** to choose to repent and/or believe the right thing, that they're ultimately *"made righteous,"* even though, yes, those who do happen to believe Paul's Gospel will get to enjoy that righteousness before everyone else, but it's still all due to *the obedience of one* and not due to their own obedience), although Eve will also be made righteous because of His obedience, of course – for reasons we'll get to later in this chapter – even if she isn't included in the first half of the parallelism.

But for those who still really want to blame our condemnation to mortality and death on our own sins rather than ultimately blaming it on the first Adam's sin, I'd be curious to know what they believe the condemnation that came upon all men because of the offence and disobedience of one/Adam actually even is, exactly, not to mention why Paul included the part about *"wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*" in verse 12, and also why he claimed that *"in Adam all die*" in 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Of course, most Christians like to insist that one has to first choose to receive the free gift to be included in the second half of these parallelisms (completely ignoring the fact that this is not how parallelisms work), based on the inclusion

of the word "receive" in verse 17,[569] but Paul didn't actually say anything about receiving the gift being a choice in that verse at all (although, if it was a choice, then receiving the *"abundance of grace"* mentioned in that verse would also have to be a choice). The idea that receiving the free gift is a choice is an assumption that one has to read into the verse, since it just isn't there in the text (you won't find the words "choice" or "choose" *anywhere* in the chapter), and receiving something isn't necessarily something one chooses anyway, as evidenced by how Paul told us that, on five separate occasions, he received thirty-nine stripes.[570] Since he would have experienced those lashes whether he first purposefully chose to receive them or not (at no point are we told that he said to his assailants, "Please whip me"; and had he instead said, "I refuse to receive these stripes," they still would have whipped him anyway), it's time to reconsider the idea that "receiving the free gift" is something one chooses rather than simply experiences apart from anything they have to choose to do, because, aside from the fact that this would make salvation something they gained through *their own* obedience rather than because of the obedience of *one*/Christ (thus contradicting Paul's entire point, which is that only the first Adam and the last Adam are responsible for anything that happens to us when it comes to both our condemnation and our salvation, at least as far as our general salvation goes, which is the type of salvation Paul was writing about in Romans 5), having to choose to receive it would also be something one had to accomplish in order to be saved, which by definition would make it a work one had to do in order to be saved, and the most difficult work one could ever do at that, based on how difficult most people find it to "choose to receive the gift" and "get saved" (at least as far as the traditional Christian understanding of what salvation is goes, although it's true that their understanding is completely wrong). And so, rather than being offered money as a gift in order to pay off

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[569] For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) — Romans 5:17

[570] Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. — 2 Corinthians 11:24

one's debts, and having the option to either accept it or reject it (which is an analogy many Christians like to use when discussing salvation), it's actually more like having money deposited directly into one's bank account – enough to pay all their debts – and having automatic payments to those they owe money to set up entirely without their knowledge (with evangelism being about telling people the good news that the money is there and that their debts will all be paid with that money, whether or not they happen to believe it, or "choose to receive it," because their bank accounts have already received it).

The reason most Christians insist that receiving the free gift has to be a choice (aside from simply never having considered the possibility that it might not be) is because they just don't want to accept that condemnation and salvation could possibly be something we ultimately have no say in, which is why they also insist that we're entirely responsible for our own condemnation to mortality and death (and its resulting sinfulness) as well, contrary to what Paul wrote (all the while often also contradictorily placing the guilt for Adam's sin on us *at the same time as blaming us*, in order to preserve the doctrine of "Original Sin," which is a doctrine that really only exists in order to be able to claim that everyone deserves to be punished in "hell" without end simply by virtue of being born, and is a doctrine which literally makes no sense at all when you take the time to actually think about it, since there's just no legitimate way for someone who didn't commit a particular sin to then be considered guilty of committing that sin just because an ancestor of theirs committed it; and one shouldn't conflate the "condemnation" Paul wrote about in that passage with "guilt" anyway, because the type of "condemnation" in that verse is just the consequence of Adam's sin that we all experience, meaning the mortality we inherited from him, which also leads to all of us then committing sins as well, and not to us somehow magically being guilty of eating the forbidden fruit ourselves, even though we didn't actually eat it at all – which is backed up by the fact that the word "condemnation" there is translated from κατάκριμα/"kat-ak'-ree-mah" in the original Greek, which simply refers to a negative sentence

and not specifically to a guilty verdict, and is a word which could also be used to say that one has been "condemned" to die of a terminal illness due to no fault of their own, which is actually pretty close to what the "condemnation" in this passage *is* referring to). You see, if our condemnation to mortality and its resulting sinfulness is based entirely on the action of *one* (Adam), as Paul said it was, then our salvation to immortality and sinlessness would have to be based entirely upon the action of *one* as well (the last Adam), as Paul also said it is, rather than based (at least in part) upon a wise decision we ourselves make to receive the free gift, and the pride of most Christians just won't allow them to accept that as a possibility (because, although they'll deny it – even to themselves – most of them, at least on a subconscious level, really want to be able to take the credit for having made the wise decision to "get saved," based on the fact that they definitely want those who *don't* make the same wise choice they believe they made to be responsible for *not* getting saved, based on the tragically large number of Christians who have asked me things along the lines of, "Are you saying that unbelievers will get the same reward as me? Even though they didn't choose to accept Christ like I did?", thus telling us they believe they earned, and even deserve, salvation because they were smart enough to choose to receive it, unlike all those sinners who aren't smart enough to make the same good choice they did and hence don't also deserve it the way they do, and so these Christians are basically boasting about, or glorying in,[571] their wise decision to choose to receive the gift – as they'd be perfectly justified for doing if they *had* made that choice – rather than simply being grateful for having received it without ever getting to decide whether to accept it or not).

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[571] For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? — 1 Corinthians 4:7

I should quickly add, some will point out that 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 also talks about "receiving" the Gospel Paul preached unto them,[572] and that the salvation referred to in that passage seems like it could possibly be said to be conditional, at least if we take the passage on its own without considering the rest of Scripture. But even if we interpreted the passage as Paul referring to receiving salvation rather than simply receiving (or hearing) the message he preached unto them, based on what we've already covered (not to mention still have yet to cover), it could only be talking about receiving the special form of salvation which involves joining the body of Christ after hearing his Gospel there (a form of salvation that not everyone receives), and not the completed salvation (being guaranteed future immortality and sinlessness) which is discussed in the next two verses after those, and really throughout the rest of the chapter (as well as which is discussed in Romans 5). So even if someone *did* have to choose to "receive" this special form of salvation, it doesn't also mean that anyone has to choose to receive the general form of salvation Christ won for all of us through His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day. And so, it's time to recognize that the idea of the salvation Paul primarily wrote about (at least the general type of salvation) being based at all upon something people have to do for themselves – even if what they have to do for themselves is something as supposedly simple as having to choose to believe the right thing – rather than being based *entirely* upon what *one*/Christ did for us, is really something one must read into the text based on one's preconceived idea that this salvation depends at least partly (even if just 1%) on us and our wise decision to believe and/or do something specific rather than depends 100% on what *one*/Christ did.

That said, we actually do have to recognize that this applies to the special type of salvation Paul wrote about too, which means it's time to stop ignoring the

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[572] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. — 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

truth about predestination as well,[573] since what we've now learned (both about "free will" in the last chapter, and also about salvation in this one) proves that predestination *must* be true, but also that it's not the horrific concept Calvinism makes it out to be. You see, if *everyone* will experience the salvation known as being made immortal and sinless, as Paul said we all will, yet at the same time only *certain* people are chosen,[574] or elected,[575] for salvation, as he also said, then not only does this means that predestination has to be true (since God is only choosing *certain* people for a *certain* type of salvation), but also that the type of salvation he meant we're chosen for can only be the special "eternal life" type of salvation that not everyone gets to enjoy, which means it can be said that predestination is actually more about *when* someone experiences salvation, not about *if* they get to experience it, since everyone *will* eventually experience immortality and sinlessness. Basically, while some people are chosen by God to receive a special, early experience of salvation – meaning they'll be quickened and made sinless before everyone else, along with receiving various other benefits such as getting to go to heaven, and likely even ruling and reigning with Christ – Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 that *everyone* will *eventually* experience the salvation that involves being quickened and made sinless, even if perhaps not until after they've been resurrected from their second death at the end of the ages.

Of course, as we already discussed in the last chapter, many people really dislike the idea of predestination (especially as it pertains to salvation). But the fact of the matter is that, even if "free will" weren't the unscriptural and unscientific impossibility we've now learned it is, the existence of "free will" is

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[573] In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. — Ephesians 1:11-12

[574] According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: — Ephesians 1:4

[575] Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. — 1 Thessalonians 1:4

completely irrelevant when it comes to salvation anyway, because whether "free will" actually could exist or not, Paul not only still places the responsibility for both our condemnation and our eventual general salvation on two men, and on two men alone, rather than on each individual human who will ever have lived, he also places the responsibility for whether or not we experience the special "eternal life" type of salvation on one Person alone as well: God, through His choice of whom He'll give the gift of faith to.[576]

And for those who disagree with the idea that even our special salvation is based on the decision of *one* rather than on our own decisions, think about it carefully, because the "gift" in Ephesians 2:8-9 can't really be referring to the salvation and grace part of the passage, considering the fact that A) nobody can save themselves, meaning make themselves immortal or sinless, and B) the definition of grace is "unmerited favour," and so the fact that *they're* both gifts goes without saying. This tells us that the gift Paul mentioned here *has* to be the faith (since nobody could ever think the salvation or grace are "of yourselves"), which means that faith *has* to be something God deals out a certain measure of to each person chosen for membership in the body of Christ rather than something that we build up on our own, just as Paul said it is,[577] and also has to be something we received apart from any action or choice of our own, since otherwise we could then glory either in producing our own faith or in having chosen to accept to receive an offer of faith,[578] neither of which Paul would consider to be possible for anyone he wrote to, because the type of salvation he

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[576] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. — Ephesians 2:8-9

[577] For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. — Romans 12:3

[578] For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? — 1 Corinthians 4:7

taught the nations about, in both its general form and its special form, is 100% apart from *anything* we do ourselves, but is always based *solely* on the action and decision of *one:* Christ and God respectively (at least from a relative perspective, even if God was technically behind Christ's decision from an absolute perspective as well).

But even if the idea that receiving the special "eternal life" type of salvation was a choice *didn't* contradict what Paul wrote, the whole point of the parallelisms in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 is to make it clear that *one*/Christ has at least the exact same level of effect on humanity that *one*/Adam had, meaning Christ's action changes the exact same number of people that fall into the categories of "all" or "many" that Adam's action did, apart from any choice or choices we make ourselves. So even if it weren't true that only those to whom God has given the faith to believe this good news will get to enjoy the special salvation which involves being made immortal and sinless *earlier* than everyone else, and that we had to instead *choose* to be included in the body of Christ, we still know that everyone will eventually experience immortality and sinlessness anyway. Besides, if Christ's action *doesn't* change the exact same number of people that Adam's action did, it means that Adam's failure was ultimately more efficacious than Christ's victory was, making Adam and his sin far more powerful than Christ and His death for our sins, considering the fact that none of us had to choose to allow Adam's sin to make us mortal the way most Christians think we have to choose to allow Christ's death for our sins to make us immortal.

If you're still finding any of this hard to accept, though, Paul's parallelism in 1 Corinthians 15:22 can also be expressed mathematically: "For as in *a*, *x* die, even so in *z*, shall *x* be made alive." The way parallelisms work means that the set (or variable, if you prefer) known as "*x*" has to consist of the exact same group (or number) of people in both clauses (with "*a*" and "*z*" being two different reasons for their two respective states at two different periods of time) rather than referring to two separate groups of people who have to choose between Adam

and Christ. In fact, since this is a parallelism, and because we know that nobody specifically made a conscious choice to "choose Adam" (I don't recall ever thinking to myself, "I accept Adam as my condemner" before becoming mortal, which would have to be the case if we, *"even so,"* need to choose to "accept Jesus as our Saviour" in order to be made immortal; and if our condemnation happens without our conscious decision to "accept Adam," then, *"even so,"* our general salvation would also have to happen without our conscious decision to "accept Christ," since this is a parallelism), or to die "in Adam," but rather we were all simply born mortal (remember, our condemnation to mortality, death, and sinfulness was entirely because of *one*/Adam, and not because of anything we ourselves did, or else newborn babies who haven't sinned yet would never die, and those who believe that a fetus receives its spirit from God while still in the womb would then have to also concede that it would be impossible to perform an abortion once a pregnancy had reached that point), this also means that, *"even so,"* nobody can choose to be "in Christ" either (if this verse meant that it's up to us to specifically choose to be "in Christ," it would mean that it was up to us to specifically choose to be "in Adam" first, which we already know isn't the case, since we're all born mortal; and if these were positional sorts of states, and we could unknowingly end up "in Adam" by committing an act we didn't realize placed us there, it would also mean that, *"even so,"* the only way to end up "in Christ" would have to also be by unknowingly committing an act we didn't realize placed us there either). This verse is simply telling us that "all" ("*x*") are mortal/dying "through Adam/because of what Adam did" ("in *a*") rather than because of any choice of our own, and that the same "all" ("*x*," again) will also eventually be become immortal (be made alive) "through Christ/because of what Christ did" ("in *z*") rather than because of any choice of our own. And the same applies to when Paul uses the words "all" and "many" in his parallelisms in Romans 5 as well (go ahead and put an *x* in place of the words "all" and "many," or perhaps an "*x*" and a "*y*" in their respective places, in the verses in Romans 5 to see for yourself). With this in mind, the only way 1 Corinthians 15:22 could possibly mean that only some people will be quickened

is if the verse said, “For as in Adam only some die, even so in Christ shall only some be made alive,” or if it perhaps said, “For as in Adam all die, *unevenly* so in Christ shall only some be made alive” (the words “even so” in the verse basically mean “in the same way,” or “equally so,” telling us that the variable *x* has to be the same number of people on both sides of the words “even so”).

Unfortunately, due to a combination of the fact that most people misunderstand the various passages in Scripture about judgement, “hell,” and the lake of fire, especially the ones that include warnings by Jesus (which are indeed serious warnings, but they don’t mean anything even close to what most people have assumed they mean) – and are misinterpreting these and other Pauline passages about salvation in light of their misunderstandings of those judgement passages rather than interpreting those particular passages in light of these and other Pauline passages about salvation (because they don’t realize that the salvation Jesus spoke about during His earthly ministry was an entirely different sort of salvation from the one Paul was writing about here, as we learned in the first chapter of this book, they mistakenly assume that, since not everyone experiences *that* sort of salvation, not everyone will experience the type of salvation that Paul was writing about here either) – along with the fact that this verse says “in” (“in Adam” and “in Christ”) rather than “through” or “because of” (which is what the word “in” is talking about here), most Christians read these passages and come away with extremely confused interpretations. Since one can only be “in” one of two people at a time, positionally-speaking, this causes them to miss the fact that the word “all” is the exact same group of people in both clauses (referring to “all of humanity”). To be fair, “in” obviously *can* mean “inside” something, positionally-speaking (from either a literal or a figurative perspective, depending on the context), but it can also mean “through [the action of]” or “because of” something or someone, and that’s clearly what Paul was getting at in this parallelism.

However, let's pretend to forget all of the above, and assume for a moment that this passage actually *is* referring to being "in Christ" from a positional perspective rather than referring to our immortality being because of what Christ accomplished. Does that change anything at all about the end result I concluded it would culminate in (all humans eventually experiencing salvation by being quickened)? Not even slightly. To put it simply, because this is a parallelism, we'd then be forced to read it as meaning: just as every human begins dying by being "in Adam," *even so* every human *will* end up made alive by being "in Christ." So even if you interpret "in" positionally here, being a parallelism would force this verse to then mean that every single person will be "in" both of those two people, figuratively speaking, just at two different points of time in each of our lives. That said, when you consider the fact that the context of the chapter was resurrection and immortality, it's pretty clear that Paul was literally telling us in this parallelism that even though "because of what Adam did all humans are mortal, even so because of what Christ did all humans will be quickened" (and to be quickened means to experience the last stage of salvation, finally enjoying one's immortality, and hence sinlessness).

For anyone who might somehow still be skeptical, however, hypothetically speaking, if Paul *was* trying to explain in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 that, because of what Adam did, every single human has been condemned to mortality and sinfulness, yet, *equally so*, because of what Christ did, every single human is guaranteed to eventually enjoy immortality and sinlessness, I'd like you to tell me what he would have needed to have written differently in those chapters in order to convince you that this is what he meant.

All that being said, while Paul tells us in verse 22 of 1 Corinthians 15 that everyone who experiences mortality because of what Adam did will eventually experience immortality because of what Christ did, he also tells us (when he

wrote, *"but every man in his own order"*[579]) that there's a particular sequential order when it comes to each mortal human being made fully alive beyond the reach of death (meaning that humanity won't all be quickened at the exact same time), with the first order mentioned being *"Christ the firstfruits,"* and the second order being *"they that are Christ's at his coming"* (there's a third order mentioned in the passage as well, but we'll get to that after we consider the first two orders). Now, there is some debate as to exactly who is included in each of the first two orders, with some people believing that the first order refers specifically to Jesus and that the second order includes everyone who will be quickened around the time of His Second Coming (both the members of the body of Christ, and also the members of the Israel of God who will be quickened around the same time, give or take approximately seven years), while others believe that the first order refers instead to the whole body of Christ (since being a part of Christ's body means we can all legitimately be called "Christ," or "anointed" – which is what the Greek word Χριστός/"khris-tos'" that "Christ" is translated from means – even if we're not all "Christ *Jesus*" Himself), but that this *excludes* the body's Head (Jesus, who is already immortal), with the second order only being those in the Israel of God who are quickened some time after He returns, at the resurrection of the just. As for me, I believe the latter interpretation to be the correct one, with the firstfruits in the first order being the whole body of Christ[580] – again, *excluding* Jesus – at the time He comes for His body in the air, including both those dead members of the body of Christ who will be resurrected, as well as all the members who are still living, finally experiencing their immortality at that time (the dead members of the

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[579] But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. — 1 Corinthians 15:23-24

[580] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. — Romans 8:23

body of Christ will be resurrected first, after which they and the remaining living members will be "made alive"/made immortal as we meet the Lord in the air), and who will no longer sin from then on (because they'll no longer be mortal). This event will be God withdrawing His ambassadors[581] from earth (as one does prior to declaring war) before the Tribulation begins, who then go on to fulfill their purpose in Christ in heavenly places.

As for why I don't believe Jesus Himself is included in this order, there are two reasons, both of which I technically actually covered in the last paragraph, but I'll go into a little more detail now in case anyone didn't catch them. The first reason is because verse 22 would also seem to mean that, *at some point in the future*, "in **Christ** shall **Christ** be made alive," which seems to be contradicted by Peter, who wrote that Christ was *already* quickened[582] – *past tense* – by the Holy Spirit, and not that He *will* be quickened/"made alive" – *future tense*, which is the tense verse 22 uses – as though He isn't already immortal now. As for the second reason, it's that *"but every man in his own order"* in verse 23 (of which *"Christ the firstfruits"* is the first order) is referring back to everyone who is promised to eventually be *"made alive"* in verse 22 (which means that to be a part of the orders referred to by *"every man in his own order,"* you have to also be included in verse 22), but since verse 22 is a parallelism, to be a part of the group of people included in the *second* half of the point being made by this parallelism, one would also have to be a part of the group of people included in the *first* half of the parallelism (meaning being included among all those who

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[581] And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. — 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

[582] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peters 3:18

"die" because of what Adam did, which we already determined refers to being mortal and in the process of slowly dying because of what Adam did). Remember, as we just discussed, the equation is basically: "For as, because of *a,* all are made mortal, even so, because of *z,* all will be made immortal." And so, to be a part of the group of people affected by *z* (at least within the parallelism), one has to first be affected by *a*, which means being mortal. The problem is, being mortal also means being guaranteed to eventually sin, as we also previously learned, and since Jesus never sinned, He couldn't have been a part of group *a*, which means He *also* couldn't have been a part of group *z* in the parallelism, and hence couldn't be a part of *any* of the orders listed under *"but every man in his own order,"* which does include *"Christ the firstfruits,"* telling us that the people included within this particular order of people being made immortal in the future can *only* consist of the parts of the body of Christ that *aren't* Jesus (who doesn't need to be included in it anyway, for the first reason I just covered, which is that He's already immortal).

And yes, I realize this seems to imply that Eve won't be saved, since she *also* wasn't a part of the first group in the parallelism (which means she couldn't be included in the second group in the parallelism either). However, like Christ, she's a unique case in all of this, having sinned before Adam did and hence not being able to be included in the parallelism either. This isn't the problem it might seem to be at first, though. As we just covered, Christ Himself was quickened without technically being included in either group within the parallelism, and this is fine because He was never a part of the particular point that Paul was making with this parallelism to begin with, which is simply that everyone affected by *a* is also affected by *z*, and nothing more. And if He can be quickened without being a part of the second group in the parallelism (even though He technically *was* affected by what He did – earning His own quickening through His own faith, as was proven by His voluntary death on the cross – He still was never a part of the parallelism to begin with, outside of being *z* in the equation of course), there's no reason others can't *also* be

quickened (and even reconciled to God) without technically being included in the point the parallelism is making either. And Eve indeed *is* going to be quickened in the future, and (along with many others who *also* aren't included in group *a* that I'll discuss soon) will even be reconciled to God as well, for reasons I'll explain a little later in this chapter. But even if it somehow could turn out that she wasn't going to be saved, because of not being included in the parallelism, the point Paul was making with the parallelism – that everyone affected by Adam's action is also going to be equally affected by Christ's action – still stands. But don't worry, she will be quickened, as I'll prove later, presumably at the same time the third order of people will be quickened.

We can't get to that third order without first discussing the second order, though, and I personally interpret this second order – *"they that are Christ's at his coming"* – as referring to those made immortal at the time of the resurrection of the just, 75 days after the Tribulation has concluded (people such as "Old Testament" saints, for example, at least from the point of Abraham onwards – including Elijah, with this being the time he's quickened – as well as those who died following the teachings that Jesus and His disciples gave). I should say, for a long time I assumed that *everyone* who gets to enjoy the sort of salvation Jesus spoke about, both dead *and* living, will be made immortal at this point, but I've since concluded that only those who were dead and who will be resurrected some time after the Second Coming will be made immortal at this time, and that everyone else who gets to enjoy "everlasting life" while living in the kingdom of heaven in Israel will simply remain alive in a "semi-mortal" state (at least to begin with) thanks to partaking of the fruit and the leaves[583] of the tree of life[584] on a monthly basis, and won't be made truly immortal until

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[583] In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. — Revelation 22:2

[584] Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. — Revelation 22:14

the final order of quickenings is completed much later. As for why I've come to this conclusion, I'll just quickly say that if the reward for "overcoming" by some of those during the Tribulation will be to partake of the tree of life,[585] and if one needs to continuously consume its products in order to remain healthy and alive, as Revelation 22:2 seems to imply, yet the quickening of the resurrected dead happens instantaneously[586] and is irreversible, as is demonstrated by those in the body of Christ when they're caught up in the air to meet the Lord (not to mention based on the definition of "immortality"), it seems that there must two different methods of remaining alive on this earth and the New Earth (quickening as the first method, and partaking of the tree of life on a regular basis as the second). That said, as I already mentioned, some like to group the body of Christ in with this order as well, and believe it applies to everyone who experiences the salvation that Jesus spoke about, as well as those who experience the salvation that Paul wrote about – even if some are quickened three-and-a-half to seven or more years apart from each other – and believe the first order is just speaking of Jesus Himself. However, as I already explained, to do so really doesn't make any sense to me, considering the tense of "made alive" in verse 22, so placing the body of Christ in the first order rather than the second seems to make the most sense, and even more-so if I'm correct that only the resurrected dead members of those in the Israel of God will be quickened at the end of the Tribulation, which it would seem has to be the case for the reason I already explained, as well as because there wouldn't be anyone left to fulfill the prophecies of righteous Israelites not only growing old but also having children in the kingdom of heaven and on the New Earth if every member of the Israel of God were quickened shortly after Jesus returns, as I've also previously mentioned (and the fact that all the living members of the body of Christ will

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[585] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. — Revelation 2:7

[586] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. — 1 Corinthians 15:52

be quickened when they're caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, as well as the fact that the dead in Christ are resurrected *before* those who are still living when they go to meet the Him in the air, yet those who are raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just are still dead until at least 75 days *after* the Tribulation ends, is also more evidence that the body of Christ is not the Israel of God, and that our respective quickenings take place at different times, which also confirms that one should not conflate the Snatching Away with the Second Coming). But regardless of whether the body of Christ is included in the first order or in the second order, there are still a lot of people who won't have been "made alive"/made immortal yet during that second order, including the rest of the members of the Israel of God who aren't quickened at the resurrection of the just but are still alive thanks to the fruit of the tree of life (not only 1,000 years later when the kingdom of heaven on earth draws to an end, but for the duration of the final age on the New Earth as well, however long that's going to last), not to mention everyone else who didn't get to enjoy "everlasting life" when Jesus returns. And so the question arises, if all humanity *is* going to be "made alive" because of Christ, yet each in their own order (which Paul told us *is* going to be the case), when will this happen for everyone who *isn't* included in those first two orders? Well, if everyone will be "made alive" in their own order, there must be at least one more order after that one for the rest of humanity to be included in, and the very next verse tells us there indeed is.

Of course, most people who read this chapter assume *"they that are Christ's at his coming"* in verse 23 is the final order of people to be quickened (if they even realize that Paul was talking about quickening at all), but Paul actually spoke of that third and final order made up of the rest of humanity which we now know also need to eventually be "made alive" when he wrote *"then cometh the end"* in verse 24. Now, this technically could be said to have a double fulfillment of sorts, since the end of the ages *is* almost certainly *when* this final quickening occurs (and is something that the body of Christ has already attained in spirit, if

not only proleptically,[587] and will have also attained physically at their own quickening, long before the actual final age ends), and this has caused most people to misunderstand Paul's statement there as meaning that he'd moved on from the topic of resurrection and immortality and had now begun discussing the end of the world (or the end of the ages, as others assume) in this verse instead. But Paul hadn't even hinted at any such topics in this chapter so far, yet had just mentioned an order of different groups of people to be "made alive," made up of every mortal human who will have ever lived, as stated in the verse immediately prior to this one (in verse 23 when he wrote, *"but every man in his own order,"* which was referring to *all* the men who are mortal because of Adam being made immortal by Christ – as he said would happen in verse 22 – in their own order), so there's absolutely zero basis that I can think of for interpreting this verse as meaning anything other than Paul telling his readers that "then comes the end of the quickenings of all the orders of men to be 'made alive'" (which tells us that the final *group* of men from the "*every man in his own order*" of groups made up of all men who are mortal will finally be made immortal at that time) and then going on to explain *when* in the future the end of the quickening of all humanity will occur, which will be at the time *"when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."* I don't believe anyone would disagree with me that when Paul wrote, *"when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God,"* he was explaining *when* whatever *"then cometh the end"* happens to mean takes place. And if the end of the world or ages were going to occur *immediately* after *"they that are Christ's at his coming"* are quickened, it might make sense to assume that's what Paul was referring to there. But as I already mentioned, we know that there will be at least 1,000 years separating the period of time when that particular order of people will be quickened and the time our current world ends and is replaced by the New Earth (and, as those who understand the Doctrine of the Ages – more often referred to by believers as the Doctrine of the

[587] Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. — 1 Corinthians 10:11

Eons – are aware, there are two whole ages, likely made up of thousands of years or more, between that quickening and the end of the ages), so a new topic about the end of the world or the end of the ages doesn't really fit in those words at all because neither of those things are going to come to an end immediately (or even any time soon) after *"they that are Christ's at his coming"* are "made alive." Meanwhile, the end of the sequence of people being quickened in a specific order fits there perfectly, since the order of those quickenings is what he'd just been writing about. In fact, if he meant the end of the world or the end of the ages, he would have then been leaving out that final order of *"every man in his own order"* of all men who are dying from the sequential order of quickenings he'd just started writing about (including the members of the Israel of God who weren't quickened after Jesus returns and who would then miss out on being made immortal if this wasn't talking about the final group of people to be quickened), so it really makes no sense at all for him to have gone from discussing that topic (the specific order of all the groups of people who are mortal and dead because of Adam being "made alive" because of Christ) to suddenly discussing an entirely new topic altogether in this verse – never having even suggested that he was referring to that new topic (Christ's triumph over other rulers and turning the kingdom over to God, or even the end of the ages or of the world) anywhere else in the chapter up until this point – and then to return to discussing his original topic of resurrection and quickening again as he does just a few verses later. Since it wasn't the point of the chapter to begin with, there would have been no reason for Paul to have even mentioned Christ delivering the kingdom up to God, to putting down all rule and authority and power, and to the end of Christ's reign over the kingdom (as he discusses in the next few verses after this one) in this chapter at all other than to explain *when* that final order of "*every man in his own order"* to be *"made alive"* that he'd just been discussing actually *is* going to be *"made alive,"* by letting his readers know that this final quickening would, in fact, not only be the end of the quickenings he'd been writing about in the two verses prior to it, but also that it would be the very last thing Christ does before giving up His reign

and turning the kingdom over to God (and, in fact, that this final quickening would be how death is finally destroyed, as he said it would be a couple verses later[588]).

Now, a lot of Christians simply assume that the reference to the destruction of death in verse 26 is just talking about the salvation of *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* in verse 23 (they have to, because of their assumption that not everyone will experience the salvation Paul was writing about here). But aside from the fact that death somehow being said to be destroyed by that group of people being quickened (or being saved in whatever way they assume this means) when Christ returns would mean that nobody *after* Christ's return (including anyone born during the thousand-year kingdom in Israel and on the New Earth, as well as those in the Israel of God who aren't quickened at the Second Coming) could possibly ever be quickened either (because the final salvation via the destruction of death would then have already been said to have taken place when Christ returned, since, if their salvation was figuratively referred to as the "destruction of death," there wouldn't be any "death" left to "destroy" for anyone else to get saved by it happening again afterwards, seeing as it would have already been "destroyed" in the past at that point, whatever the "destruction of death" might actually even mean if that were the case), this also isn't possible because verses 24 and 25 tell us that His sentient enemies are subjected, and that death is then destroyed, at a point in time **after** *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* have been "made alive," and **not** that His sentient enemies are subjected and that death is destroyed **by** that particular group of people being "made alive." Remember, death is the *last* enemy to be defeated, yet there will still be more death and sentient enemies continuing to exist *long* after the quickening of *"they that are Christ's at His coming,"* since, aside from any death which will occur on earth during the thousand years itself, there's not only going to be a final (even if somewhat short and one-sided) battle

[588] For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:25-26

between God and those who consider Him to be their enemy a thousand years *after* the quickening of *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* which will involve the death of all those enemies who will rise up against Israel in that attack,[589] we're also told in Isaiah 65 that people will continue to die on the New Earth for a certain period of time as well (when Isaiah wrote, *"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed"*[590]*),* long after *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* have been quickened. And for those who are thinking that Revelation 21:1-8[591] means there

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[589] And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. — Revelation 20:7-9

[590] For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. — Isaiah 65:17-20

[591] And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. — Revelation 21:1-8

won't be any death on the New Earth at any time, while that is one possible interpretation of the passage, at least if we interpreted that passage on its own, there are also various *other* possible interpretations of these verses in Revelation which *don't* contradict what Isaiah wrote, including the idea that it means only those who get to reside within the walls of the New Jerusalem won't ever drop dead (or suffer in any way) anymore, not to mention the possibility that Revelation 21:4 could be separated from the first three verses of the chapter by the aforementioned "Mountain Peaks" of prophecy, setting verse 4 at the end of the ages, with verses 1 through 3 being set at the beginning of the New Earth, long before the final age draws to an end. Now, some people do claim that this passage isn't talking about what takes place on the New Earth at all (and some also say the same thing about the events mentioned after the reference to it a chapter later as well[592]), but rather that it's actually talking about what will take place during the thousand-year kingdom of heaven on this earth. The thing is, these are quite literally the only two references to the New Earth in the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures, so any Israelites who read these two passages between the time that book was written and 2 Peter was written[593] would be looking for details about this New Earth that Isaiah had just revealed to them for the first time, and I see no reason to believe they'd read it as saying, "There's going to be a New Earth, but never mind that, here are some details about what's going to happen before it's even created, and we won't tell you anything at all about that New Earth again anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures."

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[592] For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. — Isaiah 66:22-24

[593] Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. — 2 Peter 3:12-13

Still, even if Isaiah hadn't told us that certain people were going to die on the New Earth, the fact that some people will still be mortal (or at least semi-mortal), not to mention the fact that some people will have died a second time in the lake of fire and that their dead bodies will be displayed there for everyone to look upon at that time,[594] also proves that death continues to exist and remain an enemy for at least a certain period of time on the New Earth, because death can't be considered to have been truly destroyed as long as A) anyone remains dead, and/or B) anyone is still in a state of slowly dying (as mortals are), or is even capable of dying (as semi-mortals still are until they're quickened), meaning death won't actually be destroyed until *"the end"* group of *"every man in his own order"* of groups is finally "made alive" and there aren't any humans left who are not yet immortal (and remember, immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in Scripture,[595] thus proving once again that everyone has to eventually experience the sort of salvation that Paul primarily taught about).

Of course, some Christians instead assume the references to death in these verses are talking about the mythical "spiritual death" that most Christians believe in (and which some of them mistakenly assume the death in verse 22 is talking about as well, although if it was, then Jesus *definitely* couldn't be included in the "firstfruits" reference, unless you believe He also "died spiritually," whatever that means, "in Adam"; although, if He did, He would

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[594] For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. — Isaiah 66:22-24

[595] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? — 1 Corinthians 15:53-55

have then only been "made alive" spiritually "in Himself" as well, and wouldn't have been physically resurrected), but if this part of the chapter is just talking about a so-called "spiritual death" rather than physical mortality, and is only talking about certain people being given some sort of "spiritual life" (or "going to heaven" after they die, which we now know isn't even a scriptural concept, since only the living can enjoy life in outer space, as we learned is what going to heaven means in an earlier chapter of this book), the same problem that applies to those who think the destruction of death is simply referring to the salvation of *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* would have to apply here as well, because the end of "death" doesn't occur until *after* both *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* are saved *and* all the rest of Christ's enemies have been subjected as well, since it's the *final* enemy to be defeated. (Although, if there were such a thing as "spiritual death," this would mean that eventually everyone else will also become "spiritually alive" when Christ subjects His enemies and destroys death, since if "death" in this chapter was simply a reference to the so-called "spiritual death" so many believe in, there couldn't be any "spiritual death" left once Christ destroys it, long after *"they that are Christ's at His coming"* have been "made alive," which means that everyone left who is still "spiritually dead" at that time will become "spiritually alive" when death is destroyed as well, especially based on the fact that verse 22 is a parallelism.)

So, unless someone has a better explanation of what these verses are referring to (one which doesn't contradict the rest of Scripture, and so far one hasn't been forthcoming when I've asked), it would seem that the point of verses 24 through 26 definitely has to be about the final order of people to be "made alive," meaning the rest of the "all" who die because of Adam who haven't been "made alive" because of Christ yet (including both those who are currently dead at that time, meaning those whose bodies will have been burned up in the lake of fire at the Great White Throne Judgement, as well as those who happen to die on the New Earth prior to the destruction of death, and also including those who are still living, thanks to having partaken of the fruit and the leaves of the

tree of life to keep from dying, but haven't been quickened yet, referring to those whose names *were* written in the book of life but who hadn't already been quickened previously – with Enoch likely being included among this group, presuming he and other righteous men who existed prior to Abraham weren't resurrected with Abraham in the second order of quickenings – along with any of their descendants who also have access to the tree, not to mention any other mortal humans who might be living on the New Earth as well but who have not been given access to the tree at that time, of course), finally quickened after the last age is completed and Jesus' reign over the kingdom comes to an end because He's placed all enemies (including death) under His feet (which ultimately just means that He'll no longer have any enemies at that time: in some cases, such as in the case of death, because they've been destroyed altogether and no longer even exist, but in other cases because they'll then be at peace with Him and God,[596] as I'll soon prove from another letter of Paul's) and has turned all rulership (including rulership over Himself) over to His Father, and God is finally "All in all"[597] (yes, in all, not just in a lucky few; if Paul had not pointed out that the "all" he was writing about doesn't include God, people could then turn around and say that "all" doesn't literally mean "all" because it obviously couldn't include God, so it could then also exclude people who die as non-believers as well if it doesn't actually mean "all," but because Paul does point out that God isn't included in the "all" but doesn't mention anyone else as being excluded from the group, we know that everyone other than God *is* included in the "all," even those who die as non-believers – and for those who like to argue that "all" in this verse can't actually mean everyone

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[596] When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. — Proverbs 16:7

[597] For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. — 1 Corinthians 15:25-28

because of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:6,[598] what I just wrote about "all" including everyone *other* than God tells us that it *has* to be referring to all sentient creatures other than God in chapter 15 regardless, although there's no good reason to assume that the "all" in chapter 12 isn't talking about everyone anyway, and based on what the Bible says about God's sovereignty, it almost certainly is).

This all means, by the way, that being "made alive" in verse 22 can't simply be a reference to joining the body of Christ or the Israel of God or to some other relative form of salvation one experiences at the time one believes one of the Gospels, as some assume, because being "made alive" happens only three times, and in a very specific order (and this is also why Enoch and Elijah can't have been living in heaven all this time, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, because, in order to live there, they'd have to have been "made alive" prior to the specific order of three sets of quickenings when that happens to everyone, although also because heaven is meant for the body of Christ, not for the Israel of God – which is the church that Elijah would be a member of – whose destiny is instead the kingdom of heaven).

This also means that people who use passages which tell us Jesus will reign "for ever"[599] in order to prove that "everlasting punishment" will also never end because *those* passages use the same words too are actually basing their argument on an obvious misunderstanding, since Paul is clear that His reign *won't* be never-ending, but rather will only last until He's defeated the final enemy, and stops reigning after doing so. This also demonstrates just how few people are aware that A) nearly all of the passages that are translated as saying

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[598] And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. — 1 Corinthians 12:6

[599] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. — Luke 1:32-33

"eternal," "everlasting," "for ever," or "never" in the popular, and less literal, versions of the Bible such as the KJV have to be interpreted qualitatively and figuratively (just as these English words are almost always still used by us today: as hyperbole, meaning they're exaggerated expressions used for the sake of emphasis; for example, if I were to say, "This church service is going to last for ever because the preacher never stops talking," I doubt you'd assume that the meeting will *actually* last for all eternity and that the speaker will continue preaching for all that time as well, although, if you aren't sure about this, please ponder it for the amount of time it takes an Everlasting Gobstopper to dissolve in your mouth, perhaps while watching a video of one of the various "eternal flames" people have lit being extinguished – the jawbreaker candy might take "for ever" to be completely consumed, perhaps even longer than that video lasts, but like most things which are said to be "everlasting" or "eternal," its time will eventually come to an end as well) rather than quantitatively and literally, based on this fact, as well as that B) everyone will eventually be quickened/"made alive," which Paul knew because he saw much farther into the future than John did in the prophecies he recorded in the book generally called Revelation (John basically only saw into the beginning of the New Earth, when death is a much less powerful force than it is now, but still exists, since, at the very least, there will still be people dead in the lake of fire at that time, whereas Paul saw a much later point of time, at the end of the ages, when death is finally destroyed altogether, and nobody can be left dead at all if there isn't any death left – which there couldn't be if it's been destroyed).

And since many Christians often make a similar mistake when they try to insist that, "If 'eternal damnation' isn't actually never-ending, then 'eternal life' would have to come to an end as well and we'd eventually die," or even, "if hell eventually ends, then heaven would have to eventually end too," I'm forced to point out that they really aren't thinking things through when they make these assertions, since we've already determined that these type of words in the KJV generally have to be interpreted qualitatively rather than quantitatively (or

figuratively rather than literally), so we have to assume they aren't talking about how long one lives (or even how long one is punished) so much as about the form or quality of the life and judgements they experience will be (and, in fact, most Christians *already* interpret this term qualitatively and figuratively anyway, as we've already covered in the second chapter of this book). Besides, we already know that the current heaven *will* eventually cease to exist anyway, or else it couldn't be replaced with by a New Heaven. And so, just because one's time experiencing "eternal damnation" will come to an end, it doesn't stand to reason that anyone enjoying "eternal life" in the future will eventually die (or lose their salvation), because it isn't verses about "eternal life" that promise us lives which never end in the first place, but rather it's verses about our impending immortality which tell us we'll never die (at least after our quickening), as I pointed out previously. So, when people are eventually resurrected from their second death in the lake of fire to be "made alive"/quickened (which they'll have to be in order for it to be able to be said that death has truly been destroyed, since as long as death continues to hold anyone prisoner, death hasn't actually been defeated or destroyed at all, but rather continues to be an enemy), members of the body of Christ will have reached the end of their "eternal life" at that time as well, but we'll still remain alive because we'll already have been made immortal *long* before that. Basically, when someone reaches the end of the figurative "for ever" or "everlasting/eternal life," that particular aspect of their salvation (the special sort of salvation that only a few will ever get to enjoy) will be over, but they'll still remain alive because they'll have bodies that can't die (or, if they're among those who get to enjoy "everlasting life" in Israel, or perhaps even on the New Earth, but haven't been made immortal yet, they'll finally be given immortality, along with everyone else).

The simple truth is, it should be quite obvious to anyone who has made it this far (and really to anyone who has read the whole Bible and was actually paying attention when they did so) that the words "everlasting" and "eternal" (not to

mention “for ever”) almost never actually mean “never-ending” (or “without end”) when you read them in less literal translations of Scripture such as the KJV, any more than they do when they’re used in everyday speech today, but almost always have to be read figuratively – as hyperbole – in such Bible versions. This isn’t to say it’s impossible that these words are *sometimes* meant to be interpreted quantitatively rather than qualitatively in certain passages where they’re used in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, of course (and I’m certainly not insisting that they couldn’t possibly have ever had a quantitative meaning when they were used outside of Scripture back then either), but one has to consider each instance of these words extremely carefully when reading Scripture, looking at the context of the passage, as well as of Scripture as a whole, before deciding they are meant to be interpreted quantitatively in a specific passage, so as not to contradict the rest of Scripture (since, if Scripture contradicted itself, there would be no reason to even consider what the Bible has to say about this – or any other – topic in the first place, and nearly anyone who did so would likely be wasting their time). And when one considers the context of the KJV and other less literal translations as a whole (not to mention when one digs into Scripture in its original languages) while taking everything we’ve covered in this book into consideration (as well as what we’ve yet to cover, as you’ll soon discover), it becomes evident that “for ever” in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations *has* to generally be a figurative term meaning either “for the age” (referring to the impending age that will last for 1,000 years when the Israel of God rules the planet after Jesus returns) or “for the ages” (referring to the final two – and greatest – ages, including both the 1,000-year age when the Israel of God will rule the world, as well as the final age on the New Earth, prior to the end of the ages), depending on the passage (although it’s easier to see this in the original Greek, where you can see whether it’s translated from a singular or a plural word in a given verse), and that “everlasting” and “eternal” in the KJV also have to both generally be figurative terms which mean “pertaining to an age or ages,” or “taking place during an age or ages” (referring again to one or both of those two future ages,

depending on the context), although these three terms can also sometimes simply figuratively refer to an indefinite period of time within the present evil age we're currently experiencing, but with a definite beginning and end (similarly, looking at the original languages while taking everything we've covered into consideration makes it clear that the word "never" in the KJV also has to often be a figurative translation, generally just meaning "not for the age" – as certain more literal Bible translations make more clear – telling us that, whatever the passage in question is referring to, it won't happen during the impending 1,000-year age). However, for those who are looking for even more proof of this than what Paul wrote (although the fact that Paul tells us everyone will be "made alive" should make this obvious enough to anyone who is being honest with themselves), all we have to do is look to the Hebrew Scriptures, which make it very clear that nearly everything referred to by these words in the less literal English Bible versions using them does eventually come to an end, and then also compare them to their Greek translations, as well as to the Greek Scriptures.

For example, in Exodus 21:6 we read about servants who choose to remain in servitude rather than going free on the seventh year, as was their right: "*Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.*" If we interpret "for ever" as literally referring to a period of time that never ends, it would either mean that the servant (or slave) in question can never die, or that the servant will have to remain in bondage to his master without end, even after both of their physical resurrections and judgements at the Great White Throne in the distant future (as well as in any afterlife, if one actually existed, in the meantime, even if they both ended up in different places while dead, although we now know from what we've covered in an earlier chapter that there is no conscious afterlife while dead, but for those who believe there is one, this point would still apply). Since I doubt anyone believes either of these options to be the case, I trust everyone would agree that

the “for ever” in this verse is actually a hyperbolic translation which really means “for a specific time period, even if the end date (the time of the servant’s death) is currently unknown,” which demonstrates that when we see the phrase “for ever” in the Bible, we can’t just automatically assume it means “without end.”

Of course, some Bible versions do say things like “for life,” or “permanently,” rather than “for ever” in this verse, but at the very least, you have to admit that עוֹלָם/“o-lawm'” (which is the Hebrew word that “for ever” is translated from in this verse in the KJV) doesn’t literally mean “without end” or “never-ending” (or at least doesn’t necessarily *always* mean “without end” or “never-ending”), and this tells us that just because we see “for ever” in an English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (or even the English word “everlasting,” for that matter, which is also often translated from the same Hebrew word), it doesn’t mean that we should just automatically assume *it* means “without end” or “never-ending” either, which is really all I’m getting at here.

However, I have had people insist that, even if the word עוֹלָם doesn’t necessarily mean “never-ending” in an ontological sense, the word should still always be understood as meaning something along the lines of: “it’s going to be like this for as long as the thing or person in question exists.” Aside from the problems this would cause that we’ve already discussed about the servant remaining enslaved even after his death and resurrection (unless you believe the servant never exists again after his death, and there’s nothing in the text which indicates that עוֹלָם should only apply to his first life on earth if you’re going to read it this way), this assertion also ignores the fact that עוֹלָם was translated other ways which contradict this conclusion as well, such as when it was rendered as “of old” in Deuteronomy 32:7,[600] and to insist that the word

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[600] Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. — Deuteronomy 32:7

absolutely *has* to *always* be rendered in a more "perpetual" manner would also mean that verse would have needed to be translated as saying something along the lines of "remember the days that never ended," or "remember the days that we're still experiencing," instead.

But is there any basis for my assertion that the word עוֹלָם doesn't necessarily mean "without end" anywhere else in the Bible, or are those the only examples? In fact, that this word doesn't necessarily mean "never-ending" when it's used in the Bible can be seen in *many* places throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, Isaiah 32:14–15 says: "*Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*" Unless we're meant to believe that Jerusalem will be left forsaken and desolate and never recover or be inhabited again, as verse 14 seems to say, we have to interpret that "for ever" as meaning a specific period of time again, just as we had to do with the previous example. And, indeed, verse 15 tells us when that "for ever" ends, stating that Jerusalem will be left deserted "for ever," *until* the spirit be poured from on high.

And those weren't the only passages to demonstrate that it doesn't mean "never-ending" either. We also read about the fact that the Levitical priesthood will be "everlasting" in Exodus 40:15[601] (with "everlasting" also being translated from עוֹלָם there), yet we know from Hebrews 7:14–22 that the priesthood of Aaron's descendants is to be replaced by Jesus Christ, who will be *"a priest for*

[601] And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. — Exodus 40:15

ever after the order of Melchisedec,"[602] and we know from 1 Corinthians 15 that even this new priesthood which is figuratively said to last "for ever" is eventually no longer going to be necessary either (since you don't need any priests once there's no sin or death remaining).[603] That this "everlasting" priesthood will eventually come to an end is also backed up by the fact that, while the believing descendants of Isaac and Jacob will reign over the people of the earth as "kings and priests" during the thousand-year period of time when the kingdom of heaven finally fully exists on earth, there almost certainly won't be any Israelite priests on the New Earth at all, because there won't be any need for them with no physical temple in the New Jerusalem (and, again, there definitely won't be a need for them after the ages end and death has been destroyed, since everyone will have been quickened at that point).

Similarly, in Isaiah 24:5 we read: *"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."* This seems to tell us that the Old Covenant (also known as the Mosaic covenant, which is the only covenant that can be broken by humans – specifically by Israelites, since the Gentile nations weren't under

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[602] For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. — Hebrews 7:14–22

[603] And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. — 1 Corinthians 15:28

the Mosaic law[604] or connected with the covenants God made with Israel[605] – because all the other covenants of God are unconditional) can never come to an end and be replaced by a New Covenant because it's said to be "everlasting," but we know from other parts of Scripture that there *will* be a New Covenant for those in the house of Israel and the house of Judah,[606] and that their Old Covenant in fact began to decay[607] when Christ died[608] (and will indeed eventually vanish away entirely, if it hasn't already). So we can see that "everlasting" doesn't necessarily mean "never-ending" or "without end" when we read that word in the Bible any more than "for ever" does.

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[604] And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? — Deuteronomy 4:8

[605] For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; — Romans 9:3-4

[606] Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:31-34

[607] In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. — Hebrews 8:13

[608] And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. — Hebrews 9:15-17

And it's not just the Old Covenant that's referred to as an "everlasting covenant" in the KJV. The Abrahamic covenant is too, in 1 Chronicles 16:16-18.[609] But since we know that the specific portion of land called Canaan (now known as the land of Israel), which is what the promise in this covenant is about, will eventually cease to exist when the planet that land is located on is replaced by the New Earth, the "everlasting" period of time that this covenant consists of will also expire when our current earth does (which has to happen, since if our current universe isn't replaced by a New Heaven and a New Earth, our current earth would get pretty dark at the time of the heat death of the universe, presuming it isn't first engulfed by the sun when our star goes Red Giant, of course, as is believed to be likely to happen in a few billion years, give or take).

The translators of the KJV also demonstrated quite clearly that they didn't believe עוֹלָם always means "without end" in Ecclesiastes 12:5,[610] where they used the word עוֹלָם to say *"his long home"* when referring to the time someone who is dead spends in the grave. Since we know that everyone who dies will eventually be resurrected to face judgement (or enjoy salvation) one day, nobody could ever be resurrected from the dead if עוֹלָם meant "never-ending." (Interestingly, though, some Bible versions actually *do* translate the verse to say "eternal home," confirming that the word "eternal" is meant to be read just as figuratively in those versions as it is in the KJV, unless we're to believe there's no resurrection of the dead.)

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[609] Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; — 1 Chronicles 16:16-18

[610] Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: — Ecclesiastes 12:5

Now, I could go on and on with example[611] after example[612] of things that were said to be "for ever"[613] or "everlasting" that eventually ended (or that are said will eventually end) in the Bible, but I trust it's obvious by now that the translators believed those who read the KJV (or who heard it read aloud) are able to understand figurative language, and that they never intended for anyone to simply assume the terms "for ever" or "everlasting" should definitely be interpreted as meaning "never-ending" or "without end" when translated from the Hebrew Scriptures, with "for ever" generally just being figurative language that refers to "an age," or to "a seemingly long period of time with a definite beginning and end" (especially when translated from the word עוֹלָם), and "everlasting" generally just meaning "age-pertaining" ("pertaining to an age or ages," in other words), "age-during" ("taking place during an age or ages," in other words), or even just "long lasting," with nearly everything that's said to be "everlasting" or said to last "for ever" eventually coming to an end. These words are quite clearly being used as hyperbole in most parts of these books in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, and are not meant to be taken literally at all (and if you look עוֹלָם up in a concordance, you can see many more examples for yourself proving that this Hebrew word doesn't necessarily mean "never-ending" or "without end," and that "for ever" and "everlasting" don't either when used in the KJV).

And with all that in mind, if "for ever" and "everlasting" don't necessarily mean "without end" or "never-ending" in the parts of the Bible translated from the

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611 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. — 1 Kings 8:13

612 Behold, I build an house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. — 2 Chronicles 2:4

613 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. — 2 Kings 5:27

Hebrew Scriptures, it stands to reason that there's a good chance they don't necessarily mean that in the parts of the Bible translated from the Greek Scriptures either. Outside of the clear proof I've just provided from Paul's epistles that they don't, based on what he wrote about everyone eventually being "made alive" (at least it should be clear proof for those who are using systematic theology to interpret Scripture and aren't ignoring everything we've already covered), this is also made obvious by the fact that עוֹלָם is translated as αἰωνίων/"ahee-o'-nee-ohn" in the parts of the LXX (also known as the Septuagint, which is the earliest still-existing Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) where it's translated figuratively as "everlasting" in the KJV, and since αἰωνίων is often translated as "everlasting" or "eternal" in the books of the less literal Bible versions translated from the Greek Scriptures (although it's not always translated that way either, even in the KJV, also making it clear that αἰωνίων can mean things other than "never-ending," which is why it's sometimes also transliterated as "eonian" – which literally means "pertaining to an eon/age or eons/ages" – depending on your Bible version), one would think this means that we shouldn't just automatically assume the words "everlasting" and "eternal" were definitely meant to be interpreted literally in the English translations of these books either (especially since, if עוֹלָם often *doesn't* mean "never-ending," at least when it's used in the Hebrew Scriptures, it makes no sense to then say that its Greek translation as αἰωνίων can *only* mean "never-ending," as some people insist it must, when we already know from the LXX that it *rarely*, if ever, means that in Scripture anyway), and that neither should "for ever" or "never," both of which are also translated from cognates of αἰωνίων: such as αἰών/"ahee-ohn'," which literally means a singular "age," or "a long period of time with a definite beginning and end" (and which is why it's sometimes transliterated as "eon," depending on your Bible version), and αἰῶνας/"ahee-ohn'-as," which literally means plural "ages," or "multiple periods of time, each with a definite beginning and end" (and which is why this word is sometimes transliterated as "eons," depending on your Bible version), not to mention the fact that both of these Greek words are also translated as "age"

and "ages"[614] in different parts of less literal English translations as well – although the KJV tends to use "world" in places that refer to a single "age,"[615] but various other less literal translations use "age" instead of "world" in those same verses – telling us that these Greek words definitely can't *only* mean "without end" or "can't ever."

In fact, unless we want to believe there are three eternities, including a "past eternity" (aside from the examples we already looked at, we can see from the way the KJV translators rendered 1 Corinthians 2:7 to say *"before the world"*[616] instead of "before for ever" or "before eternity" that they knew better than to always translate the word αἰών in a manner that denotes a period of time which never ends), as well as a "present eternity" and a "future eternity" (which the KJV translators rendered as *"neither in this world, neither in the world to come"*[617] rather than "neither in this for ever or in the for ever to come" or "neither in this eternity or in the eternity to come" in Matthew 12:32), we can see that the word αἰών simply doesn't necessarily mean "without end," just as the KJV's rendering of αἰωνίων as *"before the world began"* in 2 Timothy 1:9[618] instead of "before eternity began," not to mentioned as *"since the world*

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[614] Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: — Colossians 1:26

[615] But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: — Luke 20:35

[616] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: — 1 Corinthians 2:7

[617] And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. — Matthew 12:32

[618] Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, — 2 Timothy 1:9

began" in Romans 16:25[619] instead of "since eternity began," proves that αἰωνίων doesn't necessarily mean "never-ending" – and doesn't necessarily refer to *actual* "eternity," which literally means "without beginning or end" – either (in fact, I'm not aware of a single version of the Bible that renders it as "eternity" in this verse, which makes sense considering the fact that you can't have a time before literal "eternity," nor could literal "eternity" even have a beginning). So if anyone ever tries to claim that αἰών and/or αἰωνίων can *only* mean "never-ending" or some other word or phrase that denotes an endless period of time, and that it can't possibly refer to something more temporary, simply show them the various passages we just looked at, which is all the proof one needs that this isn't the case at all.

This all goes for when the word αἰών is translated in a sentence to say "never" as well, as already mentioned. This can be demonstrated by the way John 11:25-26 is rendered in the KJV: *"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* We know this *can't* be a literal translation, because people who believed in Jesus at the time He made that statement *did* eventually die physically (and still do today). So unless we're to believe that Paul actually *wasn't* revealing a mystery (meaning revealing a secret that hadn't been disclosed before he did so – for those who don't know, "secret" is what the Greek word μυστήριον/"moos-tay'-ree-on," which is transliterated as "mystery" in the KJV, literally means) in 1 Corinthians 15:51 when he wrote, *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"* – which also proves the eventual salvation of all humanity, I should add, because the change that Paul said we'll *all* experience is

[619] Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, — Romans 16:25

immortality,[620] and immortality for humans is always connected with salvation, as we've already covered – we have to interpret the word "never" figuratively in the KJV in that passage in John, because Paul was the *first* to reveal the secret that some people will never die prior to being quickened. And Jesus couldn't have been referring to the supposed "spiritual death" that most Christians believe in, because "never" literally means "not even one time," yet Christians believe we already "died spiritually" at least once, at the time of our first sin, so it couldn't refer to that concept even if there was such a thing as "spiritual death," at least not without adding the word "again" to the sentence (and that word is definitely not there in the original Greek, any more than it's there in the KJV). So unless Paul was lying about this being a secret at the time he wrote about it, the passage in John *has* to be a figurative translation of the Greek, simply meaning, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not be dying for the age" (based on the words it's translated from in the original Greek, since that's a literal translation of what Jesus said), telling us that believers (at least believers saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision, since this was stated by Jesus during His earthly ministry) won't die during the 1,000-year age they'll enjoy in the kingdom of heaven when it begins on the earth (the reason we know it's only referring to that one particular age rather than referring to multiple ages is because it's translated from an Accusative Singular variation of αἰών rather than from a plural variation of the word). That's not to say the word "never," when translated from αἰών, can *never* have been meant to be interpreted literally. It's just that one has to consider the context of the passage in question to determine whether doing so would contradict another part of Scripture, because if it would, then that obviously can't be how God meant for it to be interpreted.

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[620] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. — 1 Corinthians 15:52

But even in passages where it might seem to make sense to interpret some of these terms literally at first glance, such as Romans 16:26 for example[621] (which uses the phrase *"the everlasting God"* in the KJV), this still isn't necessarily the case. Some would insist that to interpret it figuratively would mean that God will eventually die, but this verse isn't actually trying to tell us that God's life will never end in the first place. The fact of the matter is, we already know that God isn't going to die based on earlier Scripture, such as Psalm 102:27, which told us long ago that His *"years shall have no end,"*[622] so that's not something Paul needed to explain to his readers. Instead, if we interpret the word "everlasting" consistently with its other instances in the KJV where it's translated from αἰωνίων (meaning we interpret it as figuratively referring to a long period of time, or even as pertaining to the ages), we can see that Paul is simply telling us that God is the age-pertaining God, meaning He doesn't just sit on high, removed from our struggles in time, but rather that He cares about – and is even intimately involved in – what happens during the ages. And those who might think this limits Him to the ages aren't thinking things through carefully enough, since otherwise God being said to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would limit Him to being the God of those three men, and those three men alone, as well. And the same goes for passages such as Galatians 1:3-5[623] and Philippians 4:20,[624] where a more consistent interpretation of the passages as figuratively saying "to our God and Father be glory for the ages of the ages" wouldn't mean they're telling us that God's glory will end when the ages do, any more than the figurative interpretation of

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[621] But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: — Romans 16:26

[622] But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. — Psalm 102:27

[623] Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. — Galatians 1:3-5

[624] Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. — Philippians 4:20

Romans 16:26 means that God's life would end at that time; it just means that Paul was simply focusing on the glory God will finally receive – which He certainly isn't receiving during the current age, at least not to the extent He will at that time – when the two greatest ages finally begin (those two ages being known as "the ages of the ages," or even "the eons of the eons," depending on your Bible translation, which, as those who are familiar with the Doctrine of the Eons know, is referring to the thousand-year age, or eon, when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel, as well as to the final age/eon on the New Earth, but I don't have the space to get into the details of that topic here, so I'm going to leave it up to you to dig deeper into that subject if you're at all curious to learn more; I highly recommend the book titled *God's Eonian Purpose* by Adlai Loudy as a great starting point – which you can buy as a physical book, but which has also been made available by its publishers as a free PDF[625] – although keep in mind that he made a distinction between "ages" and "eons" in his book which most others don't, but it's still a very worthwhile read). Simply put, with very few exceptions, the Bible doesn't delve into details pertaining to the rest of eternity, but is instead focused almost entirely on details pertaining to the ages (even though this fact might be less obvious to people who only read less literal translations of Scripture). What occurs after the end of the ages isn't something that God seems to want us to know about right now (other than to know that everyone will have been quickened/saved by that time), but rather He appears to want us to concern ourselves with what happens *during* the ages instead.

However, even if we did interpret "everlasting" and "for ever and ever" in those particular passages about God literally, the fact remains that, if we're reading Bible versions which do use the words "for ever," "everlasting," and "eternal," one has to be aware that "for ever" in those versions is still very often just figurative language that refers to "an age" or "ages," or to "a seemingly long period of time with a definite beginning and end," and the same goes for not

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[625] *God's Eonian Purpose* by Adlai Loudy: https://s3.amazonaws.com/unsearchablerich/booksonwebsite/©CPC+Gods+Eonian+Purpose.pdf

only “everlasting,” but also “eternal,” which is often used as a synonym for “everlasting” in the KJV since it’s almost always translated from the same Greek word too – with the one exception in the Greek Scriptures,[626] where it’s instead translated from ἀΐδιος/“ah-id'-ee-os,” not causing any problem for the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity at all either. And so the bottom line is that we should always be considering the context of the passages these various words are being used in, as well as comparing these passages to the rest of Scripture, in order to determine whether these terms actually should be literally interpreted as meaning “without end” or “never-ending” (not to mention “can’t ever,” in the case of the word “never” being used) in those instances, or whether they should be interpreted figuratively instead, to make sure a literal interpretation of a less literal English translation wouldn’t contradict other parts of the Bible, in other words. Because, just as the scriptural references to an “everlasting” Old Covenant can’t literally be talking about a never-ending covenant, since that would contradict the passages which talk about how it has to fade away and be replaced with by a New Covenant, scriptural references to “everlasting” judgements (or to punishments which last “for ever,” or even “for ever and ever”) can’t literally be talking about judgements and punishments which never end, since that would contradict the passages which talk about the salvation of all. (This, by the way, also means that, while we can be said to be given “eternal life” – or given “eonian life,” as it can be more literally referred to, and which it’s sometimes translated as, depending on your Bible version – at the point we believe the Gospel and are saved, this can really only be said to be the case from a relative, or perhaps proleptic, perspective, because the actual, physical experience of “eternal life” – referring to our quickening and being taken to the heavens in the case of those of us in the body of Christ, and to getting to live in the kingdom of heaven during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth in the case of those in the Israel of God – can’t actually begin from a

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[626] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: — Romans 1:20

literal perspective until the final ages, or eons, actually commence, since we now know that the phrase really means "age-pertaining life," or "eon-pertaining life," when interpreted consistently with the rest of Scripture.) And even if someone simply ignored everything I covered about the Hebrew and Greek words we just looked at, because they prefer to only consider the English words in the KJV, the facts about the figurative meaning of the English words they're translated into in the KJV should still be pretty obvious based on the passages I used to discuss them in their original languages.

But in case anybody is somehow *still* skeptical about the salvation of all humanity after reading all that, Paul confirmed it beyond any shadow of a doubt when he wrote in 1 Timothy 2:3-6 that Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all.[627] You see, when a ransom is fully paid, all those who are held captive are set free, unless the one paying the ransom has been lied to (and there's nothing in this passage which qualifies the "all" as referring only to believers, so to insist it only includes them is to once again read one's assumptions into the text, especially in light of the fact that Paul began the chapter talking about all men alive, including all those in authority at the time,[628] and also said in verse 4 that all mankind is included in those whom God wills to salvation, and there's nothing in the text to indicate he'd suddenly begun referring only to believers immediately after that, but instead wrote that Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for the same "all" he'd been talking about already, telling his readers that every human who will have ever lived has been ransomed, even though they won't all experience their salvation at the same time).

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[627] For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. — 1 Timothy 2:3-6

[628] I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. — 1 Timothy 2:1-2

To break it down:

1. Anyone Christ "gave Himself a ransom for" *will* be ransomed.
2. If someone is ransomed as a result of Christ's death, they *will* be saved.
3. The "all" that Christ "gave Himself a ransom for" includes all mankind.
4. All mankind will be saved.

Please don't confuse this as meaning that Christ died in our place, receiving the penalty for our sins so we wouldn't have to receive said penalty for our sins ourselves, though, as many Christians believe He did (so long as we choose to believe He did so, they'd also claim). Of course, even if the idea that Christ paid the price for our sins in our place was a scriptural concept, it makes no sense that we would have to choose to believe He paid the price for our sins in our place in order for Him to have actually paid the price for our sins in our place (He either did or He didn't, and our belief couldn't change the fact either way), because if those who didn't choose to believe it then had to pay the price themselves, it would mean God was double-charging, which would be quite dishonest of Him (not to mention most unfair to His Son, Who endured beatings and the pain and humiliation of the cross before entering the death state, all in order to be a ransom for *all* sinners in order to save them,[629] and God isn't going to shortchange Him of any of the sinners He suffered and died for in order to save, regardless of whether some of them might not have been born wise enough to come to believe He did so prior to their death or His return – and those who don't believe this good news includes most Christians out there as well, by the way, since they themselves don't believe that He ransomed "all" humanity through His death for our sins either, which means they haven't fully understood, and hence can't be said to have truly believed, Paul's Gospel, and as such can't be said to be in the body of Christ).

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[629] This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. — 1 Timothy 1:15

That said, there's absolutely nothing written *anywhere* in Scripture which even *implies* that Jesus died "in our place," or that He received the penalty for anyone's sins "in their place" so they wouldn't have to pay the price for their sins themselves. However, for those who have never really thought about this, let's consider what it would mean if He actually *did* pay a penalty for our sins so that we don't have to suffer that particular penalty ourselves. If He did, and if ending up in the lake of fire without being able to leave it was the penalty for our sins (whether consciously or otherwise), it would mean that Jesus would have to still be burning in the lake of fire (experiencing the specific punishment we deserve is what paying the penalty "in our place" means, after all). But since He never even set foot in the lake of fire to begin with (He couldn't have, since it hasn't even begun burning in the Valley of Hinnom yet, at least not as of the time this book was written, and He wasn't crucified or buried in that "hell"/valley either), much less remained there for all time (which would have to be the case if that truly was the price to be paid for our sins that He paid), burning without end in the lake of fire obviously wasn't a punishment He suffered "in our place," which means it couldn't possibly be the specific penalty we deserve either, at least not if He *did* pay the penalty we deserved "in our place." And if the penalty He supposedly paid "in our place" was simply death instead, nobody who "got saved" would ever actually drop dead, which obviously isn't the case (and it couldn't simply be crucifixion that He endured "in our place" either, or else all non-believers would have to eventually be literally crucified as their punishment, but there's definitely nothing in Scripture which even implies this to be the case). This also means the penalty couldn't be never-ending "separation from God," since, if it were, Jesus would also have to be separated from God at this point in time, and for all time, in order to truly "pay the penalty in our place." And for those who want to suggest that the penalty might be "spiritual death," whatever that's supposed to be, it would again have to mean that A) Christ "died spiritually" for us "in our place" rather than died physically on the cross (and I'm assuming nobody actually believes He "died

spiritually"), but also that B) nobody can be "spiritually dead" before they die physically if Christ paid that penalty "in our place," yet most Christians believe we're *already* "spiritually dead" *prior* to salvation, so there's no way He could have "died spiritually" for us "in our place" so we don't have to ever "die spiritually" ourselves, because we're already in this spiritual state *before* we get saved (or we would be if the common Christian viewpoints of "spiritual death" and that Jesus paid the price in our place were actually true, of course).

This doesn't mean that there *isn't* a penalty for our sins, however. In fact, there is, and that penalty is indeed death[630] (specifically, to die and remain permanently dead). It's just that Jesus didn't die "in our place" to receive the penalty so we don't have to, which should be obvious considering the fact that believers continue to drop dead today (and also because He didn't remain permanently dead, which is a part of the penalty). And while it's true that the reason we die is simply the mortality we inherited from Adam, the sins we can't avoid because of that mortality also make us worthy of the death most of us will experience so any mortal humans who end up sinning (which is all of us,[631] or at least all of us who don't die before we're able to sin, although everyone who does die prior to that point will presumably eventually sin as they grow up on the New Earth after they've been resurrected) still need to have their sin dealt with. Because, sure, God could temporarily overlook sin, and in "Old Testament" times He did indeed pass over the penalties of many sins which occurred[632] (especially the sins of those who participated in the sacrificial system under the Mosaic law, presuming they didn't commit "a sin unto

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[630] For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:23

[631] For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; — Romans 3:23

[632] Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; — Romans 3:25

death,"[633] meaning a sin that had a death penalty attached to it under the law). But the blood of bulls and goats could not actually take away sins[634] (the death of these animals couldn't actually remove the penalty of sin, nor could it keep us from sinning again), and so if Christ had not given His life for us (and if God hadn't known ahead of time that this was going to happen), it would have actually been unjust of God (Who judges according to truth[635]) to pass over the penalty of their sins and treat them as if they *hadn't* sinned and *weren't* deserving of death, even if they *did* perform the required sacrifices under the law (and it would be equally unjust of Him to simply forgive us today without what Christ did as well).

Because He lived a completely sinless life and then became *"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"*[636] however, Christ became *more* deserving of the authority to save us sinners than we sinners remained deserving of permanent death. In fact, He was given all power (once again translated from the Greek ἐξουσία, which, as we learned in a previous chapter of this book, simply means "authority") in heaven and in earth,[637] and so, now, not only does Christ have the authority to save all of the sinners He died to save from the condemnation which our sins made us deserving of (that condemnation being to remain permanently in the death state after we die), as well as to quicken

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633 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. — 1 John 5:16-17

634 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. — Hebrews 10:4

635 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. — Romans 2:2

636 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. — Philippians 2:8

637 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. — Matthew 28:18

everyone and destroy death altogether, God is now also able to righteously forgive sins at any time (without our consent, even, if He wants to do so) because His doing so is in accord with what Christ deserves due to His obedience. And since Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15 that *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"* and not that Christ Jesus came into the world to save only those few sinners who happened to be wise enough to decide to let Him save them, every sinner will ultimately end up saved in the end because it's what Christ Jesus came to do and also deserves. (And I should probably also point out that the condemnation we deserve for our sins is not the same condemnation that we experience because of *Adam's* sin, since that was simply condemnation to mortality leading to death, which in turn condemned us to give in to sin, whereas it's that sin we give in to thanks to our mortality which is what makes us deserve to eventually be condemned to remain dead permanently – which means we could also say that we've been condemned to be condemned to be condemned, with Christ dying in order to save us from *all* of those forms of condemnation, along with *other* forms of condemnation that I don't have the time to get into the details of right now as well, at least in the case of some people.)

So, while He didn't die "in our place," or pay the penalty "in our place" (since most of us still die, and since He didn't remain dead), Christ *did* die in order that *the penalty could be justly set aside* at whatever point God decides to do so for each of us (although *"every man in his own order"*), at which time each of us will be justified, be resurrected (if we've died), and be made free from even being able to die ever again (be made immortal, in other words). That's not all, though. Because He died *for our sins*, He not only condemned sin (not us – sin itself) in the flesh,[638] but His death also put away sin,[639] removing sin from the

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[638] For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: — Romans 8:3

[639] For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. — Hebrews 9:26

equation for all humanity altogether, even if perhaps only proleptically for the time being (thus making Him the antitype of the goat in the wilderness in the Mosaic law,[640] among other things), and if sin has been put away, in some ways it can be said that it's ultimately no longer something anyone needs to worry about at all (and in the long run, humanity as a whole definitely doesn't have to worry about it). You see, when He went down into the tomb, it can be said that He brought sin down into the earth with Him, and when He was resurrected three days later, He returned without that sin, and so sin is no longer being held against anyone anymore (at least from an absolute perspective, even if not, perhaps, from a relative perspective), regardless of whether they believe it or not, because Christ died *for our sins,* which is yet more proof that everyone will experience salvation in the end, when they're eventually made immortal and incapable of sinning any longer (although those relative few who *"come unto the knowledge of the truth"* now, meaning those who understand and believe what it means that Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried and rose again on the third day, get to enjoy a special form of salvation on top of the type of salvation that everyone will experience: including freedom from religion – because they know there's nothing they have to do, or even that they could do, in order to receive the benefits of what Christ did for us, since they're aware that having to do any act at all would be a work performed in order to earn that gift, even if that act was simply having to choose to receive the free gift that Christ already guaranteed for all of us – and also getting to experience that salvation before the rest of humanity does too, being quickened long before the

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[640] And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. — Leviticus 16:20-22

majority of humanity will be, among other benefits once we're in heaven as well).

That's not all, though, because Paul also wrote (in Ephesians 1:13-14): *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* How does that prove the salvation of all? Well, if you read it in the context of the whole chapter, and are also familiar with the different types of salvation mentioned in Scripture, you'll notice that this section of the chapter (verses 3 through 14[641]) is primarily about the blessings that God has purposed beforehand to literally lavish upon those (*"hath abounded toward us"*) whom He chose to become members of the body of Christ. Simply put, this section of the chapter is all about how God has predestined certain people to experience certain blessings in Christ, blessings which not everyone will experience. This isn't Calvinism, however, since experiencing the blessings mentioned in this chapter aren't about the general

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[641] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. — Ephesians 1:3-14

salvation that everyone receives. It's only those who are experiencing the special "eternal life" form of salvation Paul taught about that he was writing to in this passage, specifically the body of Christ.

And so when Paul wrote, "*after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,"* he was saying that his readers had heard the word of truth, and, in what is essentially a parenthetical, explained what that word of truth they heard was: the good news (*"gospel"*) of their salvation. To put it simply, Paul wrote here that the good news they had heard was the good news of their already guaranteed salvation – meaning the general salvation that all humanity has been guaranteed – not the good news of how they *could* have salvation if only they did something specific (note that he didn't write, "*after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your* ***potential*** *salvation, although only if you actually believed that gospel,"* but rather that they had heard the good news about the salvation which was *already theirs* – since it was already everyone's, even if perhaps just proleptically at present, thanks to Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection – after which they trusted that this good news about their already guaranteed salvation was indeed true). The point here is that, because there is no included proposition in the text connected with the salvation they heard about, the good news they heard was a proclamation that they were already guaranteed salvation prior to hearing about it (as the outcome of Christ's death for our sins, and His subsequent burial and resurrection, meaning as the outcome of the facts proclaimed in Paul's Gospel). Simply put, Paul couldn't tell them the good news of their salvation if it wasn't *already* their salvation (at least from a proleptic, or perhaps absolute, perspective).

Of course, most people read this verse and assume that either the first part of the verse (*"In whom ye also trusted"*) or the last part of the verse (*"in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"*) actually is a proposition about their salvation, and that their salvation wasn't guaranteed

until after they actually believed the supposed good news about how they could attain said salvation. But this is a misunderstanding due to not being aware of what the different types of salvation mentioned in Scripture are all about. All the first part of the verse is telling us is that they trusted Christ *after* they heard the good news of their already guaranteed general, absolute form of salvation which He'd already won for all of us (including them), and all the last part of the verse is telling us is that, after they trusted that Christ had already guaranteed that form of salvation for all of us because of what He accomplished through His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection, even before they believed it, they were then sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which means they were also given a special, relative form of salvation (*"an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"*) which doesn't apply to all humanity the way the salvation that Christ guaranteed for all of humanity does, since not everyone is sealed by the Holy Spirit. All that is to say, Paul's little parenthetical in Ephesians 1:13 is simply telling us that "the good news of [their and everyone's general] salvation" was already "as good as done" for them (and for everyone) before they heard it, and after they heard about the salvation that was already guaranteed for them (because it's guaranteed for everyone), they trusted Christ and were sealed with the Holy Spirit, and hence were also promised the special "eternal life" form of salvation which only members of the body of Christ get to enjoy (and were then awaiting that salvation guaranteed for everyone, meaning the quickening of their mortal bodies, referred to here as *"the redemption of the purchased possession,"* which they'll receive when Christ comes for His body, and which everyone else will also eventually receive, although *"every man in his own order,"* as we already discussed). Basically, just as it is with 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, this passage talks about both forms of salvation connected with Paul's Gospel, and just as it is when it comes to that passage, if one isn't aware of this fact, they'll horribly misinterpret Ephesians 1:13-14 too.

But even clearer than that example, Paul also wrote that God is *"the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe"* in 1 Timothy 4:10,[642] and honestly, it doesn't get any more clear than this, with Paul telling us that God will save absolutely everyone, even if those who believe this good news will get to experience a special level of salvation on top of that (as already discussed, including freedom from religion, as well as an earlier experience of immortality than everyone else, among other things). Every Christian out there knows the definition of the word "especially" (or "**specially**," which the KJV uses here, and which ultimately also means "particularly," not "exclusively," and which happens to be the origin of the term "**special** form of salvation" that I've been using throughout this book), yet somehow most of them seem to forget what it means when they get to this verse. But their apparent selective memory aside, they'd still recognize that if a teacher said, "I've given everyone a passing grade this year, especially Lydia who got an A+," the teacher would have meant that, while nobody else got an A+, they still all passed, since these Christians actually *do* know that "especially" (and even "specially") doesn't mean "specifically" or "only," even if they need to pretend to themselves that it does when considering what Paul had to say here.

Likewise, if someone wrote, *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,"* the way Paul did in Galatians 6:10, they'd know that they should focus most of their positive efforts on believers *("them who are of the household of faith,"* the very same people Paul was referring to when he wrote, *"specially of those that believe,"* in 1 Timothy 4:10), but that they should still try to do good unto everyone else (the very same *"all men"* that Paul said God was the Saviour of) as well, and not that we should do good *only* unto believers (and for those who might be wondering, yes, the Greek word translated as "especially" in Galatians is indeed the same Greek word translated as "specially" in the KJV in the verse we've been looking

[642] For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. — 1 Timothy 4:10

at in 1 Timothy: μάλιστα/"mal'-is-tah"). In fact, if "specially" did mean "only," the part of the verse which tells us God is the Saviour of all men would be a lie, because it didn't say God is "the *potential* Saviour of all men, but really only of those that believe" (or that God is "the Saviour *available for* all men, although *only actually* the Saviour of those that believe"), but instead plainly tells us that He actually *is* the Saviour *of all* men, and to be able to legitimately be called the saviour of someone, you have to actually save them at some point, which means that, to be able to truly be called "the Saviour of all men," God has to actually save all men eventually. Bottom line, if even *one* human fails to end up experiencing salvation by the end of the ages, Paul would be just as much of a liar as that teacher would turn out to be if any of the students in Lydia's class received a failing grade after telling them they'd all passed.

And Calvinists who insist that Paul is only claiming "God is the Saviour of all *kinds* or *sorts* of men," and that God only wants "all *sorts* of men" to be saved rather than actually "*will* have *all men* to be saved," as Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:3-4,[643] A) that's clearly not what these passages say anyway (the words "kinds" and "sorts" aren't there in the text), and B) they're ignoring the second part of the verse where Paul says "specially of believers" (which can't really follow the phrase "all *kinds* of men" and make any sense in this case, since "specially" would then be have to be qualifying who the "all *kinds* of men" are, but the word "specially" simply can't be used that way, because it means "particularly," not "exclusively") rather than "specifically believers," so they're just reading their own preconceived doctrinal bias that not everyone will experience salvation into these passages because they have no other choice if they don't want it to contradict their theological presuppositions, just as non-Calvinist Christians who believe in never-ending punishment do in their own way as well.

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[643] For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. — 1 Timothy 2:3-4

All that is to say, this verse (which is yet another example of Paul referring to both the general and special forms of salvation in the same passage) once again verifies that the doctrine of salvation connected with Paul's Gospel that he taught about throughout his epistles is indeed that every human who is affected by the curse and locked up in unbelief[644] – not to mention in vanity[645] (neither of which we've been locked up in because of any choice we made, but rather, from a relative perspective, because of a choice Adam made, and, from an absolute perspective, because God Himself chose to lock everyone up in that manner so we could eventually also be shown mercy and be delivered from the bondage of corruption, since, as we already discussed in a previous chapter, if we'd never experienced evil we couldn't have truly appreciated the contrasting goodness, and if we'd never experienced sin and death, we could never experience, and hence never truly appreciate, grace; immortality might not mean as much to us either, without having first experienced mortality, I should add) – will also be equally (actually, even more so[646]) affected by the cross and made immortal, even if it doesn't happen to everyone at the same time (with believers getting that special, earlier experience of salvation they've been promised, as well as potentially getting to rule and reign with Christ in the heavens during the impending ages, or perhaps getting to rule over the earth from Israel – depending on which sort of salvation they're experiencing –

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644 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. — Romans 11:32

645 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. — Romans 8:20-21

646 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) — Romans 5:15-17

figuratively referred to as "everlasting life," or as "life eternal," in the KJV and other less literal Bible versions).

In fact, the verses (Romans 8:18-23) around the passage which tells us that all creation (referred to in the KJV as *"the creature"*) has been locked up in vanity also tells us quite definitively that all humanity will indeed be saved: *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."* Notice that Paul said "the creature" (meaning creation, referring to all human beings – if not all biological beings who can look forward to things – and not just those who are in the body of Christ) has the earnest expectation of *"the manifestation of the sons of God"* (referring to our appearing with Christ when He returns[647]), because *"the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God,"* and they wouldn't be looking forward to our appearing if they weren't going to benefit from it, which we know they will, since Paul wrote there that they *shall* be delivered from the bondage of corruption and will become *"children of God"* (not to be confused with those of us who are *"the sons of God,"* which is a much more esteemed position – referring to our position as joint-heirs with Christ[648] – although we

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[647] When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. — Colossians 3:4

[648] And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. — Romans 8:17

are still technically *"children of God"*[649] as well, even as *"sons of God"* – and yes, women who join the body of Christ are included in the *"sons of God"* label too, just as all women are in the *"all men"* reference in 1 Timothy 4, which just means "all humans"). In addition, verse 23 says that it's *"not only they, but ourselves also,"* which means *"they"* (those who *aren't* in the body of Christ) and *"ourselves also"* (those who *are* in the body of Christ, referring to those *"which have the firstfruits of the Spirit"* – telling us that there will be others *after* those in the body of Christ who will also have the Spirit, based on the meaning of "firstfruits") will **all** enjoy *"the redemption of our body"* (our quickening, in other words, which is salvation; although *"every man in his own order,"* of course).

However, as I'm sure you expected, I have to once again ask the usual question: If Paul *was* trying to explain that God indeed *will* save everyone eventually, but that He'll also give believers a special salvation on top of that in the meantime, I'd like you to tell me what he would have needed to have written differently in those passages in his first epistle to Timothy and in Romans 8 in order to convince you that this is what he meant.

It's not just salvation that all humans will experience, though; it's also reconciliation. And while the salvation that involves being made immortal is technically only experienced by mortal beings such as humans, reconciliation will be experienced by all sentient beings in the universe who require it, as demonstrated by a passage where Paul used a similar sort of parallelism to the ones he used in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5, this time in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians. In fact, I don't know how someone can read verses

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[649] The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: — Romans 8:16

15 through 20 of that chapter[650] and not end up a believer in the reconciliation of all creatures, although it seems most people somehow miss the fact that Paul is using a type of parallelism known as an Extended Alternation here – likely because they probably aren't familiar with Paul's consistent use of parallelisms throughout his epistles to prove the salvation (and reconciliation) of all humanity – to tell us that the same "all" created *by Him* are also the same "all" that are reconciled *to Him* by the blood of Christ's cross, and that this passage tells us that not only are *all* humans (meaning *all* the things created in earth, as mentioned in both verses 16 and 20) both created by and reconciled to Him, but all the creatures in heaven/outer space (as also mentioned in both of the same two verses, referring to a list of spiritual beings that overlaps with another list of creatures who are described in Ephesians 6:12 as being the spiritual wickedness in high places[651]) are also both created by and reconciled to Him, and there would be no need to reconcile spiritual beings in heaven who weren't first alienated, so it can only be the foolish[652] (and sometimes sinful, or even evil) spiritual beings in the heavens who are being reconciled; and if all of them are going to be reconciled, as Paul promises they will be in that passage, we know that all the creatures on the earth will be as well, as he also says they will be in the same passage (and these are the group of beings I mentioned earlier that weren't a part of the first half of the parallelism in 1 Corinthians 15:22, since they

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650 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. — Colossians 1:15-20

651 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. — Ephesians 6:12

652 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: — Job 4:18

aren't descendants of Adam and hence aren't mortal like us humans are because of his action, but can still be reconciled to God because of Christ's action, just like Eve, even if none of them were technically included in the point being made by that particular parallelism).

It's important to keep in mind that the word "reconciliation" refers to the parties on *both* sides of an estrangement or conflict being at peace with one another, meaning that God is at peace with them *and* they're at peace with God when this reconciliation occurs, and this wouldn't the case if any of them were still being tormented in the lake of fire at that time, which they would have to leave right before Christ destroys death by resurrecting and quickening any dead humans still left in the lake of fire as well (thus proving that "for ever and ever" isn't meant to be interpreted as literally meaning "without end," even when it comes to the punishment of the spiritual beings known as the devil, the beast, and the false prophet in the lake of fire, since they'd have to be included in the "all" which are both created by and reconciled to God as well, telling us that it actually means "until the end of the ages," or "for the duration of the final age or ages," depending on the context of the passage in question and the plurality of the word αἰών in said passage in the original Greek, with "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night **for the ages of the ages**" [or **"for the eons of the eons"**] being what the part of Revelation 20:10 which talks about the duration of their torment, for example, actually means – think of the word "ever" in the KJV as often being used as metonymy for "age" or "ages," basically – with "the ages of the ages" referring to the final two impending ages that we'll get to enjoy before the ages finally come to an end), since Christ's defeat of all other enemies takes place just prior to the destruction of death (and if there's a better way to put an end to an

enemy[653] than turning that enemy into a willing servant, or even a friend,[654] I don't know what it would be). This is also proven by the prophecy of Philippians 2:10-11 which tells us, *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,"* because nobody can say Jesus is the Lord and truly mean it apart from the Holy Spirit leading them to do so,[655] which means anyone who does so will possess the Holy Spirit at that time. There's absolutely no indication in this passage that this declaration will be forced out of them the way most Christians assume it will be, especially since it's *"to the glory of God the Father,"* and He'd receive far more glory from a willing confession based on the reconciliation that Paul wrote about than from a coerced concession by an enemy, so the only reason to read the idea of this confession being forced out of still-existing enemies at gunpoint (or whatever sort of threat it takes to get a presumably immortal spiritual being to assent to something they don't want to assent to) rather than being made by friends and willing subjects who are now at peace with Him in their minds is, once again, preconceived doctrinal bias that not every human will experience salvation and that not every created being who needs it will be truly reconciled to God. But if you're having trouble with this parallelism, replace the word "all" with the variable *x* again in both verses 16 and 20 of Colossians 1 – in fact, do it in all the verses *from* verse 16 to verse 20 – and it should become clear what it means.

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[653] Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. — Romans 12:20-21

[654] When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. — Proverbs 16:7

[655] Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. — 1 Corinthians 12:3

The First Man: Adam = Condemnation [to mortality and sinfulness] of all	**The Second Man: Christ = Salvation [immortality and sinlessness] of the same all**
Therefore as… (Romans 5:18)	**Even so…**
by the offence of **one** [not ours]	by the righteousness of **one** [not ours]
judgement came [not in the original Greek text, but included in the KJV] upon	*the free gift came* [not in the original Greek text, but included in the KJV] upon
all men	[the same] all men
to condemnation	unto justification of life
For as… (Romans 5:19)	**So…**
by **one man's** disobedience [not ours]	by the obedience of **one** [not ours]
many were made	shall [the same] many be made
sinners	righteous
For as… (1 Corinthians 15:22)	**Even so…**
in Adam [meaning because of what Adam did]	in Christ [meaning because of what Christ did]
all die [meaning all are born mortal]	shall all be made alive [meaning the same all will be made immortal/be saved]
For by Him… (Colossians 1:16)	**By Him… (Colossians 1:20)**
were all things created	to reconcile all things unto himself (having made peace through the blood of his [Christ's] cross)
that are in heaven, and that are in earth [whether angelic or human]	whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven [whether human or angelic]

Now, some try to argue that verse 21 of Colossians chapter 1[656] contradicts this conclusion, but that just means they aren't reading the text very carefully, since A) it really should be obvious that the point Paul was making about the eventual reconciliation of all created beings concludes with the end of verse 20, and B) they somehow miss the fact that when Paul wrote, *"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet **now** hath he reconciled,"* in that verse, he was simply stating that his readers had already experienced reconciliation at the time he wrote the letter. But since we're not claiming that verses 16 to 20 say *everyone* has currently been reconciled in their minds yet anyway, the current reconciliation of believers doesn't preclude the future reconciliation of everyone else he promised would eventually be reconciled as well (in fact, if it did mean that, it would also mean that no humans other than those who first read this epistle some 2,000 years ago could be reconciled after that time, which would mean there's no hope for you or me either). It's also important to notice that it's only in our minds that Paul says the alienation takes place prior to being reconciled, as well as to know that the alienation is entirely one-sided at this point in time, with religious humans (and foolish spiritual beings) mistakenly believing that God is still angry with them because of their wicked works, as it could be said He was from a certain (almost certainly hyperbolic) perspective prior to the crucifixion,[657] not realizing that God is actually already at peace with everyone (in fact, from an absolute perspective, He always has been), and because of what He did through Christ, He isn't even

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[656] And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled — Colossians 1:21

[657] God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. — Psalm 7:11

imputing the trespasses of the world unto them at all[658] – remember, while evil acts will be judged at the Great White Throne, sin won't be, because sin has already been entirely taken care of by Christ – but is instead now asking those of us in the body of Christ to beseech the rest of the world to be reconciled to God (or, more strictly speaking, to be conciliated to God, since the Greek word translated as "reconciled" in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 in the KJV is καταλλάσσω/ "kat-al-las'-so," which, like "conciliation," is much more one-sided than the Greek word ἀποκαταλλάσσω/"ap-ok-at-al-las'-so" – which was also translated as "reconciled," in Colossians 1:20-21 – is), meaning to be at peace with God in their minds because He's already at peace with them, and to believe the good news of their already guaranteed salvation because of what Christ did (and it seems we'll be bringing a similar sort of message of reconciliation to the alienated spiritual beings in the heavens, after Christ takes us up there to be with Him, as well, but that's a much bigger topic than I have the time to get into here).

Some also attempt to argue that Jesus doesn't help angels, but only helps the descendants of Abraham, based on a certain type of translation of Hebrews 2:16 which is rendered along those lines (but which is translated in the KJV as: *"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."*), in order to argue that Colossians 1:20 can't mean spiritual beings will be reconciled to God. But even if theirs was a good translation of the verse, it doesn't say Jesus will *never* reconcile angels and other spiritual beings. Just as not every human is reconciled to God in their minds at present, this translation of the verse could also only mean that Jesus isn't helping angels out *at present*

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[658] And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. — 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

(which does seem to be true). But since Colossians says they *will* be reconciled, we know they'll have to be in the future, and that this verse can't mean what they're assuming it means (although, even if we did ignore Colossians, we'd then have to also believe that no Gentiles could be saved as well, since they aren't descendants of Abraham).

Of course, other Christians will try to argue that, because 1 Corinthians 15:24-28[659] said, "*he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power,"* and also that *"all enemies"* will be put under Christ and will be subdued unto Him (with "put under," "subdued," and "subject" in this passage all being translated from different tenses of the exact same Greek word – ὑποτάσσω/"hoop-ot-as'-so"), not to mention that Christ *"must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,"* that this *must* mean these enemies will be punished without end rather be reconciled to God through Christ, and so they'll insist that Colossians 1:20 *can't* include God's enemies (be they humans or spiritual beings) when it refers to all things being reconciled to Him either. They're once again reading their assumptions about never-ending punishment into the text, however, as is made clear by the fact that A) the passage in 1 Corinthians just doesn't say anything about any conscious enemy being punished anyway, much less being punished without end, not to mention the fact that B) Jesus Himself is going to then be put under God and become fully subject to Him as well, and Jesus isn't going to be punished without end when He's subjected to God, so we have no reason to believe that any of the rest of the conscious beings falling under the category of "all things" in that passage will be punished without end when they're

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[659] Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. — 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

subjected either, which once again verifies that God will indeed be All in *all* (especially since the second "all" in the phrase "all in all" is obviously including the "all enemies" in the same passage). To be clear, many of the beings referred to as enemies – human and otherwise – *will* be punished, as we know from other passages (although not all enemies will be punished, since even members of the body of Christ were once listed among those enemies,[660] yet we won't be punished;[661] and if Paul, who was also listed among those enemies, can be reconciled to God, anyone can be), but my point is simply that this passage doesn't actually mention punishment, much less unending punishment, so one can't just read their assumptions about never-ending punishment into it simply because they want to.

Now yes, some will then try to argue that, because the same Greek word – καταργέω/"kat-arg-eh'-o" – is translated *"put down"* when Paul wrote *"when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"* in verse 24 as is translated *"destroyed"* in verse 26, "all enemies" must then be destroyed too, but that's reading yet another assumption into the text, because this "putting down" or "destroying" only refers to *concepts* (such as the rulership by beings other than Christ and God, as well as mortality/death) being put down or destroyed, and *not* to actual *conscious beings* being destroyed (since concepts obviously aren't going to be included in the "all" that God will become "all" in; only conscious beings would be included in that "all"). So yes, while destruction *can* be a form of subjection, it isn't implied by the term, because it isn't the *only* form of subjection (since, again, Jesus would then have to also be destroyed when He becomes fully subject to God if that were the case), which means that it has to be outright stated that "destruction" is the form of subjection being applied to a specific being in a specific passage in order for "destruction" to

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[660] For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. — Romans 5:10

[661] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. — Romans 8:1

apply to that being, and it definitely isn't outright stated that *any* conscious beings will be destroyed in this passage (figuratively or literally), only that certain concepts will be (again, those concepts being rulership by lower beings and mortality/death). Still, others will insist that all enemies being put under His feet – which is a reference to His enemies becoming His "footstool," as Psalm 110:1[662] put it – must also mean these enemies will experience never-ending punishment. But once again, we can see that there's nothing *anywhere* in this passage, or in any *other* passages which refer to being under someone's feet[663] or to being a footstool[664] for that matter, which even hints at the idea that being under His feet or being a footstool means being punished without end. So at the end of the day, rather than disproving it, these verses actually *prove* the eventual salvation of all humans and the eventual reconciliation of all conscious beings who require it.

And at the risk of sounding repetitive, I have to ask yet again: if Paul *was* trying to explain that God indeed *will* reconcile *every being* He ever created who has been alienated from God, I'd like you to tell me what he would have needed to have written differently in Colossians 1:16-20 in order to convince you that this is indeed what he meant.

In addition, I'd also like to ask you to explain what the basis of your belief that you've been saved (or will experience salvation) even is, presuming you believe you've been saved. If you can honestly say that you've been saved simply because Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, it can be said that you have faith in Christ for your salvation. But if you believe you've

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[662] The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. — Psalm 110:1

[663] For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. — Psalm 47:2-3

[664] Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? — Isaiah 66:1

been saved because *you chose to believe* that Christ died for your sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, then it can really only be said that you have faith in your faith for your salvation. Because in order for salvation to be based solely on what God and Christ accomplished (meaning based 100% on Christ's death for our sins, and His subsequent burial and resurrection), rather than based (even if only in part) on what you yourself accomplished (meaning *choosing to believe* in Christ's death for our sins, and His subsequent burial and resurrection), *everyone* has to be saved (at least proleptically; and if something is proleptic in God's eyes, it's guaranteed to happen) by what God and Christ accomplished, whether anyone believes it or not, since otherwise it's your faith that ultimately did the job of saving you, with Christ only accomplishing the first step of your salvation, but not actually completing it Himself.

All that being said, when traditional, "orthodox" Christians insist that not all humanity has been saved, or even that not all humanity *will* be saved, they *are* technically correct. However, at the same time, they're also very wrong. And I hope it's clear by now how this can be the case, but for anyone who somehow does still view this as a contradiction, please think carefully about everything we've covered so far, and also consider this question: If I pointed out that, among a group of four people, they each had a quarter, but that at the same time only one of them had a quarter, and that both statements were equally true, how could this be the case? Well, it's actually quite simple: All four people had a piece of a pie, each an equal-sized slice of the pie that made up the whole pie when put together, but only one of these people had a 25-cent coin in their pocket. You see, as we learned from the first chapter of this book, the same word can refer to different things, and this applies to both the word "quarter" as well as the word "saved" (not to mention "salvation"). We already know that there are multiple types of salvation, and that not everyone experiences *every* sort of salvation. Relatively few people will experience the sort of salvation referred to under the Gospel of the Circumcision, for example, not to mention

the sort of salvation connected with membership in the body of Christ, which means it shouldn't be a surprise to hear me agree that not everyone will be saved, as long as one realizes that I'm referring to specific *types* of salvation which not every human is guaranteed to experience when I say that, and also realizes that everyone *will* experience at least *one* type of salvation by the end of the ages, and, in fact, that everyone *has* "experienced" a certain type of salvation already too (at least from a certain perspective), whether they realize it or not.

Because everyone *has* already been saved from both a proleptic and an absolute perspective thanks to what Christ accomplished, since God ultimately views all of us as already experiencing our salvation from a physical perspective (which could also be called an eschatological perspective, referring to the physical experience of salvation which occurs at our resurrection and/or quickening, when the mortal puts on immortality and we can finally enjoy the full salvation that we had all along thanks to Christ), since, being Almighty God, He sees everything, everywhere, all at once from His timeless perspective (and so, perhaps we could even say that all humanity has now been saved from an ontological perspective too, because salvation is not only now a guaranteed part of the human experience thanks to Christ's death for our sins, but because it really always has been, since that was always a part of God's plan for Christ and us to begin with). At the same time, though, only believers have been saved from a relative perspective, which could also be referred to as salvation from a noological perspective, with this sort of salvation being freedom from the power of sin by being given knowledge of the good news of our ontological salvation and truly believing it: faith, in other words ("noological" meaning "relating to the mind," etymologically originating from the Greek word νοῦς/

"nooce," which itself is translated as "mind"[665] and as "understanding"[666] in the KJV). Because when someone comes to realize that God is already at peace with us, and that there's *nothing* we have to do to earn the salvation that Christ already earned for us, they're then freed from the power of sin, which is the law or religion,[667] and one can say that they've been saved "noologically," and have also been brought into membership in the body of Christ. This means it can be said that we've been saved, we're being saved, and we will be saved, all at the same time, as long as we remember that there's nothing we ourselves have to do (or even that we could do) to gain *any* of these salvations (although it is also true that members of the Israel of God *do* participate in *their* specific form of salvation, something I refer to as circumcision, or Israelite, salvation, which they'll experience in the kingdom of heaven when it begins on earth in the future, and which is another equally legitimate form of salvation, as long as one doesn't try to combine their Gospel with the Gospel I've been focusing on in this chapter, which is, of course, Paul's Gospel; Paul says they shouldn't try to switch between the two of them either, but rather that they should stick with the one they're called to[668]).

Now, those aren't all the arguments for the salvation (and reconciliation) of all humanity. There are *many more*, but those should be enough to make it clear that the only way to avoid the conclusion that everyone will eventually experience both salvation and reconciliation is to insert words into Paul's

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[665] And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; — Ephesians 4:23

[666] What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. — 1 Corinthians 14:15

[667] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. — 1 Corinthians 15:56

[668] But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. — 1 Corinthians 7:17-20

epistles that aren't there, to redefine certain words into meaning something other than what the writers meant by them, or even to change (or simply ignore) the order of the words in some verses. But there's just no justification for doing so, especially when we consider the fact that there's no basis for believing in never-ending conscious torment in the lake of fire – or even in an afterlife realm while dead – as we've already learned. However, I know that there are still a number of common objections to the idea that everyone will eventually experience salvation which you've no doubt heard, or perhaps even raised yourself at some point, as well as a number of so-called "proof texts" in the Bible which you've no doubt been taught support the traditional doctrine of never-ending punishment in the lake of fire; and while it should be pretty clear by now to those who have been paying attention to everything we've covered that, when you take everything Paul wrote about salvation – as well as the differences between the various types of salvation mentioned in Scripture, not to mention the figurative meaning of certain English words related to long periods of time – into consideration, none of these arguments or supposed "proof texts" can actually support the popular assumptions most of us grew up with when it comes to this topic, we should still take a look at them regardless, so you can know how to answer them whenever they're used to try to argue against what Scripture actually says about salvation (beginning with the objections, then moving on to the "proof texts").

For example, one common objection is: "If it's true that everyone will get saved, why is it that almost no churches teach this?" Well, while it's technically a statement connected with Israel's specific type of salvation, I would suggest that Jesus' reference to the strait and narrow[669] can be seen as a trans-dispensational (or trans-administrational) truth. Because, honestly, there's no way that a religion with as many followers as the traditional Christian religion has – about a third of the human population of the planet at the time this book

[669] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. — Matthew 7:14

was written – can possibly be the "narrow way" that few find, so a better question would be: "If never-ending torment in hell is true, why is it that almost all churches teach it?" (And I'd also suggest that this goes for nearly every other popular, "orthodox" teaching within the Christian religion as well.)

Another extremely common objection is simply that the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity has been declared to be a heresy, thus it can't be true, but this is largely based not only on the assumption that the council which supposedly declared this had the authority to make such a declaration, but also on the assumption that it actually *did* make such a declaration to begin with, and many people believe it actually didn't make such a declaration at all, but rather condemned something else altogether, and that the idea that the doctrine of the salvation of all was condemned at that time is based on a misunderstanding of what was actually condemned (although I'm not going to get into the details of that debate here because it doesn't matter to those of us in the body of Christ, since we base our theology entirely on what the Bible says rather than on council meetings of Christian denominations we're not a part of and that weren't recorded in Scripture, but there are Christians who *have* gone into detail on it if you're curious to learn more about this assertion[670]). All that said, as I discussed in the first chapter of this book, the actual definition of "heresy" isn't "false teaching" anyway, just as the word "orthodoxy" doesn't mean "truth." In fact, as I explained there, the meaning of the Greek word which is transliterated as "heresies" in the KJV – αἵρεσις/"hah'-ee-res-is" – is simply "sects"[671] (or "divisions"), and not "incorrect doctrine" at all, and "orthodox" only means "that which is commonly accepted," and there's always been plenty of commonly accepted error out there. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Galileo was technically put on trial as a heretic by the very religious

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[670] *History, the Fifth Ecumenical Council, and Universal Salvation* by Aidan Kimel: https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2024/07/19/history-the-fifth-ecumenical-council-and-universal-salvation

[671] For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. — 1 Corinthians 11:19

organization (the Roman Catholic Church) that supposedly also condemned the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity as a heresy, because he taught that the earth isn't the centre of the universe, but he was still quite correct that it isn't. Meanwhile, Rome considered their view that our planet is the centre of the universe to be the orthodox one, but they were entirely incorrect. And if they could be wrong about *that* official teaching and declaration of heresy, they could be wrong about *any* official doctrine they teach, which really means that everything they consider to be "orthodox" should be considered suspect. It's also important to keep in mind that, if you're an evangelical or some other form of Protestant Christian, the entire existence of your denomination has been officially declared to be heretical by the Roman Catholic Church. But even if your own denomination has also declared the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity to be heretical, the fact that it *is* true, as already proven from what we've covered in this book so far, once again reminds us that just because something is "heretical" doesn't mean it's incorrect, and something being "orthodox" doesn't make it true. And again, never forget that both Jesus and Paul were considered to be heretics by the orthodoxy of their day, so consider yourself to be in good company whenever someone calls you a heretic.

It's also often asserted that, "If everyone gets saved, then Jesus died in vain." This is a very strange, yet also extremely common, claim you'll hear from many Christians who just aren't thinking things through particularly carefully. Because the truth is, if Jesus didn't die, then *nobody* would get saved. Really, this assertion is no different from saying, "If only a few people get saved, then Jesus died in vain since some people will not suffer without end in hell." Either way, we (should) all realize it's what Christ did that saves us, and recognize that this statement is a sign of lazy thinking.

Some Christians will also claim that a sin against an infinite God requires an infinite punishment, because sin would affect an infinite being more than it would affect a mere human. This assumption isn't made anywhere in Scripture,

however, which means they have no basis for believing it in the first place, especially because Scripture actually appears to say the exact opposite, in Job 35:5-8 where Elihu (the one friend of Job who wasn't condemned by God for his words[672]) said, *"Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man."* So no, our sin doesn't actually affect God – who is far above being able to be harmed by anything we can do – at all.

Many Christians also like to object to the salvation of all by saying things along the lines of, "You're putting too much of an emphasis on God's love, all the while forgetting His judgement, justice, and wrath. The justice of God demands that the wicked be punished for their sins without end, which means that if people who don't choose to receive the gift of Christ's sacrifice in order to experience salvation aren't punished without end, then God's justice hasn't been satisfied." There are a number of problems with this assertion, however, the first of which is simply that none of us have forgotten about the judgement, justice, and wrath of God at all (as everything you've read in this book so far should really make pretty obvious). It's just that we also understand that an attribute such as His justice and wrath can never outweigh His very

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[672] And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. — Job 42:7-9

essence, which is love.[673] And if love is His very essence, then, at least in the long run, everything He does must ultimately be beneficial for (and work out in the best interests of) all the creation He loves, which means His love can't ever take a back seat to an attribute like His justice or wrath, but rather they will always have to be influenced by His love (which always perseveres and never fails, if it's a scriptural form of love[674]) for all of His creation. And since allowing any of His creation to suffer without end in fire with no hope of escape could not be said to be an expression of His love for said creation (except in the most horrifically twisted of religious minds), we know that His justice could not allow this to happen because it would conflict with His love towards all of His creation. Of course, some Christians will try to argue here that God defines words such as "love" differently than we do, since "His ways are higher than ours,"[675] but A) Scripture already defines "love" for us, and B) if we aren't using words in a way that we can actually all understand them, there's no point in even using these words in the first place, and we might as well just stop studying Scripture altogether. And really, if "love" can somehow actually include never-ending torture in a fiery "hell" for some of those it's directed towards, I don't even want to begin to think about what "heaven" might actually include for those of us who are headed there instead, but to say it

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673 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. — 1 John 4:7-8

674 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. — 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

675 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: — Isaiah 55:8-10

might not be pleasant would likely be an understatement. There's a second major problem with the popular claim that God's justice isn't satisfied if we don't have to choose to receive the gift of Christ's sacrifice in order to experience salvation as well, though. You see, if someone claims that our salvation is dependent upon God's justice being satisfied (which it indeed is), then when His justice *is* satisfied, we'd also have to be guaranteed salvation, since it would be unjust of Him to punish someone without end if His justice *has* been satisfied. And since we now know from what we've learned earlier in this chapter that Christ died in order that the penalty for our sins *would* be justly set aside by God, meaning so that everyone will be justified, resurrected (if they've died), and even made free from ever being able to die or sin again, all apart from anything that we ourselves have to do (and not so that the penalty could *potentially* be set aside, but only if we ourselves choose to believe that His sacrifice *was* enough to satisfy God's justice, which is essentially what most Christians insist we have to believe in order to be saved), if someone insists that the salvation of all humanity *isn't* guaranteed simply because of Christ's sacrifice, they're ultimately telling us that they themselves really don't believe Christ's sacrifice actually *was* enough to satisfy God's justice after all, but rather that an action on our part is *also* required *on top* of Christ's sacrifice in order to satisfy God's justice. The problem is, this would mean that they want us to choose to believe something they themselves think isn't even actually true, in and of itself, somehow making what they believe to actually be a lie become true by choosing to believe it to be true (since the idea that what Christ did was enough to satisfy God's justice *would* be a lie if it isn't true on its own, meaning enough to guarantee us salvation apart from us having to *also* do something to *make* it true). Basically, what they really believe (even if they don't realize it and will likely deny it) is that justice is *actually* served by *us doing the right thing* (such as choosing to believe the right thing) rather than by Christ's death for our sins, which means that we must provide *our own* justice – either by being punished without end ourselves or by doing that right thing which they believe is required to satisfy God's justice ourselves – because apparently what Christ

accomplished didn't *actually* satisfy God's justice at all, at least as far as their theology is concerned. And if any of them *do* happen to admit that God's justice actually *was* satisfied by what Christ accomplished, but then also try to insist that people *still* have to choose to believe it in order to experience salvation anyway, it would mean that their objection isn't actually about God's justice at all, and that they're simply using claims about God's justice as a distraction from the real issue, which is that they want people to have to at least do *something* in order to gain salvation, even if it's just something as seemingly simple as having to choose to believe the right thing. But the truth is, if anyone at all doesn't get saved simply because of what Christ earned through His death – which is the general salvation of anyone who has ever sinned or who will ever sin[676] – then God actually *would* be unjust, because He wouldn't be giving His Son what *He* now deserves (and He'd also be treating us unjustly as well, because if His justice *has* been satisfied, there's no basis for inflicting the penalty – which we now know is actually just permanent death, and not inescapable torture in fire – upon us any longer). So if anyone ever tries to use the excuse that, "God is love, but He's also just," in order to try to object to the idea that everyone will be saved, you can agree with them, and then explain that it's *because* He's just that everyone *has* to eventually be saved.

Some also argue that teaching the salvation of all humanity undermines evangelism – saying things like, "If the salvation of all is true, it doesn't matter whether you believe now or not, so why bother to evangelize at all?" – as well as undermines the necessity of believing the Gospel – making similar statements along the lines of, "If the salvation of all is true, it doesn't matter whether you believe now or not, so why bother to become a Christian?" From one perspective (the most narrow of perspectives), yes, that could be said to technically be true. But from a broader perspective there are still very good reasons to believe now, as well as to evangelize. For one thing, if it is true, isn't

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[676] This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. — 1 Timothy 1:15

it better to believe (and teach) the truth rather than a lie (especially since the Bible so heavily condemns false teachers who teach lies)? Even beyond that, though, belief in this doctrine helps bring serious peace of mind that almost no Christians truly have (over the years I've interacted with many Christians who are still terrified that they're going to suffer without end in a place called hell). But on top of all that, there's another really good reason to believe this, and this is the fact that only those who do believe it get to join the body of Christ (since, if you don't truly understand what it means that *"Christ died for our sins,"* can it be said that you actually believe it, and if you don't actually believe it, how can it be said that you've joined the body of Christ?). However, I suppose someone who says this is implying that, if it's true that everyone gets saved, then there's less urgency to preach the Gospel, or even for people to become Christians. Whether this is true or not comes down to what one means by evangelism, as well as whether "becoming a Christian" is really all that important in the first place, and, really, what the Gospel about how we're saved actually even is. From the perspective of those of us who believe what I've written in this book, we see the idea of having to become a Christian in order to be saved as religion rather than good news. To put it simply, we see religion as anything which teaches that God will only look kindly upon us if we do the right thing(s) before we die. The good news which Paul primarily taught, on the other hand (that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day), is not a religion at all, but is instead the announcement of the end of religion (simply put, it's a proclamation, not a proposition). Religion, at least to those of us in the body of Christ, consists of all the things (believing, behaving, worshipping, sacrificing, etc.) that the religious think they have to choose to do (and then actually do) in order to get right with God, but no action (which would include choosing to believe something specific, and then actually believing it) on our part can ever take away our sins or make us immortal. Thankfully, everything necessary for salvation from sin and death has already been done, once and for all, by God through Christ. And while God calls members of the body of Christ to proclaim Paul's Gospel to those He calls us to proclaim it to, believing it has

no effect on one's ultimate salvation, because our ultimate salvation was already guaranteed some 2,000 years ago *by* Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection, and God doesn't intend to bring everyone to a knowledge of the truth in this lifetime anyway (while He's guaranteed salvation for everyone through Christ's actions, He only elects certain people to join the body of Christ – or perhaps to join the Israel of God instead – in this lifetime). So if someone doesn't believe the Gospel, they won't have the peace of mind we have that God in Christ did indeed save all of us already (at least proleptically speaking, or from an absolute perspective), and they might also miss out on living in the kingdom of God during one or two of the impending ages (missing out on "everlasting" – meaning age-pertaining, or eonian – life, in other words), but I'd also suggest that one's concern that they might not become believers if they think the good news I just presented is true is actually not a concern at all because, if someone truly believes that they don't have to become Christians simply because of what Christ accomplished, not only have they already believed the actual Gospel Paul taught (since, if they actually believed they could avoid "converting," so to speak, because the above is true, then they've technically actually *already* believed Paul's Gospel before they even realized it, at least presuming they also understand what death actually is) rather than the "gospel" the Christian religion teaches, but they're now in the body of Christ as well. So, perhaps that does undermine "evangelism" from a traditional Christian perspective, but not from the scriptural perspective that those of us in the body of Christ come at things from. And, of course, there may also be certain rewards to be had in heaven for evangelism after Christ comes for His body, which would also be incentive to evangelize. That said, wanting to share good news is human nature. There's a reason I wrote this book in the first place, after all (not to mention why I share it so widely and never charge for the digital version of it), and belief in the salvation of all humanity has never stopped any of us from wanting to let everyone know this good news, or from actually sharing it.

Another variation of that objection is, "If you're right, then I'll miss out on some stuff, but I'll be okay in the end," and some even add, "However, if I'm right, you're going to burn in hell for eternity." It's interesting how some Christians believe it's more important to accept a doctrine because it might have a worse possible outcome than accepting its alternative might have, regardless of whether that doctrine is correct or not, but I'm far more interested in truth than I am in worrying about unfounded threats (and if we needed to choose a theology based on it having the worst possible outcome if we don't believe or follow it, some religions have even worse end results for those who don't follow them than the traditional version of Christianity does, so this argument doesn't help their case the way they might think it does). The real truth, however, is that, if I'm wrong, I've still believed the Gospel (since the facts still remain that A) I believe there's nothing I can possibly do to save myself from sin and death, and B) my faith is solely in Christ's death for our sins, along with His subsequent burial and resurrection on the third day, for salvation), so that isn't actually the case at all. And so, if I'm wrong, I've actually only been teaching that God is better than He really is, since I'm claiming He'll actually succeed when it comes to accomplishing His will that everyone be saved; whereas if I'm right, those who make this claim have actually spoken terrible blasphemy, accusing God of doing horrible things to the creation He supposedly loves by torturing them in fire with no chance of escape (or at least of giving up on the majority of them, letting nearly everyone cease to exist completely, never to enjoy consciousness again, if certain other Christians are correct). This truth is lost on those who are lost, however, thanks to their slavery to the demonic teachings of the modern Christian religion, because if most of humanity *were* to suffer consciously in the lake of fire without end, all this judgement would do is torture the majority of people who ever existed nonstop, which would serve no purpose at all other than to stand as a never-ending reminder that Satan, death, and "hell" won the ultimate victory after all (a Pyrrhic victory though it might be for Satan, a defeat of God in the battle over souls it would remain nonetheless – and the same would go if those who understand that the punishment is simply permanently

ceasing to exist but who also believe that some people *will* "experience" that punishment were right, by the way; it would mean God still lost to Satan, death, and "the grave" in the struggle for souls), and that God was a failure in ridding creation of sin and evil (simply quarantining sin and evil to a small corner of the universe does nothing to eliminate sin and evil from existence, and the only thing it would really change is to add infinitely more suffering to the universe than it currently has, just in a more compressed area, which would actually be far worse than what we have today), ultimately making Him and Jesus A) monsters (only the most horrific of monsters could force, or even allow, someone to be tortured without the possibility of escape; the worst person to ever live could never do anything like that, but many religious Christians want to accuse God of doing something that would make Hitler look like a saint in comparison, since all he was able to accomplish was temporarily torturing and killing millions of people, but even he couldn't torture anyone without end), and B) the biggest sinners of all for "missing the mark" (which, again, is literally what the word "sin" means) by failing to accomplish their goals. (And don't try to bring up satisfying God's justice as a possible purpose, because we've already determined that Christ's death for our sins was all that God's justice required, and for Him to require anyone else to suffer too wouldn't be about justice at all, since His justice *was* satisfied by Christ's death, regardless of whether someone believes it before they die or not.) And honestly, if we're going to worry about a "Pascal's Wager" sort of scenario here, I'd much rather err on the side of accusing God of being too good and too loving and too successful than accusing Him of being the exact opposite.

Some Christians also like to say, "Those who believe everyone will be saved just want an excuse to sin," but if someone truly understands and has believed what I've written in this book, then they've already believed the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, and hence have already been saved, so it makes no more sense to say this about us than it does to say it about any traditional Christian who believes they've been saved

themselves (especially a Christian who believes in OSAS, meaning "Once Saved, Always Saved").

On a similar – yet somehow even worse – note, some Christians claim that, "If there isn't a place of never-ending torture in a place called 'hell' for sinners, then there's no point in being good in the first place," and some even go on to assert that, if they believed it was true that everyone will experience salvation in the end, they'd be out there robbing and raping and murdering people. (Seriously, I've had multiple Christians say this to me.) I have to hope they're just using hyperbole there, although if they're being serious, and the threat of never-ending torment in a place called "hell" is the only thing keeping them civilized, then perhaps it is a good thing that they don't believe the truth about this topic, because that's a seriously disturbing admission about who they really are and what they wish they could actually be doing. But regardless of their sincerity in making these statements, they really aren't thinking things through. I'll start with the second claim first, which is to point out that very few believers in the salvation of all are out there committing the crimes these Christians are telling us they apparently wish *they* could – and, if they believed the salvation of all was true, supposedly would – indulge in. However, presuming they aren't actually being honest about how their belief in never-ending torment is keeping them from acting out some twisted desire to steal from and hurt others, perhaps the bigger admission that Christians who resort to these sorts of arguments are making is that they don't trust God's grace at all. This is actually a bigger topic than just how it applies to the topic of the salvation of all, and I don't have the time to really get into all the problems connected with this fact right here, but the bottom line is that most Christians really don't trust God's grace in the slightest and are always trying to add at least a tiny bit of law to it (just to be safe), even though mortal humans trying to perform religious law *always* leads to more sin, not less[677] (and not just specifically the Mosaic law,

[677] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

but any religious rules at all, which is what the Mosaic law itself ultimately is), and so this ends up with the exact *opposite* result of what they're hoping to achieve through their attempt to shoehorn religious rules into salvation. And as far as the first claim goes, for those Christians who *haven't* forgotten that salvation isn't based on "being good" anyway, since our good works can't save us, this statement is about as logical as saying, "If criminals eventually get out of prison, then there's no point in avoiding crime in the first place." Aside from the fact that the threat of life sentences in prison (and even the death penalty, depending on where you live) doesn't deter the criminals who do commit major crimes from the actions that result in these sentences, you don't find most Christians out there living lives of crime (or, if they are, most of them are hiding it pretty well), so we can assume they're just not thinking things through when they say these things (and, just as with the last objection, any Christian who believes in OSAS and makes these claims forgets that they could then be out there committing the horrific crimes they tell me they wish they could be committing, since they're guaranteed to still remain saved regardless, according to their own soteriology, so they aren't being consistent with these assertions at all). Besides, almost no Christian actually believes someone should remain in prison for the rest of their life over a petty crime like shoplifting or jaywalking, so the idea that people should then be tortured without end in "hell" for the same – or even lesser – infractions of the secular law really makes no sense at all (and if someone really believes that sin is actually so serious that it requires someone to be tortured in fire without end, the idea that "the punishment should fit the crime" would be an entirely erroneous idea when it comes to their take on the judicial system as well, since they already believe that every immoral action – which includes breaking the secular law, in most cases – *does* deserve a much worse punishment than just a fine or a period of time in prison, even when it comes to extremely minor offences, so they should really be arguing for life sentences, the death penalty, or maybe even torture, for *every* crime, if they wish to be consistent, since they believe that we all deserve far worse consequences than that for committing these actions).

Another very common objection I hear all the time is that Jesus didn't preach the salvation of all humanity, and that if it were true, He would have mentioned it. Well, if you've read this whole book from the beginning up to this point, you already know why this is a bad argument, of course, but I'll elaborate anyway. Simply put, Jesus *couldn't* have preached the salvation of all humanity, and this is for the very same reason I explained in the first chapter of this book as to why there had to be two Gospels. Because His death for our sins (and subsequent burial and resurrection) is the basis for the salvation of all humanity, had He taught the salvation of all humanity publicly during His earthly ministry, the spiritual powers of darkness sometimes referred to as *"the princes of this world"* would have almost certainly put two-and-two together and realized that Him dying for our sins and God raising Him from the dead would be the only possible way that all humanity could not only miss out on eventually remaining dead permanently, but even be made immortal (these are highly intelligent beings, after all), and they would have then *avoided* their plan to have Him killed, resulting in nobody being saved at all.[678] (And this also means that those of you who *are* believers in the salvation of all humanity and use parts of the Bible such as the book of John to try to argue that it is indeed scriptural really need to stop using these Circumcision writings for that purpose, because those passages you're using as "proof texts" *can't* actually mean what you think they do, since the sort of salvation being referred to in those books isn't connected with Paul's Gospel or the salvation of all *at all*, so please stick to Paul's epistles for your arguments.[679])

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[678] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. — 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

[679] *Did John reveal the truth of the salvation of all mankind in his writings? (Part One)* by Aaron Welch: https://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2019/08/did-john-reveal-truth-of-salvation-of.html

And while there are likely more objections than just these which I could cover here (and if I come across them, I'll likely try to come back and add them to future updates of this book), I'll wrap this list up with a classic: "God is a gentleman who won't coerce people into salvation, or force anyone to go to heaven against their will" (some even go so far as to compare the idea Him saving people without them first specifically choosing to be saved to rape; and it's odd how many Christians seem to have this obsession with using sexual assault in their objections to the salvation of all humanity, and so perhaps they're telling us something about themselves there and actually *are* as interested in participating in this crime as many of those who make that previous objection about what they'd do if they believed in the salvation of all seem to imply). Well, if you've read everything I've written in this book up to this point, you already know that we believe only members of the body of Christ will end up living in heaven (with everyone else eventually being resurrected to live on the New Earth), so right off the bat that's a straw man argument. But regardless, we don't believe God will force anyone to be saved against their will anyway, but rather that He gives people the will[680] to want to be saved in the first place. And since Paul told us that everyone is going to experience salvation in the end, He'll certainly make sure that everyone is willing to enjoy immortality and sinlessness/perfection by the end of the ages. And those who still insist that God just wouldn't force someone to experience salvation without having to specifically choose to experience it, aside from the fact that this isn't an assertion found anywhere in the Bible (this is just an unfounded assumption certain Christians make in order to try to hold on to their preferred soteriological doctrines, as well as in order to not have to give up their fetishization of "free will"), most of these people *do* believe that God will instead force people to suffer in fire without end, even though nobody would actually choose that either. This means that, at the end of the day, it seems as though these Christians don't actually care if God forces people to experience

[680] For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Philippians 2:13

something against their will at all, so long as He doesn't let them *enjoy* what's to come against the will of the Christians who want people to have to choose to do something specific in order to avoid experiencing suffering instead, the way they think they did.

And with all that being said, let's move on to the so-called "proof texts" that we've all heard used to support the doctrine of never-ending punishment in hell, in order to finally determine what they're actually talking about once and for all.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. – Daniel 12:1-3

Now, the events of this passage do take place at least partly around the time of the Great White Throne Judgement (at least the negative part of it; the positive part is separated from the negative part by a thousand-year "Mountain Peak" of prophecy, taking place long before the negative part), but all it says is that some people will be resurrected to shame and "everlasting" contempt (this also means that nobody is dead in this passage, at least at first, since they've just been resurrected, so it can't be talking about the "hell" one's soul is figuratively said to be in after they've died that we discussed in a previous chapter), and shame and contempt aren't even remotely close to the same thing as torture in fire. Besides, aside from the fact that "everlasting" has to be meant to be interpreted figuratively rather than literally here anyway, based on everything we've already covered about the salvation and reconciliation of all humanity, as

well as what we've covered about how the word is generally meant to be read qualitatively rather than quantitatively in the KJV and other less literal Bible translations, it's also only the contempt that is said to be "everlasting," not the shame (and the contempt is experienced by others rather than by the ones being judged in this passage themselves). This tells us that, when they're resurrected, many people will feel shame while being judged at the Great White Throne, and then, after they die a second time in the lake of fire, their corpses will be looked upon with "everlasting" (meaning age-pertaining) contempt by those who see them being consumed on the New Earth (this is referring to the contempt, or abhorrence, that those spoken of in Isaiah 66:24 will feel when looking upon the carcases – meaning the dead bodies – of those in the lake of fire,[681] being translated from the same Hebrew word – דְּרָאוֹן/"der-aw-one'" – in both verses). But at the end of the ages, when everyone who died a second time has been resurrected and quickened (in order for death to be destroyed), this "everlasting" contempt will finally end.

Before moving on, though, this seems like a good time to remind you that not once did the Hebrew Scriptures ever threaten any human with never-ending torture (much less torture in fire), either while dead or after one is resurrected, as a punishment for breaking the Mosaic law (or even for sin in general). At most, they threatened physical death for certain capital crimes. And even if this passage in the book of Daniel had actually said that certain people will be tortured in fire without end while they're dead (which isn't what it says at all), or even after they've been resurrected, there'd never been a threat of a never-ending conscious punishment before that passage, so there's no good reason to assume it was suddenly being proclaimed here, centuries after the giving of the Mosaic law, when no Israelite had ever heard of it before, and when the readers of Daniel clearly couldn't have possibly understood it to mean that prior to

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[681] And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. — Isaiah 66:24

Jesus' statements about "hell" anyway (presuming we ignored the context of *those* warnings, which we learned from Isaiah and Jeremiah, of course, as discussed earlier in this book). You'd think that, at the very least, God's chosen people would have been given a warning about something as horrific as never-ending torture (in fire, no less), not to mention be told who would be experiencing such a thing or why, or how to avoid it, for that matter, prior to Jesus (or even prior to Daniel) supposedly doing so. The fact is, not only was no Israelite ever warned about it (at least not that we see in Scripture, and we need to base our doctrines on what Scripture says), nobody prior to Israel was ever warned about it either, at least that we're told of. Not even Adam and Eve were warned about suffering without end in a fiery place if they sinned, much less anyone who lived from their time to the time Daniel was supposedly warned about it.

And even if to "surely die"[682] (which was obviously a figurative translation in the KJV, as we've already learned, since Adam didn't physically drop dead the day he sinned) *was* referring to the so-called "spiritual death" that many Christians mistakenly believe in, there's no hint of being tortured in fire without end in that expression anyway. I say "mistakenly," of course, because "spiritual death" is actually a completely unscriptural and meaningless term (at least outside of the fact that those in the body of Christ can be said to have died with Christ when He died,[683] but that isn't what Christians mean when they talk about the so-called "spiritual death" of sinners) since, if our spirits *could* die, we'd drop dead ourselves (considering the fact that a body requires a spirit to remain alive,[684] and I can't imagine that a spirit which had somehow dropped dead, however that's supposed to even work, would still be able to sustain life in a

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[682] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. — Genesis 2:17

[683] Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: — Romans 6:8

[684] For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. — James 2:26

body). And if the term is simply a metaphor, then it isn't actually "spiritual death" so much as "metaphorical death"; and if it really is just a metaphor, it can't be a metaphor for being separated from God, as some assume, because *"in Him we live, and move, and have our being,"* as Paul explained,[685] so to be separated from God would mean to cease to exist, if it were even possible to be separated from Him at all (which it isn't, since to actually be separated from God would require a "universe" that exists "outside" of Him, so to speak – for those who are separated from Him to end up in – but to have anything "outside" of Him would mean there's another "universe" that's somehow "larger" than God, requiring an even "higher" God than ours to create *that* universe, so the entire idea is actually quite blasphemous). And it can't be a metaphor for ending up in the lake of fire either, because Adam didn't end up in the lake of fire on the day he ate the fruit. Besides, if Adam *did* only die metaphorically, then we'll also only die metaphorically as well (and Christ would have also only died and risen metaphorically too), which we know isn't the case, so there's just no good scriptural basis for interpreting these things the way most Christians have been taught to interpret them, and it should really be clear that this figurative warning in the KJV should simply be interpreted as meaning Adam would gain mortality leading to eventual physical death, as we've previously discussed.

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[685] For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. — Acts 17:28

That's not to say death *isn't* ever used as a metaphor in the Bible. But even Ephesians 2:1-7[686] (which is often quoted to try to prove the idea of "spiritual death") has to be interpreted carefully so as to not to descend into absurdity. Because even if that is a good translation of the original Greek – which I say simply because not everyone agrees, since some believe that something more along the lines of **"And you, being dead to your trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all conducted ourselves in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (and we now being dead to the trespasses;) quickens us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and raises us up together, and makes us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,"** would be a better translation of the original Greek in those seven verses, believing the passage is actually referring to believers *now* being dead *to* sin, as Paul also said we are in Romans 6,[687] rather than referring to having *been* dead in some way in the past *due* to sin – it simply can't be saying that people are *literally* "spiritually dead,"

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[686] And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. — Ephesians 2:1-7

[687] Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:11

for the reasons we just covered, especially in the KJV which also says we've been quickened in that passage, despite the fact that we *haven't* literally been quickened, since we're clearly still mortal (at least as of the time I wrote this book), and we aren't literally sitting in heavenly places right now either, which this translation says we are if we interpret it literally. The key to the part about being quickened, of course, is partly found in verse 7 (where we can see that this is indeed figurative, since this verse tells us that Paul is referring to the ages to come, which means the references to having been raised together and seated in heavenly places in verse 6, and having been quickened in verses 1 and 5, have to be mostly proleptic, meaning they're a guarantee of our future immortality, sinlessness, and position when we're finally in heaven), and also partly found in Colossians 2:10-13[688] (which tells us we've been baptized into not only Christ's death and resurrection, but into His quickening/immortality as well, although it obviously isn't physical for us yet as it one day will be when we're literally in heaven). And so, even if one believes that the way the KJV translators rendered the passage is indeed the best translation (and this book is assuming that the KJV *did* translate things correctly, even if I wanted you to be aware that some might disagree with this translation), everything else we've covered still proves that it can't be referring to a "spiritual death" without contradicting the rest of the Bible, so the words *"who were dead in trespasses and sins"* and *"even when we were dead in sins"* in verses 1 and 5 would have to be interpreted metaphorically rather than "spiritually."[689]

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[688] And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; — Colossians 2:10-13

[689] *Spiritualizing Scripture, The Crime* by Martin Zender: https://www.martinzender.com/Zenderature/spiritualizing_scripture.htm

That tangent about "spiritual death" aside, though, as I already mentioned, the passage in Daniel is talking about a physical resurrection on earth anyway. It wasn't referring to a spiritual existence in an afterlife realm while dead at all. The negative part of this passage is referring to those resurrected to life at the Great White Throne Judgement before they're either sent off to their second death – when they're tossed into the lake of fire to die a second time for a while – or to their time paying off "the uttermost farthing"[690] on the New Earth (which is a whole other topic that most Christians aren't familiar with at all, and which has nothing to do with "earning salvation," as Christians assume would be the case if it means what some of us believe it means, because nobody gets saved by paying off their debt, since that doesn't gain anyone any of the types of salvation we've already covered), so it seems safe to say that this isn't actually talking about what most people have read into it, and that we should move on to the next passage.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. – Matthew 5:29-30

This is just an earlier telling of the same warning Jesus gave in Matthew 18 that we covered near the beginning of chapter 2 of this book. The reason I didn't include it along with that passage is because this one doesn't refer to the duration of one's time spent in hell (or, more accurately put, the duration of the *existence* of this particular "hell" – which is the Valley of Hinnom, being translated from the Greek word γέεννα – since the other passage technically didn't mention the duration of one's time spent there either), but everything I

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[690] Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. — Matthew 5:26

already said about that passage applies to this one too, so there isn't really much to add to those comments here, although perhaps I should point out that Jesus said *"thy whole body"* could be cast into this particular "hell," so His warning can only be referring to something that happens to physical bodies in a geographic location here on earth rather than to ghosts trapped in an afterlife dimension, which lines up perfectly with what we've already learned from that prophecy about carcases in the book of Isaiah and from that prophecy about the Valley of the Son of Hinnom in the book of Jeremiah that Jesus was referencing with this warning.

Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
– Matthew 5:21-22

Jesus said this shortly before the last passage we just looked at, but you'll notice that he didn't say anything about being conscious in hell, or being there without end, so the same comments apply to this warning as well. And for those Christians who want to insist that never-ending punishment is implied by all of these references to "hell," well, they'd have to demonstrate how everything we've already covered in this book has been incorrect, not to mention prove that this assertion of theirs is indeed the case, in order for it to be anything other than an assumption they're reading into Scripture.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. – Matthew 18:6

This passage doesn't actually mention any version of "hell" by name, but it precedes one of Jesus' suggestions that people amputate body parts in order to avoid the hell known as the Valley of Hinnom, so I wanted to mention it because these verses all seem to suggest that if people either kill themselves (or allow themselves to be killed) after (or perhaps rather than) committing a certain type of sin, or mutilate their bodies in order to avoid committing certain types of sins, they can avoid being punished in hell, which really doesn't seem to fit with the traditional Christian doctrine of salvation, at least not that of most Protestants. And if they aren't taking the methods of avoiding being punished in hell in these passages literally (or at least interpreting the methods figuratively to mean that one must do whatever they can to avoid sinning in order to avoid hell, which also doesn't fit with the popular doctrine, because most Protestants don't believe we can avoid hell by avoiding sinning, considering the fact that by the time anyone had heard or read these warnings they'd already have sinned at least once in their life, guaranteeing them a one-way trip to their version of "hell," if they were right, and so these warnings would have come far too late to be useful to anyone if they happened to be correct in the rest of their theology), then they can't really use these passages to defend their assumptions either, if they want to remain consistent.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. – Matthew 12:31-32

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. – Mark 3:28-29

And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.
– Luke 12:10

These are parallel passages that are all talking about the same thing: the so-called "unforgivable sin." The first thing it's important to note when reading them is how long the penalty for this sin will actually last, because contrary to what most people assume, it isn't a never-ending punishment. You see, while the passage in Mark tells us (at least in less literal Bible translations such as the KJV), *"he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness,"* the passage in Matthew tells us how long that "never" (which is a figurative translation in the KJV) will actually last: for the duration of this "world" and the "world" to come. This is another case of the word "world" being used as metonymy for "age" in the KJV (having again been translated from the Greek word αἰών in this verse), and there are at least two "ages" or "worlds" to come still, as we just learned when we looked at Ephesians 2:7[691] (note the plural "ages" in the verse – and I should also mention that those who understand the Doctrine of the Eons do believe we're still living in the same age, or eon, that Jesus was living in when He spoke the words we've been looking at). This means that, while someone who is guilty of this sin won't be forgiven in this world/age/eon, or even the next world/age/eon, they could theoretically be forgiven during the world/age/eon after that (which, as those who are familiar with the Doctrine of the Eons believe, will be the final world/age/eon, on the New Earth, prior to the time Christ destroys death), not to mention after the final world/age/eon has concluded (as all ages will have to do, based on the definition of the word "age"). This also once again supports the fact that the word "everlasting" generally just means "age-pertaining" when it's used in the Bible, since we can see from what we just covered from Matthew 12 that the "everlasting"

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[691] That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. — Ephesians 2:7

damnation of Mark 3 will only last for two ages (the age that Jesus lived in while He walked the earth, and the age after that one).

But what is this "everlasting" damnation, specifically? Well, it's important to note that time spent in the lake of fire is not implicitly meant by the word "damnation" there (the word "damnation" in this passage in Mark – translated from the Greek word κρίσις/"kree'-sis" – basically only means "judgement," "sentence," or "penalty," referring to the fact that there is indeed going to be an "everlasting" penalty, figuratively speaking), and since neither hell nor the lake of fire are mentioned in any of these passages, to read punishment in the lake of fire into those passages without a good reason to do so is simply an assumption one has to make in order to support their soteriology. And while the less literal Bible versions such as the KJV don't make it quite as obvious what the penalty is, the way the original Greek and the more literal Bible translations do, anyone who has made it this far in the book should really be able to figure it out on their own.

Before I explain it, however, I should really point out that, even if "*hath never forgiveness*" in Mark in the KJV was meant to be taken literally and actually meant they *wouldn't* eventually be forgiven, people don't necessarily need forgiveness in order to be saved anyway. That might sound like a strange statement, but there are two factors to consider here. The first is simply that someone who is condemned to some form of punishment doesn't require forgiveness in order for their punishment to end, because even when someone is found guilty of a crime and sentenced to a certain number of years in prison today, they still leave the prison once they've served their time, even if they are never forgiven or pardoned (and to assume that the sentence of those who commit the so-called "unforgivable sin" has to be without end is also nothing more than eisegesis, especially since we already know from Matthew that it only lasts until the conclusion of the world/age after the one Jesus lived in during His earthly ministry, and that there's at least one world/age to come after that next

one ends, based on what Paul wrote in that verse in Ephesians 2:7 we just looked at, which means that *"will have no forgiveness for the age"* is what the figurative translation in Mark is really saying – which is backed up by the fact that it's a legitimate literal translation of the original Greek, as various literal Bible versions also confirm by the way they render this verse – simply telling us that they won't be forgiven during the current age, or during the thousand-year period of time known as "the age," also known as "the kingdom of heaven," and sometimes also as "the eon," depending on your Bible translation). And the second thing to consider is that there's actually something even better than forgiveness, and that's justification. Forgiveness implies guilt, and just means that the forgiver is overlooking the guilt of the one being forgiven by not punishing them for their crime (and said forgiveness can be revoked as well[692]), whereas justification means "not guilty" to begin with, or "declared to be righteous" (it's sometimes well defined as: "just as if I'd never sinned at all"; and it's important to note that justification can't be revoked the way forgiveness can

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692 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. — Matthew 18:21-35

be – at least not the sort of justification Paul wrote about, anyway – and there's no reason to believe that a "not guilty" verdict by God could suddenly become a "guilty" verdict), so even if somebody does miss out on forgiveness entirely, justification is far superior to it anyway, and that passage doesn't even hint at the idea that they won't eventually be declared justified (which it seems they eventually will have to be, based on everything we already went over from Paul's epistles).

So, with all that being said, what is the punishment for the sin that these passages are referring to? Well, there were various reasons one might end up experiencing this sentence, but there was basically only one ultimate punishment that Jesus ever threatened His Jewish audience with: missing out on getting to live in Israel during "the age" when the kingdom exists there for 1,000 years (regardless of whether the cause of missing out on "everlasting," aka "age-pertaining," life in the kingdom is because one has not been roused from the dead at the resurrection of the just, is because one has been executed and had their corpse burned up in the Valley of Hinnom, or is simply because one has been exiled from Israel to live in the "outer darkness" at that time, missing out on living in Israel during that thousand-year age was basically the bottom line when it came to the punishments Jesus spoke about), and since a more literal translation of the Greek text that Mark 3:28-29 is translated from is, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall not have forgiveness for the age, but is worthy of an age-pertaining sentence," and also since one needs forgiveness in order to live in Israel during "the age," we can determine that the "age-pertaining" sentence must simply be to miss out on getting to live in the kingdom of heaven during that thousand-year age because they won't have been forgiven during that period of time.

But as big and bad a threat as that was for Jesus' audience (and it was a pretty major threat for them), missing out on getting to enjoy life in Israel for that thousand-year age wasn't the final word. Jesus said that *"the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"*[693] to the chief priests and the elders of the people,[694] but that doesn't mean the chief priests and elders won't ever go into the kingdom of God themselves (even if they missed out on the part of the kingdom of God known as the kingdom of heaven, since that part only lasts for 1,000 years). In fact, they indeed will, just not until a point in time *after* the first group has already done so (Jesus said *"before you,"* not "instead of you"), and since both groups are currently dead, with the first group not even having enjoyed life in the thousand-year kingdom yet, the only time and place left for the second group to possibly enter the kingdom of God will be on the New Earth, after the Great White Throne Judgement has ended (since they won't be resurrected until after the thousand years are over[695]), which proves that people who miss out on the salvation Jesus spoke about can still make it to the New Earth. Please note that I'm not saying they'll definitely have been forgiven at this point, though. In fact, I'm willing to concede that they very well might not be forgiven at that time, and they certainly won't have been saved at that point (at least not when it comes to the sort of salvation Jesus primarily spoke about, since they'll have been dead during the thousand years, or at least for most of that period of time; and they won't be made immortal at

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693 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. — Matthew 21:31-32

694 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? — Matthew 21:23

695 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. — Revelation 20:5

that time, so they won't enjoy the salvation Paul taught about at that time either). But that's okay because, as we've already covered, one doesn't need to be forgiven (or "pardoned," which might be a more precise translation than "forgiven") once they've paid the penalty for a crime, and the penalty for this particular crime was simply to miss out on life in Israel for the thousand years that the kingdom of heaven will exist there (simply put, forgiveness is quite possibly only necessary for getting to live in the kingdom of heaven during the thousand-year period of time it exists on this planet, or for getting to live in heaven itself during the same time period, although the forgiveness that the Israel of God experiences is conditional, whereas the "forgiveness" that those of us in the body of Christ experience was given to us by God without us having to do a single thing to enjoy it,[696] simply because He chose to bless us more than anyone else, and the word "forgiveness" when it comes to us is mostly just referring to being dealt with graciously by God, but that's a much bigger discussion than I have the room to get into here, although it really should be pretty evident based on everything else I've covered about our salvation in this book).

To reiterate all that, there are people who will get to enjoy the kingdom of God when it begins on earth shortly after Jesus' Second Coming, in the next world/age (this would include the tax collectors and prostitutes Jesus spoke of, among others). But after the Great White Throne Judgement, during the final world/age (which will be the world/age *after* the one Jesus referred to as "the world to come"), the kingdom will be located (at least to begin with) in the massive

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[696] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

city[697] known as the New Jerusalem,[698] and it's during this world/age that people such as the chief priests and elders, as well as those who are said to *"hath never forgiveness,"* will get a chance to enter the kingdom (which refers to getting to enter the New Jerusalem; it isn't a reference to simply living on the New Earth, since there will be plenty of people living on the New Earth who aren't living in the New Jerusalem). Not everyone will get to do so until they've paid off "the uttermost farthing," however (which I personally suspect means, at least in part, paying the people they wronged in this lifetime back in some way while on the New Earth). But when they have, they'll also get to enjoy life in the kingdom of God (even if they missed out on the salvation Jesus spoke about, since they didn't get to live in Israel when Jesus first returned). This doesn't mean the salvation *we're* concerned with is through works, though, because this has nothing to do with the salvation Paul wrote about at all. Nobody who goes to live in the New Jerusalem after paying off their debt on the New Earth will be made immortal at that time, which is what the salvation Paul wrote about was largely referring to (although it seems likely that they'll remain alive, thanks to the fruit and leaves of the tree of life, but it seems they'll need to continue consuming the tree's products regularly in order to remain healthy and alive – presumably on a monthly basis, based on Revelation 22:2 – as already discussed, and so while they won't technically be mortals at this time, since the tree's produce will protect them from death by aging or illness, they'll be in that state I refer to as being "semi-mortal" rather than being truly

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[697] And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. — Revelation 21:16-17

[698] And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. — Revelation 21:2-4

immortal, since true immortality refers to being incapable of dying, which means they wouldn't need the produce of the tree of life to remain alive, and hence this isn't the salvation Paul wrote about).

I should also quickly add that, being recorded only in Circumcision writings, and based on the fact that members of the body of Christ are guaranteed our special salvation regardless of what we do, this particular sin isn't something we need to concern ourselves with (even if blaspheming the Holy Spirit is still a good thing to avoid). Basically, this warning is really only applicable to Israelites who are hoping to live in Israel during "the age."

For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. – Psalm 49:17-19

Of course, "hell" isn't mentioned in this passage, but regardless, the reference to the one who dies in this passage never again seeing light is sometimes still used to try to defend the popular doctrine. However, by this point, I trust you can see that the reference is obvious hyperbole, since we already know that they *will* see light when they're resurrected to be judged. This is simply poetic terminology being used in a book of poems and other figurative language, in this case to say that those who do evil can't rely on their wealth to save themselves, and that they'll wind up in the dust along with the animals who

have died, during the time that the writer gets to enjoy his salvation,[699] which we now know will be in the kingdom of heaven on earth. But we also now know that this isn't going to be the last word on their final outcome, even if the writer of the Psalm himself wasn't aware of this fact.

For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. – Proverbs 2:18-19

Similar to the part of the Psalm we just looked at, this Proverb is obviously also using hyperbole for the exact same reasons, so I trust I don't have to go into any detail actually explaining it, since what I said in that explanation about future resurrection would also apply equally here.

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[699] Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: Both low and high, rich and poor, together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish. — Psalm 49:1-20

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. – Isaiah 55:6-7

Some Christians will quote this verse in order to suggest that one can't find the Lord or be saved after the time that *"he may be found"* or *"is near."* This passage was written specifically to the Circumcision (Israelites), however, and we already know that not everyone will be saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision, so it doesn't cause any problems for the doctrine of the salvation of all, because anyone who misses out on salvation under *that* Gospel will eventually experience salvation under the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, as we've already learned, so this passage doesn't actually help the popular doctrine either.

The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? – Isaiah 33:14

I'm sure it should go without saying, by this point, that the "devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings" can't be referring to any version of "hell." For one thing, as we've already covered, nobody who heard or read this warning at the time it was given could have possibly interpreted it as referring to any version of "hell," since no location referred to as "hell" in any English version of the Bible had ever been described that way in Scripture yet, and this verse doesn't mention "hell" either, so there's no way anyone could have made a connection between this particular "fire" and any version of "hell" back then (and there's nothing in the verse that even hints at an afterlife, so there's no way it could have been interpreted as referring to an afterlife punishment either). So what was this talking about? Well, the first thing to note is that it's a reference to specific sinners in a specific location – Zion – telling us that this is a judgement

specifically meant for Israel, and the fire is simply a figure of speech for certain judgements of God against Israel. Why does God use fire as a symbol of judgement? Because the judgement comes directly from God, Who is referred to as a consuming fire Himself[700] in various parts of Scripture[701] (and I hope you don't believe that God is "hell," or the lake of fire, Himself, which He can't be since we already know that that the lake of fire will be located in a valley in Israel). The Hebrew Scriptures[702] are full of examples[703] of this symbolism being

[700] For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. — Deuteronomy 4:24

[701] For our God is a consuming fire. — Hebrews 12:29

[702] Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. — Psalm 50:3

[703] Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. — Isaiah 29:6

used[704] to refer to judgements of Israel,[705] so to assume this one verse is a reference to the lake of fire is just reading one's preconceived doctrinal bias into the text. But the question does remain, who among Israel shall be able to dwell in the "fire" when God judges Israel? Well, the answer to that question is given in the very next verse (in Isaiah 33:15): *"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his*

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[704] He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. — Lamentations 2:3

[705] And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered morter, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD. — Ezekiel 22:17-31

eyes from seeing evil." Those Israelites who walk righteously will be able to dwell among the fiery judgements themselves without being devoured, yet we know the righteous won't be cast into the lake of fire (only certain unrighteousness people are said to end up there[706]), so it should go without saying that this verse was never talking about the lake of fire to begin with. This also serves as a good reminder when reading the rest of the Bible that, just because you see the word "fire" in a passage (even if it's a passage about judgement), it doesn't necessarily mean it's referring to the lake of fire or any other "hell," but rather that it might simply refer figuratively to someone being judged in some way *without* ending up in the version of "hell" known as the lake of fire (especially if you don't specifically see the words "hell" or "the lake of fire" in the passage in question).

In addition, it's also important to remember that, when we see a passage about judgement, being judged doesn't imply that someone will be punished without end anyway (or even that they'll be punished at all). First of all, judgement can be a good thing (as the judgement of the body of Christ at the judgement seat of Christ, among other scriptural judgements,[707] should make clear). But second of all, many of the punishments based on negative judgements throughout the Bible eventually ended (or were promised to be reversed in the future[708]), so we'd have no basis for simply assuming that doesn't apply to the judgement

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[706] But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. — Revelation 21:8

[707] With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. — Isaiah 26:9

[708] When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. — Ezekiel 16:53-55

referred to in this verse in Isaiah either, even if we didn't already know what Paul wrote about the salvation of all humanity, which proves it would have to anyway.

For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. – Isaiah 34:8-10

This is, of course, typical figurative, prophetic language, just like in the last passage we looked at (which was in the chapter immediately before this one in the book of Isaiah), and aside from the fact that neither "hell" nor the lake of fire are mentioned anywhere in this chapter either, the reference to the dust becoming *"brimstone"* and the land becoming *"burning pitch"* which *"shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof"* which *"shall go up for ever,"* not to mention the part of the passage saying, *"from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever,"* isn't even talking about people burning at all, but rather is talking about land (at least in a figurative manner, if not literally). This passage, at least if read literally, is basically a prophecy about the judgement awaiting the land the nations live in during the Day of the Lord's Vengeance, as the passage says, which is referring to the Tribulation. Yes, the land of Idumea (meaning Edom) is mentioned specifically in verses 5 and 6,[709] but the Edomites have pretty much been lost to history at this point, with no particular land left belonging to them, so Idumea is generally assumed to be have been used there as a single example of the judgement

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[709] For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. — Isaiah 34:5-6

which will come upon *all* the nations of the world who stand against Israel during the Tribulation, as Edomites often did when they were still around, since they hated Israel more than any other nation (although it does also seem to be true that what was once the land of Edom *will* be "a desolation" at that time as well,[710] presuming this itself isn't simply figurative language for the utter destruction that did fall upon the Edomites in the past). And since we know that the rest of the world which isn't Israel *isn't* going to be a desolate, burning wasteland for the entire 1,000 years that the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel (because we already know people will be living out there in the "outer darkness" during that time period, or else nobody would exist to rise up against Israel at the end of the thousand years one last time, as Revelation tells us will happen[711]), not to mention the fact that this entire planet is going to be destroyed after the thousand-year kingdom of heaven in Israel ends and will be replaced with a New Earth, we know that this isn't meant to be taken any more literally than the *"everlasting burnings"* in chapter 33 are meant to be, since the smoke which is going to *"go up for ever"* would have to eventually stop rising, if it were literal smoke, because there won't be any land left to burn after this earth is destroyed and replaced with by the New Earth, and that the *"for ever and ever"* of this entire judgement takes place for no longer than 1,000 years, give or take. This is all just telling us that either the land the nations live in will be judged harshly for a period of time, or that the people living in said land will be instead, but we know that the *"burning"* language in this prophecy is purely

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[710] Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. — Jeremiah 49:17-18

[711] And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. — Revelation 20:7-9

figurative based on what else we know about the state of the rest of the world[712] during the thousand year period of time that the kingdom of heaven will exist in Israel.[713] But either way, there isn't anything in this passage which even implies that any humans will suffer without end.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. – Matthew 13:24-30

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 13:47-50

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[712] From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. — Zephaniah 3:10

[713] In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. — Isaiah 19:23-25

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. – Matthew 25:31-46

I'm covering all three of these passages together because I believe they're talking about similar judgements which occur around the same time. And since pretty much every Christian I've ever spoken with also believes these are either similar judgements which take place around the same time, or are even perhaps referring to the exact same judgement, it seems safe to do so (although, if you believe these are actually referring to separate judgements that don't take place

around the same time, I'd be curious to hear how you do happen to interpret these passages).

If someone reads those passages over without taking the time to break them down, and ignores the fact that no version of "hell," nor the lake of fire, is mentioned by name anywhere in any of these parabolic prophecies, it's sort of easy to see why someone might assume they're talking about true believers going to heaven and non-believers ending up trapped in hell (especially if they aren't aware of what we've now learned about what both heaven and the various "hells" are when referred to in the Bible, not to mention what we've now learned about Paul's teachings regarding the salvation of all humanity). But whatever the cause of the outcome mentioned in these passages is, I hope it's obvious by now to anyone who has made it this far into the book that Jesus' main point here had to be about getting to enjoy life in the kingdom of heaven on earth vs not getting to do so, just as pretty much *all* of His judgement teachings were about. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, at the end of His explanation of the first parable, Jesus says the angels *"shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,"* and we now know that the kingdom of heaven is going to be here on earth, not in an afterlife realm, which means the identity of the "righteous/just/sheep" and the "wicked/them which do iniquity/goats" can't be what most Christians have assumed either. Of course, most Christians assume that the sheep, or the righteous, represent true believers, and that the goats, or the wicked, are everyone else, and while neither hell nor the lake of fire are actually mentioned by name in any of these passages, if people are being judged and going into fire for eternity, as the passages seem to imply when one doesn't consider the context and recognize the figurative language, most also assume that it must be talking about the Great White Throne Judgement and the lake of fire. Of course, as most Christians are aware, but seem to forget when they read these passages for some reason, there won't be any true believers being judged at the Great White

Throne, which means the sheep can't actually represent true believers at all if Jesus was talking about that particular judgement (those in the body of Christ will have already been "judged," so to speak, over 1,000 years earlier, at the Judgement Seat of Christ – or the dais of Christ, as it's referred to in certain more literal Bible translations – and will have been living in the heavens for all that time, while those in the Israel of God will have been living on, and reigning over, the earth that they inherited for the thousand years before this occurs,[714] and there's no reason to think that either group would be judged after that period of time ends, especially since most of them will have been made immortal at this time, and immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in Scripture, as we now also know; besides, believers within the body of Christ will likely *participate* in judging those at the Great White Throne Judgement[715] – Christ is the judge[716] at that judgement, and it would take a very long time for one person to judge every single human being who ever lived, even if one excludes all those who have already experienced salvation, so it makes sense that the rest of His body will assist Him here – and no, the Great White Throne Judgement doesn't take place outside of space and time, but rather takes place in our physical universe after the dead have been physically resurrected into mortal bodies, which should be more obvious than it is to some, considering the fact that it's technically impossible for anyone who isn't God to be outside of space and time anyway, as well as that nothing can occur without space and time, so nobody could experience being judged if they weren't existing within space and time, considering the fact that movement requires one to exist within space and change requires one to exist within time). Not to mention, there's no reference to a resurrection in any of these passages,

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[714] Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. — Revelation 20:6

[715] Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? — 1 Corinthians 6:2

[716] For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: — John 5:22

which would be necessary to occur if these are about a judgement of everyone who has ever lived. Instead, all one needs to do is take a look at the verse in Matthew 25 which says it takes place *"when the Son of man shall come in his glory,"* and look at the context of the rest of the chapter, as well as the chapter before it, which makes it obvious that it's talking about the time that Jesus returns to the earth at His Second Coming, telling us that these passages must be talking about a judgement (or judgements) which takes place on earth shortly after the Great Tribulation ends, rather than the Great White Throne Judgement which takes place about a thousand years after this judgement.[717]

Of course, if "life eternal" and "everlasting punishment" literally meant that every single human living on earth were going to be judged and sent to afterlife realms called heaven or hell for eternity, as most Christians have always assumed would happen at the time the judgement in these parables takes place, that would cause other obvious problems. For example, it would leave nobody living on the earth for the next thousand years to reproduce, as Scripture says will happen in Israel when the kingdom begins there (as well as on the New Earth, after the thousand-year age ends and our current planet is destroyed). As I've mentioned before, the Bible teaches that those who have been made immortal will be like the angels and will no longer marry or reproduce at that time, and if all the non-believers are going to be sent to the lake of fire to die a second time at that point, with everyone else being given their immortality at that time, that doesn't leave anybody else to fulfill the prophecies about the New Covenant, or even the New Earth, that are supposed to take place after the

[717] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. — Revelation 20:5

Tribulation ends. Not only that, it also wouldn't leave[718] any Gentiles to fulfill[719] the many prophecies[720] about the nations[721] during the thousand years,[722] not to mention the fact that no Gentiles would be left to rise up against Israel at the end of the thousand years one last time if all the non-believers are cast into the lake of fire at this point, as I've already mentioned.

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[718] Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. — Zechariah 8:22-23

[719] And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. — Zechariah 14:16-19

[720] And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. — Isaiah 2:2-4

[721] In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. — Isaiah 19:23-25

[722] And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. — Revelation 2:26-27

Hopefully you've also asked yourself why there's nothing in there about the sheep "asking Jesus into their hearts" or "accepting Jesus as their Lord and Saviour" in these passages, if you're still assuming this is talking about the salvation Paul wrote about (not that either of those are actually scriptural ways to be saved), or even about them believing that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, and why it seems like the positive outcomes in these parables appears to be dependent upon being just or doing good works rather than being said to be by grace through faith. Most people just brush those concerns aside, of course, because they "know" these passages have to be talking about what they've always been taught by their religious leaders that they are, and decide to believe, even though it doesn't actually say so in the passages, that the reason for the positive outcomes in these passages (especially during the judgement of the sheep and the goats) *has* to be figurative and has to be talking about these good works as proof of faith rather than good works being the actual cause of the sheep's reward as that passage says they are when interpreted literally (and then push the thought that "many non-Christians do the very things Jesus seemed to say would result in everlasting life while many Christians don't" to the back of their minds and try to forget that fact as well), because if one were to read it literally it would become obvious pretty quickly that it just *can't* be talking about what one has always assumed it is at all (although one is then also forced to push the thought that, "if the *cause* of the rewards and punishments referred to as 'life eternal' and 'everlasting fire' is figurative, then there's no reason to believe that these rewards and punishments, or even their durations, aren't *also* figurative in this passage, especially based on the meaning of the English words 'everlasting' and 'eternal' in *other* parts of the KJV and the words they're translated from in Scripture," to the back of their mind as well, but most successfully do so). But even if this could all somehow be twisted into meaning the sheep are true believers who will go to heaven, and the goats are non-believers who will go to the lake of fire, we already know from what we've previously covered that

there's no basis for believing that any human is going to remain in the lake of fire without end (and that there's no reason to believe any human is conscious in it either), and we in fact know that everyone who dies a second time will have to be resurrected and quickened in order for death to actually be destroyed as Paul said it will be, so mangling the passage in such a manner doesn't actually help defend the traditional doctrine anyway.

But as for what these passages are *actually* talking about, in order to figure this out, one needs to first be aware of certain passages in the Hebrew Scriptures which are the key to understanding the biblical meaning of being in a "furnace," because this isn't talking about the lake of fire at all. Instead, if you look at passages such as Deuteronomy 4:20, which says, *"But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day,"* or Jeremiah 11:4, which says, "W*hich I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God,"* among

various other references[723] in the Hebrew Scriptures[724] to being in a "furnace,"[725] it should be obvious that none of these passages refer to spending time burning in literal fire in an actual furnace made of iron, but are basically talking about time spent in parts of the world that aren't Israel (no Christian believes the "furnace" part of the parable is literal anyway, and if the "furnace" in the warning isn't a literal structure with fire burning inside of it, it stands to reason that the "fire" in the figurative "furnace" in this warning isn't literal fire either, but is simply a symbolic reference to judgement, as we've now learned that mentions of "fire" and "burning" very often are in the Bible). And so, what

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[723] For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: — 1 Kings 8:51

[724] Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you. — Ezekiel 22:8-22

[725] Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. — Isaiah 48:10

the first two parables are actually saying is that there will be righteous Israelites and unrighteous Israelites when Jesus returns, and some will wail and gnash their teeth (which is a figure of speech used in various parts of the Bible to refer to the extreme negative emotions of the living[726] rather than the dead[727]) because they've been forced to live in parts of the world that aren't the kingdom of heaven/Israel (these parts of the world being referred to parabolically as "the furnace of fire," also referred to in other passages as the "outer darkness," which we've already learned can't refer to the lake of fire, since *it* will be located in a valley *inside* the kingdom, and since Israel is where the kingdom of heaven will be located when it begins on the earth, those parts of the world far from the light of the King and His kingdom[728] will be in "outer darkness," also referred to in Isaiah 34 as a figurative "*burning pitch*" which "*shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof*" going up "*for ever*"), unlike the righteous Jews who *will* get to live in the kingdom of heaven/Israel at that time (which is where everyone who heard Jesus when He spoke wanted to live when the kingdom fully arrives on earth in the future). It's actually very simple to grasp once you come to understand who Jesus' audience was and what His message was all about, especially when you also take all of Paul's references to the salvation of all humanity in his epistles into consideration. But when you assume that Jesus was talking about an afterlife for ghosts in another dimension rather than the life and death which physical bodies on this planet will go through, and think that Jesus was directing His message to everyone rather than specifically to Israelites, it's easy to get extremely confused about *all* of His sayings.

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[726] The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish. — Psalm 112:10

[727] All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it. — Lamentations 2:16

[728] Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. — John 8:12

As for the parable of the sheep and the goats, this judgement simply refers to certain Gentiles of the nations (based on Jesus' statement that *"before him shall be gathered all nations"*) being cursed[729] for not being a blessing[730] unto the least of Jesus' brethren during the Tribulation period, which this judgement takes place immediately after (Jesus' "brethren" obviously being a reference to faithful Israelites,[731] presumably those who will be taken into captivity among the nations during the Tribulation,[732] and not simply to random people who are suffering today), by being forced to reside outside the kingdom of heaven, as well as to other Gentiles of the nations getting to live *in* the kingdom in Israel at

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[729] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: — Matthew 25:41

[730] Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. — Genesis 12:1-3

[731] While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. — Matthew 12:46-50

[732] Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. — Zechariah 14:1-2

that time[733] as a reward for blessing the faithful Israelites who were persecuted during the Tribulation. We know from Zechariah 14:16-21 that there will be Gentiles not living in the kingdom of heaven at this time, consisting of *"every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem"*[734] at the end of the Tribulation,[735] meaning the Gentiles who didn't support Israelites during the Tribulation and hence won't get to enjoy 1,000 years of "life eternal" in Israel at that time, but who didn't die at Armageddon because they weren't a part of the army that gathered against Jerusalem there. So we know from this passage that the goats definitely won't actually be killed in the lake of fire at this judgement, because if they were, there wouldn't be anyone left to fulfill that prophecy, not to mention the prophecy in Revelation which tells us that every nation will be involved in rising up against Israel one more time in the future, long after this

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[733] So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD. — Ezekiel 47:21-23

[734] And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts. — Zechariah 14:16-21

[735] And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. — Revelation 19:19

judgement, as well.[736] This, of course, also means that the fire prepared for the devil and his angels isn't any more literal than the "furnace of fire" is, but rather that it's simply a figurative reference to the parts of the planet outside the kingdom of heaven where these people are sent to live as their punishment (the parts of the planet that are referred to as a "furnace" for exiled Israelites at that time, or, again, as the land which was referred to as a figurative "*burning pitch*" which "*shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof*" going up "*for ever,*" which makes sense, considering the fact that what we've seen so far tells us that "fire" rarely, if ever, speaks of the "hell" known as the lake of fire when either that specific location isn't also referred to by name in a passage using the word, or the word "hell" itself isn't used in the passage in the KJV), since people living in those parts of the world – or at least their descendants who don't get saved during that time,[737] one thousand years later – will give in to temptation by Satan to rise up against Israel one last time at the end of the thousand years, having been *"prepared for the devil and his angels"* so they can to tempt these people to do so (keeping in mind the "Mountain Peaks" aspect of prophecy when reading this passage if it sounds confusing that it could be talking about the distant offspring of those who didn't help Israelites during the Tribulation who are ultimately the ones *"prepared for the devil and his angels"*). This also means that the urban legend which many Christians repeat, that "God created hell for the devil, not for humans, but humans sinned so He had to punish them in hell too," is based on a complete misunderstanding of this passage, and actually has no scriptural basis at all, since this passage isn't even talking about

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[736] And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. — Revelation 20:7-9

[737] And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. — Isaiah 49:6

hell, or about it being prepared for the devil, to begin with. Simply put, those labelled as "goats" in this prophecy will spend the rest of the impending thousand-year age that the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel (or at least the rest of the time they're alive during that age, although their descendants are also included in this age-pertaining punishment, figuratively translated as "everlasting punishment" in the KJV) in the age-pertaining "fire," meaning the parts of the world outside of Israel. And at the end of the thousand years, the descendants of the original "goats" will be tempted by the devil to rise up and attack Israel one last time, just prior to the Great White Throne Judgement.

And don't worry, this interpretation of the judgement of the sheep and the goats isn't teaching salvation by works either. In fact, it isn't technically talking about salvation at all – because the sheep won't be quickened at the time they enter the kingdom they were predestined by God to enter[738] – but is just talking about a reward for blessing Israelites.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

[738] Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: — Matthew 25:34

This passage is obviously also talking about Christ's Second Coming (compare the details of verse 7 here[739] to the details mentioned in Matthew 25:31[740] if there's any doubt in your mind), which means that what I've already written about "fire" in the parables we just looked at applies to this passage as well. Paul was simply pointing out the sort of punishment some of those who will be alive at the time Jesus returns will have to endure, and it's just as figurative as when Jesus spoke about it (referring to not getting to live in the kingdom of heaven when it begins on earth, including both *"them that know not God,"* meaning the Gentile "goats" of Matthew 25, as well as them *"that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* meaning Israelites who are not a part of the Israel of God and are exiled to live in the figurative "furnace of fire" at that time). Besides, almost no Christian takes the word "destruction" in this verse literally (since most somehow manage to interpret this word as a figure of speech referring to being tortured in the lake of fire without end), and if *that* word is figurative and not literal, there's no good reason to believe that the word "everlasting" before it is any more literal than it is (and based on everything we've already learned from Paul's epistles about the salvation of all, as well as what we now know about the meaning of "everlasting" in the Bible versions that use the word, we know it can't be anyway).

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)
– Philippians 3:18-19

We know that anyone who experiences "destruction" will still eventually also experience salvation, based on what Paul taught in the rest of his epistles. This

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[739] And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, — 2 Thessalonians 1:7

[740] When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: — Matthew 25:31

means that the "end" which the enemies of the cross of Christ that Paul is condemning here can only be an "end" from a relative perspective, since we know the "end" they'll experience at the end of the ages will ultimately be salvation.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. – Matthew 10:28

Notice the word "destroy" there, which, just like the word "destruction" in the last couple passages we looked at, we have no basis for interpreting figuratively in the manner most Christians do either (in the sense that to be "destroyed" somehow figuratively refers to suffering without end in the lake of fire). Even if we didn't know about all of Paul's teachings on the eventual salvation of all humanity, I'd still argue that it would make far more sense to interpret it in a way that lines up with what Jesus was *actually* teaching throughout His earthly ministry: about the kingdom of heaven beginning in Israel in the future, and how to either get to live there when it begins, or end up missing out on it at that time. With that in mind, I'd suggest that this verse is simply saying that Jesus' Jewish audience at the time He gave the warning (along with those Israelites who live through the Tribulation, and even any who live between those two periods of time) should not fear men who might kill them for their faith in Jesus, because God will still resurrect them to live in the kingdom of heaven when it begins on earth if they're martyred. But if they die without that faith, on the other hand, or have rejected Jesus in order to temporarily save their lives, God will *not* resurrect them at that time, and they'll presumably even die a second time in the lake of fire, which means they'd miss out on the greatest desire of their soul (this is what the figurative language of having one's "soul destroyed in hell" means, or at least this is a far more scripturally consistent interpretation of the phrase than what most Christians assume it means, as should be obvious by this point), which for anyone listening to Jesus would have been (or at

least should have been[741]) to get to live in that kingdom when it begins in Israel in the future. Like Judas,[742] it would have been far better for them to have died in the womb or in childbirth than to have been born at all, since babies who die in childbirth will at least be resurrected at the Great White Throne Judgement so they can grow up on the New Earth, while Judas will likely end up in the lake of fire when he's resurrected, at least prior to the time Christ destroys death (yes, even Judas will have been resurrected and quickened at that time, but he'll have missed out on so much in the meantime).

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. – Matthew 10:32-33

This statement almost certainly has to do with who will get to be resurrected to live in Israel when the kingdom begins there vs who won't be, based on the last passage we just looked at (which was stated just moments before this one), as well as about any Israelites who will be living when Jesus returns and whether they get to enter the kingdom or don't get to, and doesn't tell us anything about what happens to anyone *after* the thousand years come to an end, so it doesn't really help support the popular doctrine.

When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. – Psalm 92:7

Just like the other passages referring to being destroyed that we've looked at, we know that being *"destroyed for ever"* in this verse can't be referring to never-ending torment in hell without reading one's doctrinal bias into the phrase, and

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[741] But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. — Matthew 6:33

[742] The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. — Matthew 26:24

we also know from everything we've learned from Paul's epistles about the salvation of all that nobody remains dead (or even dying) at the end of the ages, so the "for ever" here has to be as figurative as it is in any other passage we've already looked at, and by now it should be clear that this just means they'll miss out on getting to live in the kingdom of heaven, but not that they won't eventually experience salvation at the end of the ages, when the figurative "for ever" comes to an end.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?
– Matthew 23:33

All this verse says is that the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking at the time[743] would be sentenced to have their corpses destroyed in the Valley of Hinnom, and they almost certainly did in AD 70 after being killed by the Romans (presuming this wasn't a reference to the lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgement; while the prophecies about having one's corpse consumed in the Valley of Hinnom are referring to dead bodies being destroyed in a literal, geographical location, we do have to take the "Mountain Peaks" of prophecy into consideration with such references as well, because they are sometimes referring to a location on our current planet, and sometimes referring to a location that will exist on the New Earth instead, if not referring to it happening in both locations, depending on the person). It doesn't say they'll be in this particular hell without end, however, nor does it say they'll be conscious while they're in it (and we know from what we've already learned that they won't be), so this really isn't a helpful verse for anyone trying to teach never-ending torment in hell.

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[743] But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. — Matthew 23:13

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
– Matthew 7:13-14

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
– Matthew 7:21-23

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. – Luke 13:23-30

Of course, there's nothing about hell or the lake of fire in these passages, but they're quoted so often to defend never-ending punishment that I thought I should include them regardless. That said, based on everything we've covered so far, you should really be able to interpret these for yourself by now. But for those who do need an explanation, Jesus is simply talking about certain people

who won't be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven after He returns, because they've continued to live particularly sinful lives (this also makes it clear that this isn't a warning for members of the body of Christ, because there is *no* condemnation for us,[744] and nothing can separate us from the love of God,[745] not even sin, since where sin abounds, grace much more abounds[746]). He obviously isn't talking about ghosts not being allowed to live in an ethereal afterlife realm called heaven when they die, based on everything we've already covered, and He likely isn't even talking about unbelievers (I'd think that anyone who can do the things in His name that the people He was condemning were able to do are probably Jewish believers, but it wasn't lack of belief He condemned them for anyway; rather, it was for their iniquity). Jesus' statement that many *"shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"* in the passage in Luke also confirms that this all takes place on earth. So, in answer to the disciple's question, yes, there are relatively few that will be saved, at least when it comes to the sort of salvation Jesus preached about during His earthly ministry. This doesn't mean they can't later experience the sort of salvation Paul taught about, however, because it's an entirely different sort of salvation, as I've already explained.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. – John 14:6

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[744] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. — Romans 8:1

[745] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 8:38-39

[746] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

Like the last passage, this one doesn't mention hell or the lake of fire either, but I thought I should quickly cover it as well, since many Christians like to use it to prove that non-Christians are going to be permanently punished in hell. Aside from the fact that Jesus was talking to Jews in this verse, which tells us that it's technically about the sort of salvation Israelites were looking forward to (which, again, involves getting to live in Israel after He returns, not "going to heaven" as ghosts after one dies), if anybody comes to the Father *after* the thousand years are finished, as Paul promised everyone eventually will, it would still be "by" (or "through," meaning "because of") Christ.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. – Acts 4:12

Once again, there's nothing about "hell" or the lake of fire in this verse, and this statement was made by Peter to the religious leaders of Israel, so we already know it can only refer to the sort of salvation that pertains to Israelites (getting to live in the kingdom in Israel after Jesus returns, in other words), and has nothing at all to do with the sort of salvation Paul later taught about to the nations.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – John 3:16

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. – John 3:36

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. – 1 John 5:12

Pretty much every single Christian out there already interprets basically every part of these passages extremely figuratively, reading "going to heaven" into the

word "life," and "being punished without end in hell" into the word "perish," for example. Based on everything I've written above, though, it should really be quite clear by now to anyone who has been paying attention that these verses are simply saying that those Israelites who *"believeth not the Son"* won't get to enjoy life in Israel after Jesus returns (and while it's too big of a tangent to dig into the details of it right now, references to "the world" in the writings of John that aren't talking about specific ages/eons are generally, if not always, referring to "the world" of Israelites, not the whole planet or every human to ever live, based on who Jesus said the intended audience of his earthly ministry was: the lost sheep of the house of Israel). And how does an Israelite *"believeth on the Son,"* as the KJV puts it? Well, it simply means they believe that Jesus is Israel's Messiah (or Christ) and the Son of God, as John wrote at the end of the same book: *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."*[747] Now, I trust you noticed what John *didn't* write in that verse. You see, if the people John was writing to are required to believe that Christ's death was *"**for our sins**,"* and if they have to trust in His death ***"for our sins"*** in order for them to have *"life through his name,"* then John left out a very crucial piece of information for them in that verse where he told his Jewish readers *exactly* what *they* have to believe in order to have *"life through his name."* Because, yes, his book did explain that Christ died, but A) it didn't explain that His death was ***"for our sins,"*** and B) it also didn't explain that this aspect of His death (the *"for our sins"* aspect) was necessary to be trusted in the way it is for those who are saved when they believe Paul's Gospel. So I hope you've figured out that this is because that particular belief wasn't necessary to experience the sort of salvation Jesus spoke about during His earthly ministry, realizing that John certainly *would* have included it in that list of things they have to believe in order to experience the sort of salvation that John was writing about if it actually *was* a necessary thing for his readers to believe in order to experience

[747] But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

the sort of salvation that he was writing about, since it wouldn't make sense for him to leave out such important information about what his readers needed to believe in order to "have life" if that was the main reason he wrote the book, as he claimed it was in John 20:31 (especially since John wrote this *after* Jesus' death and resurrection).

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. –John 3:1-7

Modern-day evangelicals are obsessed with this passage, insisting that everyone has to choose to be "born again" if they want to experience salvation. Unfortunately, just like Nicodemus, they have absolutely no idea what Jesus meant by the term.[748] To get the obvious out of the way first, nobody can choose to be born a first time, and this second birth is no different[749] since it happens to those who *"received him [Jesus]"* and were *"given power to become the sons of*

[748] Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? — John 3:9-10

[749] The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. — John 3:8

God" not *"of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"*[750] so it's obviously not something any individual can choose to experience out of the strength of their own will power, but is instead something that is ultimately decided for them by God (once again demonstrating that receiving something isn't necessarily based on a choice we make ourselves).

But equally important to know, unless you're an Israelite, you can't be "born" a second time, because you haven't been "born" a first time, at least not when it comes to the sort of "birth" that Jesus was talking about there. Remember, Jesus wasn't talking about the same sort of salvation Paul primarily wrote about (in fact, throughout Paul's epistles, he never even once spoke about a new birth; instead, he taught about a whole new creation altogether—or *"a new creature,"* as the KJV puts it[751]—which is even better than being "born" a second time), but was referring to getting to live in the part of the kingdom of God that will exist for 1,000 years in Israel, so from that fact alone it should be obvious that this statement is only relevant to Israelites and not to Gentiles. But to make this even more clear, Jesus' question (*"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"*) in response to Nicodemus thinking that any of this was about biological childbirth tells us that this Pharisee should have already known exactly what Jesus was talking about based on the Scripture available to him at the time. This tells us that we have to look to the Hebrew Scriptures to determine exactly what Jesus meant (and we know there's nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures about "asking Jesus into your heart," as most evangelicals explain being "born again" as meaning when they share their "gospel," or really

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[750] He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. — John 1:11-13

[751] Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

anything else they use to try to explain the meaning of being "born again" either, for that matter).

So what was it in the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus was referring to here? Well, Jesus was talking about a nation that was figuratively said to have been "born" a first time by Moses in Exodus 4:22 when he said, *"Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn"*[752] (along with similar statements he made in Numbers 11:12[753] and in Deuteronomy 32:18[754]). That would be the first "birth" of those whom Jesus was referring to in this passage, telling us that it only applies to the nation of Israel. As for the second birth, this also has to be something spoken of in the Hebrew Scriptures if Nicodemus should have known this already as "*a master of Israel,*" so we have to look to passages that refer to Israel being born another time, and this would be Isaiah 66:8 which asks, *"shall a nation be born at once?"*,[755] prophetically referring to something that will happen to the nation of Israel in the future. Simply put, Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about Israelites fully experiencing their New Covenant (which never applied to Gentiles, since we didn't have an old covenant to be replaced with by a new one to begin with) and the rebirth of the favoured nation of God when they're returned to their land completely and are finally able to walk in God's statutes

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[752] And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: — Exodus 4:22

[753] Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? — Numbers 11:12

[754] Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. — Deuteronomy 32:18

[755] Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. — Isaiah 66:8

properly,[756] meaning they'll finally keep the Mosaic law perfectly, because they'll have been sprinkled with *"clean water"* and will have the law written on their new hearts (and this is why Jesus said they need to be born not just of the Spirit, but also of water,[757] to let Nicodemus know that He was referring to that prophecy in Ezekiel 36, and Nicodemus would have also known that this prophecy was connected with the prophecy about the New Covenant in

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[756] Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. — Ezekiel 36:22-32

[757] Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. — John 3:5

Jeremiah 31[758]), which we know – thanks to the Greek Scriptures – will all take place around the time of the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus returns and the thousand-year kingdom begins.

This is also why Jesus specifically said, *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."* Unfortunately, people who aren't using the *King James Version* are unlikely to be aware of this, because most other Bible versions don't use the precise grammar in their translations of that passage the way the KJV does (and even many people who do use the KJV won't realize it, since few today know about 17th-century grammar), but "ye" is a plural word in the KJV, which means Jesus was simply saying: "Marvel not that I said unto thee [Nicodemus], Ye [the nation of Israel] must be born again."

Now, it is true that Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"*[759] and combined with the fact that they make the same mistake Nicodemus made in assuming the first "birth" was biological (which is what led him to ask his question about entering "*the second time into his mother's womb*"), this has led evangelicals to assume that individual Gentiles today have to choose to be "born again" or they won't be able to go to heaven, but we already know that going to heaven is only for the body of Christ, so this

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[758] Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. — Jeremiah 31:31-34

[759] Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. — John 3:3

can only be referring to getting to live in the part of the kingdom of God that will exist on earth for 1,000 years rather than in the part of the kingdom of God that will be in heaven.[760] Simply put, Jesus was just referring to the specific Israelites[761] God chose to be a part of Israel's second birth when it occurs (since Jesus didn't specify that He was referring to or including the nations in this statement the way He did in Matthew 25:32,[762] and because we know that His teachings were pretty much only relevant to Israelites[763]—not to mention the fact that Gentiles weren't "born" a first time in the manner that Jesus was referring to there, so there's no way they could be "born" a second time as well—it should be pretty obvious that His statement should be understood as meaning: "Except a [Jewish] man be born again..."), including a few who can perhaps be said to have (at least proleptically, if not literally) experienced the second birth earlier than the rest, such as those[764] Peter wrote to[765] in his first epistle[766] (where he called back to prophecies about this from Exodus

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[760] If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? — John 3:12

[761] For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. — Romans 2:28-29

[762] And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: — Matthew 25:32

[763] But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. — Matthew 15:24

[764] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, — 1 Peter 1:3

[765] Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. — 1 Peter 1:23

[766] But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; — 1 Peter 2:9

19:6[767] and from Psalm 22:30-31[768]). And even then, we know that an Israelite only needs to be "born again" to *"see the kingdom of God"* during the first thousand years of its existence on earth, since the Mosaic law (and hence the New Covenant) will be irrelevant after those thousand years have been completed, after heaven and earth have passed away, which means the "born again" figure of speech will no longer be relevant either. This tells us that Israelites who missed out on getting to enjoy life for 1,000 years in the kingdom of God on this earth will finally have an opportunity to enter the kingdom of God on the New Earth (when it will be centred within the New Jerusalem). Some will try to argue that Jesus' *"except a man"* statement means this *has* to apply to all humans, of course, but they're ignoring the context of the passage. This is just like Paul's *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* statement, which we now know is only referring to the part of the kingdom of God that will be in outer space, because we know that flesh and blood *will* inherit the part of the kingdom of God that's going to exist on earth during the thousand years (since not everybody who gets to live in the kingdom will have been quickened at that time), as well as on the New Earth (at least until the end of the ages), and there's no reason the word "man" and "kingdom of God" can't be just as context-defined here as "flesh and blood" and "kingdom of God" are in that passage (and, based on the scriptural references I included in the footnotes of this paragraph, as well as the other arguments I presented, it should be obvious that it is).

And just as a quick but somewhat related aside, I should point out that Nicodemus and Jesus were likely speaking either Hebrew or Aramaic rather than Greek when they had this conversation, and that it would have then been

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[767] And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. — Exodus 19:6

[768] A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this. — Psalm 22:30-31

translated into Greek from whichever language they were speaking when their discussion was recorded in the book of John. I bring this up because the Greek adverb ἄνωθεν/"an'-o-then" that the English "again" part of "born again" was translated from in the KJV can legitimately be – and, honestly, is even more commonly – translated in English as "from above" (although not always[769]), and some Christians believe this means that Jesus actually said "born from above" rather than "born again." However, I don't believe that anybody at all could ever hear "born from above" and possibly somehow think the speaker was literally talking about a second biological birth the way that Nicodemus thought Jesus' statement was referring to, even as a misunderstanding of what the speaker was saying, whereas someone who hears "born again" could be forgiven for mistakenly assuming that's what the speaker meant. Nicodemus' use of whichever word was translated into Greek with the adjective δεύτερον/"dyoo'-ter-on" – literally meaning "the second time" – seems to tell us that the context of the term he was responding to was "second," or "again," anyway, so I maintain that "born again" is indeed the only English translation that makes sense, unless, perhaps, the writer of the book of John specifically used ἄνωθεν as a double entendre in his Greek translation, since the second birth of Israel would indeed be sent "from above" rather than generated by themselves. But either way, the original statement Jesus made in whichever language they were speaking was almost certainly "born again" and not "born from above."

So no, unless you're a member of the Israel of God, you haven't been "born again," and neither can you be (since you weren't "born" a first time in the manner Jesus was speaking about), nor do you need to be, since the salvation of those in the body of Christ won't be enjoyed in the same part of the kingdom of God that Israel is looking forward to living in when it begins in earnest on the earth, and keeping the New Covenant in the way that being born again refers to

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[769] But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? — Galatians 4:9

is entirely irrelevant to us anyway, because we're not going to follow the Mosaic law perfectly in outer space (since we're not under law to begin with) the way Jeremiah said those in the house of Israel and the house of Judah will when the New Covenant comes fully into effect.

I realize that evangelicals and other Christians have various ideas about what it means to be "born again," but if their ideas can't be shown to be laid out in the Hebrew Scriptures, they have no basis for the claims, because otherwise Jesus wouldn't have criticized Nicodemus for not knowing what He meant by the term. And I'm sure you've heard "testimonies" by certain Christians about how they were "born again" and became a whole new person, walking away from a life they considered to be sinful, thanks to God changing them when they "got saved" (and, in some cases, it's true that they were leading particularly sinful lives, although it's also true that most Christians misunderstand even more of the Bible than just the topics we've been discussing, and misinterpret large parts of it to be teaching that many things are sinful which actually aren't sinful at all, but that's a discussion for another chapter). And yes, God was indeed behind the change, at least from an absolute perspective, because God is behind absolutely *everything* that happens (since all is of God). But from a relative perspective, their changed lifestyles had nothing to do with being "born again" at all, since we know from what we just covered that being "born again" is only for the Israel of God (and that's not to say the lives of Israelites who are "born again" won't change drastically, but that's because they'll finally be able to keep the Mosaic law perfectly when it happens, which isn't something Gentiles are meant to keep, and members of the body of Christ certainly aren't, whether they're Jewish or Gentile, which is another clue that being "born again" isn't for us).

So when you hear a Christian's "testimony" about how getting "born again" changed them, and are tempted to think it means you should remain a member of (or return to) the Christian religion (or to join it, if you've never been a

member), remember that *many* people who have hit rock bottom have realized how destructive their lifestyles were and dramatically changed their lives for the better *without* becoming Christians at all (and that people who join other religions have similar "conversion experiences" to the ones Christians talk about as well), so joining this religion isn't proof of anything other than that they decided something in their life needed to change. And if "fruit" is evidence of having believed the truth, just remember all the negative "fruit" of all those Christians you've met throughout your life (and even those who might seem to be living better lives now in some ways than they were before they converted all have "secret sins" they hide from the rest of us, so remember that you're only seeing the "fruit" they've made public). As nearly everybody who hasn't been blinded by the "light" of the leaders of the Christian religion[770] knows, the fruit of Christianity is anything but good, so don't be tempted to return to it if you've already been saved from it, or to give it a try if you've been blessed enough to never have been imprisoned by it (and if you're still a member, get out as quickly as you can). Those of us who have escaped the Christian religion (as well as many of those who were wise or blessed enough to never join it) know very well that, while nearly everything Christians think is sinful actually isn't, almost all of the actions and attitudes that they live by are extremely wrong (and often quite evil, all the while calling their actions and teachings both righteous and good[771]). As nearly everyone who looks in at it from the outside can see, greed, fear, paranoia, hunger for power, peer pressure, envy, hypocrisy, arrogance, prejudice, intolerance, anti-intellectualism, malice, spite,

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[770] For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. — 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

[771] Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! — Isaiah 5:20

and all manner of other actual sins[772] are the hallmarks of the Christian religion, but most Christians within the religion somehow just can't see what is plainly evident to the rest of us. That said, where sin abounds, grace much more abounds, so even Christians can technically experience God's grace (and eventually all of them will, of course). But as far as those who don't embrace His grace go, I really wouldn't want to be a religious leader or Christian "evangelist" at the final judgement, and those who willingly follow these leaders are in for a world of sorrow at that time as well (yes, it's likely that most Christians will actually end up at the Great White Throne Judgement due to their believing a false "gospel"). If the citizens of the cities that rejected Jesus' disciples are going to be judged more harshly than those of Sodom because they had the light revealed to them,[773] how much more severely are those in Christendom who have the completed Scriptures going to be judged for ignoring, and even rejecting, the truths found therein, following the myths of their religious leaders instead, because they prefer to have their self-righteous ears scratched?[774] (And for anyone who is wondering, yes, members of the body of Christ might have

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[772] This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. — 2 Timothy 3:1-5

[773] But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. — Luke 10:10-12

[774] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. — 2 Timothy 4:3-4

been called Christians at one time,[775] and while this label *does* seem like it might have been used by members of the Israel of God in the past,[776] there's no indication that any believers in the body of Christ used it for themselves, but rather it appears to be a pejorative applied to them by others outside the body, and as such, most of us avoid the label – so as to not be confused with those in the religion that uses the label today, which some of us suspect began with people such as Phygellus and Hermogenes and others who turned away from Paul[777] creating the adulterated "gospel" of the Christian religion[778] by merging parts of each of the two legitimate Gospels into one – and simply call ourselves members of the body of Christ, or sometimes just "believers" or "'Concordant' believers.")

Still, there is a possibility that a small number of people today (and throughout the last two millennia) *do* have a legitimate "born again" experience, similar to those who were members of the Israel of God during Peter's lifetime. I've spoken with some who are not necessarily "orthodox" Christians, but who seem to have had some miraculous experiences and signs connected with coming to believe what John 20:31 (and Romans 10:9-10, which we'll be discussing next) says, so it's possible that they have Israelite ancestry that they aren't even necessarily aware of themselves, and that they're a part of a

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[775] Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. — Acts 11:25-26

[776] Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. — 1 Peter 4:16

[777] This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. — 2 Timothy 1:15

[778] I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. — Galatians 1:6-7

remnant of the Israel of God awaiting the kingdom, which I do personally believe has existed since the first century. But even if so, the vast majority of Christians do not fall into this small group, presuming I'm correct that it does exist, since most of them believe that Jesus is God the Son rather than the Son of God, and aren't following the Mosaic law in the way that they're supposed to be doing so.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. – Romans 10:9-10

Similar to the above passages written by John, misunderstanding what Paul wrote in this passage has caused a lot of confusion and consternation among many people, and has also led to some pretty bad doctrines (such as the idea that "Lordship Salvation" is meant for members of the body of Christ, as just one example). As we learned in the first chapter of this book, however, there are different types of salvation referred to in Scripture, and different ways of experiencing "everlasting life." By now you should be well aware that anyone to whom God has given the faith to truly believe that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day will experience "everlasting life" in the heavens (rather than in Israel, which is where those who experience the salvation Jesus preached about will enjoy their "everlasting life"). This means that, while it isn't the choice to believe in Christ's death for our sins, as well as His subsequent burial and resurrection, that saves someone (our special salvation to "everlasting life" is based on God's sovereign election[779] of those of us in the body of Christ long before we were even born,[780] and has nothing to

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[779] Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. — 1 Thessalonians 1:4

[780] According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: — Ephesians 1:4

do with any decisions we make at all, as we've already determined), if someone does truly understand what it means, and also believes, that He did die for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, they are among those whom God has chosen for membership in the body of Christ, and will get to enjoy "everlasting life" in the heavens after they're caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. One thing you'll notice that Paul *didn't* say his readers did when they were saved, however, is confess Jesus as Lord (or *"confess the Lord Jesus"*), and yet verse 10 of Romans 10 seems to make it clear that the salvation written about there *is* at least partly based on confession. Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus isn't Lord to us, of course, since we're told elsewhere that He is,[781] but His Lordship isn't something Paul said his readers confessed at the time they were brought into membership in the body when he explained what they did when they were saved (nor did he say it's something that they or we have to confess in order to be brought into the body; in fact, it's simply having faith that he considers to be the important thing we do, as he makes clear all throughout the rest of his epistles, so there's no good reason to take this one reference to confession being necessary for salvation that happens to be sitting in the middle of a series of chapters which were primarily about Israel and their salvation and applying it to us, especially when it would contradict everything else we know about our salvation).

Likewise, while Romans 10:9-10 says that someone who experiences the salvation that confessing the Lord Jesus and believing God raised Him from the dead brings will indeed believe God resurrected Jesus (just as those in the body of Christ believe), which means they would obviously also have to believe that He died (just as those in the body of Christ also believe), there isn't anything in that verse about His death being *"for our sins"* or about that fact being something one has to trust in for their salvation, which is a crucial part of what we believe when we're saved (there's nothing about His burial there either, I

[781] But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. — 1 Corinthians 8:6

should add, which was also an important element of Paul's Gospel, as we now know). The most important part of the belief connected to the sort of salvation Paul is talking about in Romans 10 is Jesus' resurrection, not His death *for our sins*. It might not seem like it to most, the first time they read this passage, but these are important distinctions between these two different sets of belief connected with two different types of salvation.

As I've already alluded to, something we need to keep in mind is that Romans chapters 9 through 11 are primarily about Israelites (they aren't 100% about Israelites, but a focus on Israelites is a large part of those chapters, including in the passage in question), and Paul's point about confessing and believing in that passage was connected to what Israelites have to believe in order experience the sort of salvation John wrote about, which is that Jesus is the Christ, meaning Israel's Messiah, and that He's the Son of God. This sort of salvation/"everlasting life" has nothing to do with the salvations Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, nor does it have anything to do with residing in the heavens during the impending ages, but is actually about getting to live in the part of the kingdom of God that will be on planet earth, meaning living in Israel after Jesus returns. Belief that Christ's death was *"for our sins"* wasn't a requirement for salvation in any message that Jesus or anyone else preached prior to Paul proclaiming that it was necessary to be believed to be considered a member of the body of Christ, as we've already discussed (it couldn't have been, since even Jesus' disciples didn't understand that He was going to die or be resurrected until after it had all taken place, which means they also couldn't have known all that His death would accomplish prior to Paul trying to explain it to them[782]), and Jesus' resurrection was only an important part of what they had to believe inasmuch

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[782] And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. — 2 Peter 3:15-16

as it proves He's still able to be their Messiah because He's no longer dead (with the confession part being connected to Him being the Son of God).

Of course, most Christians mistakenly assume that the whole Bible is to and about everyone, but by now it should be pretty clear to anyone who has made it this far into the book that there are two entirely different sets of messages for two entirely different groups of people in the Bible (one for the body of Christ and one for the Israel of God), as well as multiple different types of salvation written about in there, so don't worry if you haven't verbally spoken the words "Jesus is Lord," or "confessed the Lord Jesus" with your mouth (especially if you have a disability making it so you physically aren't able to speak and, as such, can't verbally confess *anything*). One day you, and everyone else, will, of course.[783] But in the meantime, the only way to experience the special form of salvation Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15:2 is for God to choose you for membership in the body of Christ; and if He has, He'll give you the faith to understand and believe what it means that Christ died *for our sins*, that **He Himself** was buried, and that He rose again the third day, at some point prior to your death or to the time Christ comes for His body.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. – Romans 9:1-5

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[783] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — Philippians 2:10-11

I'm including this passage because I've heard it asked, "How could Paul be willing to give up his salvation in exchange for the salvation of his kinsmen – if it actually was possible to make such a trade – if everyone will be saved?" Of course, based on everything we've already covered, we now know that Paul taught about different types of salvation at different times, and it should be obvious that this passage can only be referring to the special form of salvation which only a few will experience, meaning he'd be willing to give up his position as a member of the body of Christ if it meant all Israelites could join the Israel of God (remember, this is in Romans 9, which is largely about Israelites and their sort of salvation, as we just discussed when looking at the last passage), because he cared about his kinsmen that much. And since we already know that not everyone will experience either of those types of salvation, this passage isn't actually problematic at all when it comes to the type of salvation everyone experiences because of what Christ accomplished. But on top of that, few seem to consider the question of, if Paul actually *did* believe in never-ending torment, do you actually think he'd really wish to lose his salvation, even if it meant that every other Israelite would be saved? Can you imagine that anyone would be willing to suffer fiery torture without end for any reason at all whatsoever? Anyone who has burned themselves even for a moment would know the answer to that question is a resounding "no" (those who believe in never-ending torment have to admit that not even Jesus was willing to make that sort of trade, yet some want to suggest that Paul was more generous than Him, or at least would be if their soteriological assumptions were correct), but they might be willing to trade their future glorified position in heaven for the benefit of those they care about, knowing that they'd still experience immortality on the New Earth eventually, so this passage actually tells us quite definitively that Paul did *not* believe in the idea of never-ending torment. And since it's also pretty unlikely that someone would give up their existence altogether, never to be resurrected again, this is yet another passage supporting the idea that Paul believed in the salvation of all. This also tells us that the common Christian assertion that "God doesn't send people to hell, but rather people 'choose to go

to hell' themselves" can't be true either, at least not when it comes to the inescapable torture-chamber version of "hell" most Christians believe in, because nobody would actually choose to allow themselves to be burned without end. And those who would then reply to this by saying, "they choose to go to hell by rejecting Christ," aren't thinking things through, because unless someone can choose to avoid the Christian version of "hell" *after* their judgement as well, it would still be God forcing them into the mythical torture chamber against their will, if such a place existed, so this attempt to absolve God of being responsible for forcing untold billions into an inescapable place of suffering really doesn't work the way they think it does at all.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. – 1 Thessalonians 4:13

I've heard Christians use the line about those who have "no hope" here to try to prove that these people without hope can't ever be saved, but Paul was simply referring to people having no expectation in their minds (which is what the Greek word ἐλπίς/"el-pece'," translated as "hope" in this passage, means) of a future resurrection and salvation, not to having no possibility of resurrection and salvation. And he was referring to the sorrow of living people due to them not expecting their dead loved ones (who could be deceased members of the body of Christ even) to be resurrected, because they didn't believe in a future resurrection of their dead loved ones. He wasn't talking about the sorrow of people who were already dead at all, or how *they* have no hope/expectation in *their* minds (which they can't have, because they're dead and can't have any thoughts at all), so anyone who tries to use this verse to prove never-ending punishment isn't reading the text very carefully.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. – Matthew 18:3

Just like all the other passages we've covered, there should be no reason for me to point out that there's no mention of hell or the lake of fire in this verse either, and I shouldn't have to repeat that Jesus was simply talking about not getting to live in Israel after He returns when He said certain people would not enter the kingdom of heaven unless they've been converted, so I'll just leave it at that.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 6:23

Just like the last few passages we looked at, this verse doesn't mention hell or the lake of fire directly, so one has to read the idea of never-ending torment in hell into the word "death" here if they want to continue believing in such a thing, which by now should be obvious that there's no basis for doing, since the concept doesn't even exist in the Bible to begin with, at least not in any of the passages we've looked at so far (and is clearly contradicted by Paul's writings about the salvation of all humanity anyway). All Paul is saying in this summarization of chapter 6 of the book of Romans is that the consequence of sin is mortality leading to eventually remaining dead permanently (the mortality being a consequence of Adam's sin, and the permanent death state being the consequence of the sins we ourselves commit thanks to the mortality we inherited from Adam, as we learned from chapter 5 of Romans), or at least it would be if Christ hadn't died for our sins. Because He did, however, instead of experiencing that permanent death state, members of the body of Christ will instead get to enjoy what is figuratively referred to as "eternal" life during the impending ages, although the life technically *will* be literally eternal for believers from that point on, since we won't ever die again, having been made immortal at the time we begin our "eternal" life when we're caught up in the air to be with Christ in the heavens, even if Paul technically was referring to the life we'll get to enjoy during the final two ages when he wrote that (and yes, everyone else will also eventually get to enjoy immortality too, at a later time,

also thanks to Christ's death for our sins, but Paul was talking specifically about members of the body of Christ in that chapter, which is why he spoke of "eternal" life there rather than simply mentioning immortality instead, because "eternal" life has other benefits as well, benefits that unbelievers don't get to enjoy).

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. – Acts 16:31

A common question I've heard asked is, "How can Paul have been teaching the salvation of all humanity if he said that someone has to 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' in order to be saved?" Of course, by now it should be obvious that Paul had to have been referring to the special form of salvation which involves being a member of the body of Christ, and not to the salvation which all humanity will experience because of Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day, so this verse doesn't actually cause any problems for the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity at all. (And for anyone who thinks Paul's statement there was meant to be instructive to anyone reading the book of Acts as far as salvation goes, imagine only telling someone who didn't even know who Jesus really was to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" with no further explanation of what that even means, and then ask yourself if that could possibly be enough for them to do in order for them to be considered saved; as I mentioned in a previous chapter, it's important to remember that the book of Acts was a Circumcision writing primarily concerned with letting the Israel of God know why the kingdom temporarily ended up getting put on hold for them, and that Paul's Gospel was never fully fleshed out anywhere in the book since it wasn't meant for the book's original audience to believe, which is why the writer left the full explanation of what Paul meant, which he would have later given to the Philippian jailor when he arrived at the jailor's house, out of the book.)

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

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Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. – Galatians 5:19-21

Inheriting the kingdom of God in these passages should not be confused with salvation. Paul was writing to members of the body of Christ who were already saved, and who couldn't lose their salvation no matter how hard they tried[784] (as Paul said in that passage in Romans, if you're called for membership

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[784] For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 8:29-39

in the body of Christ, you *will* be justified, with no other qualifications included in that passage), so the inheritance here was simply about reigning with Christ.[785] It couldn't have been about salvation for those in the body of Christ because our special salvation isn't based on our actions – even if we stop believing in Him for some reason, He'll remain faithful to us from a salvation perspective since He can't disown, or deny, Himself,[786] and the body of Christ is now a part of Himself. Now, it might be that we *can* lose out on reigning with Him by denying Him in order to avoid suffering, but whether we can or not, we still remain His body, and He won't amputate and disown His own body parts, and body parts can't amputate themselves either. So even if a member of the body of Christ doesn't *"inherit the kingdom of God"* (or doesn't get to "receive an allotment of the kingdom of God," referring to gaining ownership or rulership over a specific portion of the kingdom of God, which is what verse 21 of Galatians 5 is presumably saying, and which is how that part of the verse can also legitimately be translated from the original Greek), they'll still experience their quickening at the same time the rest of the body does.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. – Philippians 2:12

This verse is used not only to try to defend salvation by works, but also to claim that, if someone has to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, the possibility exists that they might end up not being saved in the end. My personal suspicion as to what this verse means is that Paul was instructing his readers to make sure – or to work out in their minds whether – they've truly believed his Gospel and hence really are saved (referring, of course, to the

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[785] If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: — 2 Timothy 2:12

[786] If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. — 2 Timothy 2:13

special “eternal life” sort of salvation which is only for the body of Christ, not the general salvation that everyone will experience). However, whether or not this is the actual meaning of the verse, whatever it does mean, just as it can’t be telling people to do works in order to be saved, because that would contradict all the passages where Paul explained that salvation under his Gospel *isn’t* based on works (and that anyone who does try to be saved by works under his Gospel will be accursed), it also can’t mean that anyone will miss out on the general salvation he taught about, because that would contradict everything else he taught about his Gospel we’ve already covered in this book.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
– Revelation 3:14-19

A lot of people worry that they’re a “lukewarm” believer, and that God will “spue” them out of His mouth, sending them to hell to suffer without end. Of course, we already know what “hell” refers to in Scripture now (in fact we now know what all of the “hells” mentioned in the KJV are), and that it isn’t what most people have always assumed it is, but something else important to note is that this passage is referring to a whole local church, not to any individual, so it’s that local church itself that’s at risk of judgement, and isn’t talking about any individuals being at risk of “hell” to begin with (and I personally believe it’s a local church that will exist during the Tribulation, although that’s a discussion

for another time; but regardless, since Revelation wasn't written by Paul, the local churches John wrote to have to be a part of the Israel of God rather than the body of Christ, so it isn't relevant to most of us anyway).

These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. – 2 Peter 2:17

I'm not going to get into all the details of this particular passage, because it's enough to point out that the sinners in question aren't literally wells, nor are they literally clouds, so the "for ever" here should be taken about as literally as the rest of the verse (and about as literally as the other times it's used in judgement passages in the Bible that we've covered as well), which means we can't really use this verse to prove any particular soteriological perspective when it comes to the duration of one's judgement.

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without

fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. – Jude 1:5-13

The "everlasting" chains in this passage don't help defend any specific doctrine of salvation either, because this passage tells us they only lock up the fallen angels *until* ("*unto*") their judgement (the "everlasting" in "everlasting chains" is translated from a whole other Greek word – ἀΐδιος – rather than the typical αἰωνίων that "everlasting" is normally translated from in the KJV as well, which doesn't actually change anything as far as anyone's soteriology goes, but I thought I'd mention it because it's one of the two cases of this word being used in the Greek Scriptures, with the other being used – and translated as "eternal" in the KJV – in the already discussed Romans 1:20[787]). And the reference to Sodom and Gomorrha suffering the vengeance of "eternal" fire doesn't help either because neither of these cities are currently still burning, and we already know that Sodom will also eventually be returned to her "former estate" anyway[788] (and if Jude was just referring to the citizens of the city, Ezekiel 16:55 would then likely also have to be referring to its citizens). And as far as the "wandering stars" go, the lake of fire doesn't seem like it could be described as a place of "blackness of darkness" (aside from the fact that it will be in a valley in the open air in Israel, underneath the sun and moon, the lake of fire would be anything but dark unless we aren't taking the "fire" part of its title literally, and if one chooses to interpret the "fire" part figuratively, there's no reason to interpret the supposed duration of the punishment, as the KJV translates it, literally either), and I'm assuming I don't have to point out that they aren't

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[787] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: — Romans 1:20

[788] When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. — Ezekiel 16:55

literally clouds or trees or waves or stars, which means we're outside the territory of literalism to begin with here, telling us that we once again have no basis for interpreting "for ever" any less figuratively than we would these words either (and reminding us that, at least based on everything else we've covered so far, we seem to have no reason to *ever* interpret "for ever" as literally meaning "without end" in the Bible versions that use the phrase), nor do we have any way to use this passage in the KJV to support any particular soteriological perspective when it comes to the duration of one's judgement either.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. – Revelation 14:9-11

This passage is obviously extremely figurative. It can't simply be about being cast into the lake of fire because the lake of fire will be located in a valley down here on earth after the Tribulation ends, not up in heaven where it would presumably have to be in order to be tormented in the presence of "the holy angels" and the Lamb, if we were taking it literally. And for those who would suggest, for some reason, that it's about those who worship the beast during the Tribulation getting cast into the lake of fire *after* the Great White Throne Judgement, 1,000 years later rather than immediately after the Tribulation, the lake of fire will be outside the New Jerusalem on the New Earth, not inside it where it would have to be for those words to make sense from a literal perspective. Plus, we know from Isaiah that no humans will be alive in the lake of fire anyway, so the reference to torment here tells us it *can't* be about

suffering consciously in the lake of fire, but that it must be referring to something else altogether. As for what it means, considering everything we've already learned about the word "fire" when it's used in passages that don't also specifically refer to "hell" or the lake of fire by name (and this passage doesn't use either of those names), it makes far more sense to interpret this passage in the KJV as simply being extreme hyperbole (since Revelation is an extremely figurative book) about the judgement of those who take the mark and worship the beast, and the intense suffering they'll go through while still alive during the Tribulation for doing so, as described just two chapters later.[789] This is similar to the way that when the great whore of Babylon is judged[790] – which I don't believe any Christian interprets as referring to an actual human suffering or even being burned in actual fire, but rather as a satanic religious, political, and/or economic system being utterly destroyed – and when "her" smoke rises up

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[789] And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. — Revelation 16:1-11

[790] And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. — Revelation 19:1-3

"for ever and ever," we know there isn't going to be any literal smoke rising because there's nothing literally even being burned, so the concept of smoke rising *"for ever and ever,"* as the KJV renders the particular Greek phrase it's translated from, seems to simply be apocalyptic language referring to an intense judgement in whatever manner it might happen to occur in.

Either way, though, that was quite literally the *only* passage we've looked at which even *suggests* that any human might be conscious while being punished *"for ever and ever"* (since the only other passage to mention a judgement of conscious beings for that particular "duration" in the KJV was referring to the punishment of spiritual beings, not humans, and we now know that even those particular beings will have to be set free in order to be reconciled to God the way Paul said they will be, so there's no reason to assume the *"for ever and ever"* in this passage in the KJV is any more literal than the one that talks about how long *their* punishment will last, not to mention any longer than the limited number of years the *"for ever and ever"* mentioned in the judgement of the land the nations will be located in after the Tribulation ends[791] will last in the future either; and unless one decides to read their theological assumptions into the text, in order to apply it to more people than are actually mentioned in it, this passage can really *only* be applied to humans who worship the beast and take his mark anyway, which is an extremely small percentage of every non-believer to ever live, so it doesn't help support the idea that anyone else who doesn't choose to get saved will suffer without end either – not to mention the fact that the same passage which tells us that even the evil spiritual beings who will be tormented *"for ever and ever"* will eventually be reconciled to God has to mean that all humans, even those who take the mark of the beast, will have to be

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[791] For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. — Isaiah 34:8-10

reconciled to God some day too, in order to not contradict that passage in Colossians, along with all the other passages about the salvation of all humanity that Paul included in the rest of his epistles which we've now looked at as well), and this is quite problematic for the popular doctrine of never-ending torment in hell, because *that's it*. No other passage I'm aware of that one might think is talking about the "hell" known as the lake of fire implies that they'll actually be alive and suffering while in said location, so they don't actually help defend the popular doctrine (although please correct me if I'm wrong and missed one, but please also first consider whether anything I wrote in this book would apply to it as well), and to interpret this extremely figurative reference to the judgement that a very specific – and relatively small – group of people (those who took the mark) will experience as referring to suffering consciously in the lake of fire makes no sense either.

In fact, prior to reading this single passage in John's book describing his vision on Patmos, nobody who was reading the books of the Bible in order would have ever had any scriptural reason to interpret *any* of the other passages we've looked at as meaning that any humans would be conscious in the lake of fire – especially in light of what Isaiah wrote about carcases in that location – or even that their corpse could never be resurrected from their second death and be quickened (and hence saved) after burning up in it, since no passage which mentioned either "hell" or the lake of fire by name in the KJV said anything of the sort. And so, somebody studying the Bible carefully from beginning to end who had never actually heard of the doctrine of never-ending torment in hell for non-believers couldn't possibly come to the conclusion that any humans would be conscious or suffering while in the lake of fire, at least not before reaching this particular passage more than halfway through the final book in the Bible. And if they're being honest with themselves and taking the rest of Scripture into consideration when they get to this passage, they'd realize that it would make no sense to think *this passage* was referring to that either, since no other passage we've looked at even hinted at such a fate, and because it would

contradict everything else they'd already learned as well, which means that to use this one extremely figurative passage located near the very end of the Bible to reinterpret all the references to judgement that came before it in Scripture into meaning all unbelievers (or really anyone at all) will be suffering without end in hell ignores basically every hermeneutical principle I'm aware of, and would contradict too many other things in Scripture we've already looked as well, so there's just no good scriptural excuse for doing that (especially because nobody prior to the writing of the book of Revelation could have ever understood *any* of the other judgement passages to *actually* mean that anyone would be tormented without end, based on what we've now learned). And so, even though some people will miss out on "everlasting life," and might even end up in "everlasting" hell fire (or perhaps simply end up experiencing some other form of judgement, figuratively spoken of using the word "fire," as often happened in the Bible), we now know that they, and everyone else, will eventually *leave* hell (whichever hell or hells they might end up in) and experience salvation, thanks to God and Christ.

But the fact that not everyone gets to enjoy "everlasting life" is also something that should concern my readers, because there are certain qualifications for getting to do so. There are, of course, various types of "everlasting life" available to be experienced, depending on when one lives, anyway. You might get to enjoy the "everlasting life" that involves living in Israel after Jesus returns if you happen to live through the Tribulation and take care of Israelites who are persecuted during the second half of it. This isn't in an immortal body, however, although I think it stands to reason that whoever does get to enjoy this sort of "everlasting life" will likely be given access to the tree of life and will never die. The members of the Israel of God will also be given "everlasting life" after Jesus returns (and will get to reign over the rest of the world from Israel), and those of them who died prior to – and are resurrected 75 days after – the end of the Tribulation will even get to enjoy their "everlasting life" in immortal bodies upon their resurrection (while those who "endure to the end" of the

Tribulation will get to remain alive in a semi-mortal state thanks to the tree of life, although they, as well as those who helped persecuted Jews during the Tribulation, will eventually be made truly immortal too, along with everyone else, at the end of the ages, when Christ finally destroys death completely).

However, there's a final group of people who also get to experience "everlasting life," and this entire group *will* get to enjoy it in immortal bodies (and these bodies will be even more glorious than the immortal bodies of those in the Israel of God[792]). These people, of course, are the members of the body of Christ. This is an extremely small group of people, though, and technically only those relatively few people who have been ordained to "eternal life,"[793] meaning those to whom God has elected to give the understanding of what it means and the faith to believe that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, will actually be immersed into His body. However, while whether we experience this sort of "everlasting life" or not isn't something we ultimately get to decide for ourselves (nobody chooses what they believe – they either hear or read something and believe it, or they hear or read it and don't believe it, and nobody can choose to force themselves to believe something that they think isn't true, at least not without some serious self-induced brainwashing, likely requiring powerful drugs; although, if they didn't think it was true, they'd have no reason to try to force themselves to believe it in the first place, so we couldn't really blame them for not believing it anyway), at some point in their life, anyone included in this group *will* have believed (which first requires actually understanding) all the elements of what it is Paul said that members of the body of Christ believe when they're saved, which means

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[792] There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. — 1 Corinthians 15:40-41

[793] And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. — Acts 13:48

God *will* have given them an understanding of, and belief in, the following facts before they die or before Christ comes for His body: 1) That *"Christ died for our sins"* means that sin has now been dealt with for everyone, and so nobody's sins are being held against them at all anymore (the good and evil works[794] of non-believers will still be judged at the Great White Throne,[795] of course, but sin and evil are two entirely different concepts, as I've already mentioned, and should never be confused as being the same thing, although it is true that a lot of evil actions are indeed sinful), and everyone will eventually experience salvation because of this, and entirely apart from anything they do on their own at that, including even believing this good news. 2) That "*He was buried*" means Christ Jesus literally ceased to exist as a conscious being when He died, and that He Himself was placed in the tomb (and not just His body while He Himself went somewhere else, which also means that He can't be Almighty God Himself). And 3) that *"He rose again the third day"* means, after spending three days truly dead, God resurrected Christ Jesus into a physical (albeit "spiritual") body, and not that Jesus simply now exists as a glorified ghost in another dimension (this final point was the whole reason Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15, after all). And so, if you've come to truly understand and believe the details I've just explained,

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[794] Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. — Romans 2:6-11

[795] And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:11-13

then you can rest assured that you are indeed among the elect and have joined the body of Christ.

If you've made it this far and disagree with basically everything I've written, however (although I'd be very surprised if that ever happens, because at the time of the latest revision of this book, at least, literally every single person who has read all of the chapters up to this one without skipping over anything in them and has gotten back to me has told me they're now convinced that everyone indeed will eventually experience salvation), I'm sorry to say that there's a good chance you'll have to wait until the end of the ages to experience your own salvation, since you likely aren't among those whom God has elected for membership in the body of Christ (although I'd like to hear how you answered all the questions throughout the book so far that I asked those who disagree with us, so please get in touch with me to let me know those answers, or at least let the person who sent you this book know your answers). But, just like everyone else, even you'll get to enjoy salvation at that time (and if you happen to be alive at the time the Tribulation begins, maybe you'll actually be among those who get to experience "life eternal" by being a member of the Israel of God, or perhaps even by helping the least of Jesus' brethren at that time, instead). This also means that, if you want those of us who have come to understand and believe what I've written in this book so far to change our minds and believe what you do about the topics I've covered instead, you're going to have to do a good job of breaking down exactly where I went wrong in my scriptural interpretations over the last four chapters. You can't just expect those of us who have come to believe the doctrines I've covered in this book so far to take your word for it that they're wrong simply because you say they are, so you'll have to actually do the work of explaining how we've misinterpreted all of the passages of Scripture that I've exegeted in this book in order to prove us wrong if you want us to change our minds and believe what you believe instead (which doesn't mean just presenting us with various philosophical arguments, or appealing to our emotions, as Christians who don't want to let go

of their beloved doctrine of never-ending punishment tend to do when they realize they have no scriptural foundation for their assumptions, at least in my experience). So the ball's in your court, but I'm not going to hold my breath, because, as I've mentioned already, thus far literally nobody has ever even *attempted* to refute the arguments I've laid out in this book about the topics we just covered (although a few people I've shared these interpretations with have been given the faith to believe the truth and are now in the body of Christ, and I pray that now includes you too).

But why did God seem to hide all this truth from so many, as seems to be the case when we consider the fact that so few people appear to be able to see much of it at all when they read their Bibles? To that I simply repeat the words of Proverbs 25:2 once again, in which we're told, "*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter,*" and then suggest that perhaps God did this to reveal the true nature of our hearts to us when we're finally judged, so that we'll be able to see just how evil our preferences for how others end up spending eternity can be (although it's also true that those who aren't among the elect *can't* believe most of what I've written anyway, because their minds have been blinded,[796] and only God can open the eyes of their minds and get them to believe the truth, which won't happen for most people until they're standing before the Great White Throne). And your reaction to everything you've just read almost certainly will be used to reveal the truth about the state of your own heart during your years as a mortal here on earth to you at that time.

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[796] In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. — 2 Corinthians 4:4

Chapter 5: "Touch not; taste not; handle not"

Unfortunately, the misinterpretations of Scripture that we covered in the last four chapters aren't even close to being the only things that the leaders of the Christian religion make incorrect assumptions about when it comes to what the Bible teaches. Another great example of where they go astray is when it comes to their beliefs regarding the topic of morality. Because many are under the mistaken impression that the Mosaic law is applicable to the body of Christ, and also because they themselves have been taught that certain things which Scripture never calls sinful actually are sins, they've got all sorts of mixed-up ideas about what is right and wrong today. This causes them to teach others to try to be more "moral" than God Himself, acting just like modern-day Pharisees, becoming morality police who teach that any number of actions, many of which are never even mentioned in the Bible, are forbidden.

Before looking at some of the specific actions that the religious mistakenly think we need to avoid, though, it should first be noted that the Bible *does* tell us plenty of things that God actually would prefer people not do without us needing to add to it (even if the list differs depending on which dispensation, or administration, one is living under; it's perfectly fine for members of the body of Christ to eat a BLT, for example, even though it would be a sin for those under the Mosaic law). In fact, Scripture even provides a list of things that God

actually hates[797] (that's not the only list, as you'll soon see, but it's an important one when it comes to general morality itself), and there's nothing at all about most of the things the morality police dislike on *that* list, including some of the biggest hangups religious conservatives have (although there are a number of things on that list which many of them do seem to enjoy). What He does hate, however, is dishonesty, and I suspect that religious lies are the worst sort of dishonesty since they're lies about God Himself. Basically, if a particular action isn't on one of those lists, insisting that it's sinful and making new rules that God Himself never made is really lying about what God wants, just like the religious leaders in Jesus' time did. And remember, it was those very same people who opposed Jesus, and who conspired to have Him (and, later, His followers) killed. That's right, it wasn't the pagans, atheists, or liberal theologians who tried to eliminate Christ and His followers. Rather, it was the religious conservatives of His time who tried to squash Him and His teachings (and any others who taught them as well), just as they do today (as it was then, the greatest enemies of Christ and His true followers are still religious conservatives, even if these supposed "ministers of righteousness"[798] call themselves Christians now).

All of that aside, though, worrying about morality (at least the way conservative Christians understand morality) is a huge red herring. What followers of Churchianity (which is what some of us call the Institutional Church and the "orthodox" religion known as Christianity – as opposed to the "heretical"

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[797] These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. — Proverbs 6:16-19

[798] For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. — 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

religionless doctrines that I now believe the Bible teaches are meant for the body of Christ) don't seem to realize is that all of the "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" cause them to completely miss the point of Paul's teachings to begin with (since, again, it's Paul's teachings that the body of Christ is supposed to concern itself with under the dispensation of the grace of God). Starting with a flawed presupposition about doctrines like sin and grace will cause one to think that they're supposed to be concerned with religious rules, when being a member of the body of Christ is actually about something else altogether. Basically, Paul's Gospel isn't a religious proposition ("do this or else!"); rather, it's a proclamation ("it's already been done by Christ, so why not believe this good news and stop trying to please God yourself?").

While most religions are a set of rules that people need to follow in order to A) live an enjoyable life, B) avoid suffering negative consequences (either imposed by followers of said religions in this life or by their deity or other beings in an afterlife, or by being reincarnated to live another mortal life again on earth after death), and C) make God happy, Paul promised that A) believers of his teachings are less likely to have a fun life than those who don't believe his message, since they'd be persecuted by those who do prefer religion (including the Christian religion) to the truth, B) explained that we don't have to do anything to avoid suffering a negative afterlife (or life after resurrection, to be more precise) since we've already been justified by faith regardless of what we do,[799] and C) told us that God is already happy (the word "blessed" in 1 Timothy 1:11[800] literally means "happy" in the original Greek). Instead of following a bunch of rules the way followers of various religions (including the Christian religion) do, members of the body of Christ don't have to actively try to avoid sinning by our own strength at all (and, in fact, should actually not ever try to), because we're

[799] Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. — Romans 3:28

[800] According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. — 1 Timothy 1:11

justified (and living) by faith, and are walking according to spirit and not according to flesh.

To hear most Christians talk about it, you'd think that sins are something we should be actively trying to avoid committing. When the street preachers here in my city give their sermons, the focus is always on sin and how our sinful actions will send us to an afterlife realm called "hell" if we don't get our sin dealt with by "getting saved" in the manner the preachers believe one needs to do so in (completely missing the fact that Christ's death for our sins in Paul's Gospel is a proclamation, not a proposition, and that sin has already been taken care of for everyone whether they believe it or not, as we've already learned in the previous chapters). And if you talk to them one-on-one, you'll discover they believe that, even *after* we "get saved," we still need to do our best to avoid certain actions the preachers consider to be sinful (as well as do certain things they consider to be commanded of us). Following rules is basically the foundation of their entire religion, and so when they attempt to interpret passages such as the following ones, they'll tell you Paul was explaining how we need to try to do good, spiritual acts while trying to avoid fleshly, sinful acts:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is

none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. – Romans 8:1-10

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. – Galatians 5:16-25

And while Paul is indeed telling his readers they shouldn't be walking after the flesh – not to mention what the consequences of doing so might be – in those verses, that he isn't telling people to try to actively avoid sinning should be very obvious to anyone who considers the context of the passages. Unfortunately, most Christians are so obsessed with religious rules that they've actually made Sin their lord (anthropomorphically speaking), which keeps them from being able to grasp what Paul actually taught about the topic of sin at all.

So what was Paul talking about in those passages? Well, if you ask any Christian who has studied Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, they should be able to tell you that a large part of both books is about how we're not under the law,[801] and how we shouldn't allow ourselves to be placed under it at all. The problem is, when they get to passages that talk about "the flesh," most

[801] For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. — Romans 6:14

Christians immediately forget this fact and proceed to completely ignore the context of the passages, reading their love of religious rules into the passages instead. Following religious rules isn't even close to what Paul was talking about when he wrote warnings about walking after the flesh, however. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Even though the context of those passages should make it obvious, it can help to read an entirely different passage written by Paul, one which can serve as the key to understanding the other times he writes about the flesh. In Philippians 3:1-11, Paul is warning his readers against having confidence in their flesh[802] – by which he means trying to be righteous by following rules – telling them they should instead be trusting in the faith of Christ for their righteousness rather than in their own actions (or even in their own faith, as discussed in a previous chapter).

This, along with the context of not being under the law (and the fact that Paul also compares walking after the Spirit with not following the law in that passage from Galatians[803]), should make it clear that Paul was actually telling people to stop trying to follow (and enforce) *any* religious rules at all, because trying to follow religious rules is what it actually means to walk after the flesh (including

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[802] Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. — Philippians 3:1-11

[803] But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. — Galatians 5:18

trying to follow the 10 Commandments, which are indeed a part of the Mosaic law, as Paul made clear by referencing the 10th commandment[804] when he wrote Romans 7:7[805] as a part of his teaching that we shouldn't allow ourselves to be placed under any parts of the law). So if you are actively trying to avoid (or even trying to do) specific actions in order to please God, you're actually walking after the flesh, not to mention ignoring what Paul said about following ordinances and other commandments of men.[806] And, as we know, he contrasted the concept of walking after the flesh with the concept of walking after the Spirit, and if walking after the flesh means trying to follow religious rules, walking after the Spirit must necessarily mean we *aren't* trying to follow religious rules, but are instead trusting that Christ will live the life He wants us to live through us,[807] and that He'll end up doing the things God wants us to do and avoiding the things God wants us to avoid, Himself, through us. It's only when we start walking after the flesh, meaning we start worrying about religion and trying to follow rules and prohibitions, that we begin doing the very things

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[804] Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. — Exodus 20:17

[805] What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. — Romans 7:7

[806] Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. — Colossians 2:20-23

[807] I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. — Galatians 2:20-21

that God doesn't want us to do, because trying to follow religious rules (be it the Mosaic law, or any other form of religious rules) only leads to more sin.[808]

At this point most Christians will protest and say that, while we aren't under the Mosaic law itself, there are still other rules in the Bible we need to follow, but in making such claims they're ignoring everything Paul taught throughout his epistles. The reason we don't follow the Mosaic law isn't because there's anything wrong with the specific rules in the law themselves.[809] The commandment against murder[810] is not a bad rule in and of itself, for example, which means that it isn't simply the specific rules in the Mosaic law we aren't supposed to follow, but rather it's *trying to follow religious rules in general* that we aren't supposed to do.

Which brings us to the next protestation most Christians will make. "What about the long list of sins Paul mentioned in that passage in Galatians we looked at? Wasn't he telling his readers to do their best to avoid those specific actions?" The answer to this will shock most people, but no, he most certainly wasn't. If walking after the flesh means trying to follow religious rules, how could Paul possibly then turn around and say, "But make sure you don't break these specific religious rules, okay?" Instead, if you look at the context, it becomes clear that he's warning his readers what will happen if they *try* to avoid sinning. Instead of becoming the holy, righteous people they hope that avoiding those specific actions will make them, those actions are instead exactly what they'll end up doing. Just as positive attributes like love, joy, and peace are the fruit of walking after the Spirit, the various negative actions Paul listed there are the

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[808] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

[809] But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; — 1 Timothy 1:8

[810] Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13

fruit of walking after the flesh, meaning those actions are the fruit that will come forth from trying to follow religious rules.

And so, Paul's condemnation in Romans 10:2-3 can equally be applied to Christians today: *"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."*

Bottom line, if you hear someone tell you that one must follow religious rules, especially if they're a part of the Mosaic law in any way (at least if you're in the body of Christ), don't walk; run! It means that they are very likely a wolf in sheep's clothing, trying to lure you into their religious trap. At the very least, they are extremely confused and likely have nothing useful to teach you (at least from a spiritual perspective). Remember that, while not all things are a good idea, all things are technically permitted,[811] and also that to the pure all things are pure[812] (but those unbelievers in Paul's Gospel who are pretending to be believers – likely lying even to themselves about their faith, not to mention often telling themselves that there's really only one Gospel while also completely failing to understand what Paul's Gospel actually means in the first place – have a defiled mind and conscience that causes them to consider pretty much nothing to be pure). Yes, if someone doesn't have faith that something is allowed, then it would be a sin **for them specifically** to do it[813] (although not because the action itself is necessarily actually sinful in and of itself), but the corollary of this verse must be true too: if that which is not out of faith is sin,

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[811] All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. — 1 Corinthians 6:12

[812] Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. — Titus 1:15

[813] And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:23

then that which is out of faith is not sin. It is true that Paul used food and holy days as specific examples, but the principle still applies to everything.

Remember also that we should think of our old humanity (or our "old man," as the KJV puts it) as dead,[814] and that we are to, in fact, reckon ourselves dead to Sin altogether,[815] which means that Sin has no more dominion over us at all – anthropomorphically speaking – because we're not under law at all, but rather are under grace[816] (and remaining under grace takes away all of Sin's power over us). To "reckon" isn't to try make something a fact, meaning to try to avoid sinning in this case, but rather it means to simply look at it as if it's *already* a fact, and to stop letting Sin reign over you by trying to avoid sinning. And yes, Paul did say, *"they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh,"*[817] and yes, that is indeed an ongoing process as well, as some will point out (since the word translated as *"have crucified"* – σταυρόω/"stow-ro'-o" – is in the Aorist tense in that verse in the original Greek), but since he also told us to consider ourselves as already being dead to Sin, he obviously wasn't telling us to try to stop sinning there, any more than he was when he said, *"I die daily,"* in another verse.[818] The context of "flesh" in the first verse has to be referring to the same thing as it did in the rest of the passages we just looked at, meaning our self-righteous attempts to please God by following religious rules, and the context of the second verse was just physical death, with Paul simply speaking of how he

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[814] Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. — Romans 6:6

[815] Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:11

[816] For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. — Romans 6:14

[817] And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. — Galatians 5:24

[818] I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. — 1 Corinthians 15:31

risked physical death regularly thanks to the various persecutions and perils he faced in his ministry there, as he clarified in the very next verse after he made that statement.[819] And similarly, Jesus' command to *"take up one's cross daily"*[820] doesn't refer to trying to avoid sinning either. Aside from the fact that this was directed specifically to those under the Gospel of the Circumcision instead of to the body of Christ, even if it could be considered a trans-dispensational truth, it wasn't talking about avoiding sin, but rather about being willing to face death like He was about to do.

To be fair, as we also covered in an earlier chapter, the Bible does seem to teach that those believers who happen to be saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision do have to be careful to avoid rejecting what they've believed and falling back into sin so as to not "lose their salvation," so to speak, or they'll miss out on the thousand-year kingdom of heaven, if not more (although the "more" just refers to living in the New Jerusalem during the final age, not to the immortality that everyone will eventually experience by the end of the ages, as we learned everyone will experience earlier in this book), and unlike those of us in the body of Christ, they *are* required to keep the Mosaic law (at least the parts they're still able to keep without a temple). But as far as those of us in the body of Christ go, while we might not all get to reign, we are safe as far as our special salvation goes, regardless of what we do, because Paul told us in Romans 8 that anyone God calls for membership in the body of Christ *will* be justified and glorified,[821] and because he told us not to allow ourselves to be placed under the law at all, since to do so is what it means to fall from grace. So at the end of the

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[819] If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. — 1 Corinthians 15:32

[820] And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. — Luke 9:23

[821] Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. — Romans 8:30

day, we just don't have to worry about Sin, or about trying to avoid sinning, if we're in the body of Christ, because we're now dead to Sin.

I should say, after reading all that, some (honestly, most) Christians are still going to misunderstand everything I just wrote, thinking that I'm telling people we actually *should* go out and *purposely* commit sins, not to mention that we shouldn't walk worthy of the Lord,[822] but that's not what I'm saying here at all (although it is imperative to remember that the pace at which we walk is entirely in God's hands[823]). In fact, you definitely should *not* be going out and purposely committing sins (at least not actual sins; I'm not talking about the innocent actions that many Christians confuse for sins because they essentially misunderstand the entire Bible). I'm simply saying that we shouldn't be trying to avoid sinning of our own strength, but rather that we should be trusting God to keep us from sinning instead. This also means that if you *aren't* accused of encouraging people to sin, you probably aren't teaching the same things that Paul taught about sin and grace, since this false accusation seems to have also been levelled against him[824] – which is why he wrote Romans chapter 6 in the first place – and so those who aren't accused of being "hyper-grace" or antinomian themselves probably aren't either). And while I need to

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[822] For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; — Colossians 1:9-10

[823] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. — Ephesians 2:10

[824] What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? — Romans 6:1-2

move on at this point, there's still a lot more[825] that can be said about[826] this extremely important topic,[827] so I want you to read the articles by Martin Zender[828] – who goes into so much more detail[829] on this topic[830] than I was able to get into here[831] – that I've linked to in the footnotes of this sentence.[832]

Still, while worrying about sin is not something those of us in the body of Christ are meant to do, it can be helpful to know *why* some of the activities that conservative Christians think are sinful really aren't, and how one responds emotionally to what they read in the rest of this chapter will be a good test of whether one is walking according to Spirit or walking according to flesh. Those who aren't walking according to Spirit will feel their pharisaical flesh crawling, and their self-righteous souls getting stirred up against some of the things that are about to be said. And, as such, they would be wise to consider reevaluating themselves, spiritually-speaking, and also question whether they're more interested in holding fast to the traditions they've been taught by their denominations and religious leaders, or in what Scripture actually teaches.

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825 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 1* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.6.pdf

826 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 2* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.8.pdf

827 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 3* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.13.pdf

828 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 4* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.14.pdf

829 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 5* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.15.pdf

830 *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 6* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.16.pdf

831 *Walking According to Spirit* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.26.pdf

832 *"FLESH" in Romans 8* By Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.27.pdf

Perhaps the best examples of unscriptural traditions when it comes to morality are the twin topics of sex and lust. You've almost certainly been taught that premarital sex is a sin, and the primary reason that most conservative Christians are so against premarital sex is one little word: fornication. Depending on your English Bible translation, you'll find fornication criticized as a very bad thing that one should flee from,[833] and if you look fornication up in an English dictionary you will indeed find that it *can* mean sexual intercourse between unmarried partners (although that isn't its only, or even its original, meaning). The thing is, the word translated as "fornication" in some English versions of the Bible is the Greek word πορνεία/"por-ni'-ah," which does not literally mean "premarital sex" at all (that's not to say that premarital sex by certain people can't fall under the umbrella of πορνεία under very specific circumstances, but that isn't what the Greek word itself actually means, in and of itself, making "fornication" yet another example of the various False Friends found in the KJV, and is the one I referred to in the first chapter of this book that I said I'd discuss later).

Of course, some English Bible versions use the term "sexual immorality" to translate the word πορνεία instead, but you have to be just as careful with this translation, since it's really just a broad and general term that doesn't tell us anything on its own about what sexual acts would actually be considered to be immoral, and to assume "sexual immorality" means "premarital sex" is obviously eisegesis, since it isn't based on the original Greek at all, considering the fact that πορνεία just didn't refer to the act of simply having sex outside of marriage at the time the Greek Scriptures were written. And it isn't what the

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[833] Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. — 1 Corinthians 6:18

Hebrew word translated as "fornication"[834] – זָנָה/"zaw-naw'" – meant either, since that word literally just meant "prostitution," generally referring specifically to temple, or cult, prostitution when used in Scripture, which is why πορνεία and זָנָה are often also translated as "prostitution" or "whoredom."

In fact, even the English word "fornication" itself originally meant something similar, since the word literally meant "to meet a prostitute under an arch" (the word originated from the Latin word "fornix," which means "arch" or "vault"; prostitutes used to wait for their customers in ancient Rome under vaulted ceilings where they'd be safe from the elements, and "fornix" became a term for brothels, with the Latin verb "fornicare" referring to a man visiting a brothel). And so, if your English Bible version uses the word "fornication" (or even "sexual immorality"), it's important to avoid assuming that the term is referring to premarital sex the way most Christians do, since it's often referring to prostitution of some sort instead. That said, one has to remember to be careful here too, because the words πορνεία and זָנָה don't necessarily just refer to the concept of trading money for sex as practiced by regular sex-workers, but generally imply a more illicit affair taking place when used in Scripture (it's important to keep in mind that sex work on its own – not to mention paying for sex – wasn't always considered to be the shameful act that it's considered to be by most people today), which is backed up by the fact that it's generally agreed upon by scholars that the most literal meaning of πορνεία is closer to "illicit sexual intercourse" than anything else.

If we take the term "illicit sexual intercourse" literally, it means sexual intercourse that breaks the law. Generally, here in the western world at least, premarital sex doesn't break the law, and it certainly wasn't against the law among the Gentiles Paul wrote to when he told believers to avoid πορνεία either

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[834] Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto. — 2 Chronicles 21:11

(and this tells us that πορνεία simply *can't* be referring to premarital sex on its own, at least not when it's used in Paul's epistles; remember, he was primarily writing to Gentiles when he used that word, which means that whatever the Jewish uses of the word might have been at that time was mostly irrelevant in his epistles, outside of very specific cases where he referred to actions performed by certain Israelites as an example of forms of πορνεία to avoid when he used the word). But even if one does dig into the Mosaic Law, they'll see that it wasn't ever spelled out as being illegal there either. While there were potential civil consequences for men who had premarital sex with female virgins back in Bible times[835] (note that there's no indication that the premarital sex itself in Deuteronomy 22:28-29 was considered to be a sin, and the woman in question isn't actually punished at all, as she would have been if premarital sex *were* a sin, because this was simply a property violation against the woman's father, since fathers would get less money for selling their daughters to husbands if the daughter wasn't a virgin; sadly, women were considered to be property in ancient cultures, including that of Israel, and were often basically sold from one "owner," her father, to a new "owner," her husband, through marriage), and a woman deceiving her husband into thinking that she was a virgin before marriage when she really wasn't could also result in harsh

[835] If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. — Deuteronomy 22:28-29

penalties[836] (since he would have paid more money for her if he believed she actually was a virgin), premarital sex on its own was never specifically forbidden or called sinful in the Hebrew Scriptures. Of course, premarital sex (or sex outside of marriage) technically could fall under the broad label of πορνεία in some parts of the world (and still can today), but it could (and can) only legitimately do so in regions where this actually was or is considered to be illegal (such as in parts of the Middle East today, for example). Outside of those more conservative regions of the planet, however, it wouldn't be considered to be wrong by the law and hence wouldn't be a sin to do so.

So what sexual acts would be considered illicit when the word πορνεία was used in Scripture? Well, it would, of course, cover any of the specific sexual prohibitions that *actually were* mentioned in the Mosaic Law, or at least it would for those who were required to follow said law (i.e., members of the Israel of God, as we learned in the first chapter of this book):

None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her

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[836] If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. — Deuteronomy 22:13-21

nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness. The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. – Leviticus 18:6-23

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them

shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. – Leviticus 20:10-21

And without even having to go any further, the passages I just quoted prove that premarital sex is not a sin all on their own, because if it were a sin, God wouldn't have had to have gone to the trouble of forbidding sex with animals – or even with other people's wives – since all He'd have to have said is, "Don't have sex with anyone you aren't married to," which is a commandment He never *actually* gave *anywhere* in Scripture. (I should also quickly point out that you won't find masturbation, enjoying the way someone's body looks, or fantasizing about someone in a sexual manner listed anywhere in that list of sexual prohibitions either, which is something important to keep in mind as well.) The fact that God also never forbade men from having concubines, who

were not wives but who were women that men had sex with, and in fact never once condemned the many men in the Bible who were considered to be righteous (relatively speaking) yet had concubines, also makes this quite clear, since sex with those concubines would have been "premarital" sex (or really "extramarital" sex, but that's basically what Christians mean when they refer to "premarital" sex, because otherwise they'd be okay with a divorcee having sex with someone they're not married to, since that sex would no longer be able to be classified as "premarital"). It also makes it obvious that those Christians who claim having sex with someone means one is automatically married to that person haven't thought things through particularly well either, I should add, since concubines would have then been called "wives" in Scripture instead, if that was the case, considering the fact that God considered polygamy to be acceptable and men to legitimately be said to have multiple wives in the Bible.

As far as those of us in the body of Christ go, however (since we aren't under the Mosaic law the way those in the Israel of God are), while the word πορνεία *literally* means "illicit sexual intercourse," we have to look at context to determine what sort of sexual activity is being called illicit in Paul's epistles (and not just automatically jump to the conclusion that it's premarital sex being referred to, the way most Christians assume it is), and the Hebrew Scriptures actually do help us here because they reveal that it largely referred to sexual idolatry (meaning sleeping with temple – or cult – prostitutes) when Paul used the term, as demonstrated by 1 Corinthians 10:8[837] where Paul used the word to

[837] Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. — 1 Corinthians 10:8

refer back to the cult prostitutes of Moab mentioned in Numbers 25:1-9[838] (who used sex as a part of worshipping other gods since, in Bible times, Satan used sex to lure people into idolatry, although, now that cult prostitution is basically no longer a thing, he now uses avoiding the forms of sexuality that conservative Christians disagree with as a new "circumcision" instead; and just to quickly get the supposed discrepancy between Paul's 23,000 in 1 Corinthians 10 and the 24,000 in Numbers 25 there out of the way, it's simply that Paul chose not to include the "heads of the people" of verse 4 who were hung – amounting to 1,000 people – but referenced only the 23,000 common people slain with the sword, as mentioned in verse 5). Paul presumably (or at least hopefully) would have also been speaking against the rape of the women forced to participate in temple prostitution in his time when he spoke against πορνεία,[839] not just the idolatry aspect of it, but the connection to idolatry was a large, if not the largest, part of it.

That said, it could also be used in reference to sexual practices that actually were considered illicit by the culture in question, practices such as incest, for

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[838] And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. — Numbers 25:1-9

[839] *Translating Sex: Issues with the Translation of Sexual Terms in 1 Corinthians* by Roy E. Ciampa: https://www.viceregency.com/TranslatingSexPaper.pdf

example, which Paul also spoke against in 1 Corinthians 5:1 using the same Greek word.[840] This particular instance of πορνεία also demonstrates quite conclusively that premarital sex was not considered to be a sin. If it were, the Corinthian believers would never have even considered letting things go this far; they would have stopped long before accepting, and seemingly even taking pride in, this relationship happening among their church members if Paul or anyone else had previously taught them that sex outside of marriage fell under the category of πορνεία-based sins, and he also apparently forgot to tell them it was a sin in this epistle as well when he was telling them to avoid such forms of πορνεία, so anyone who claims it is sinful is just eisegeting their own moralistic bias based on their preconceived religious traditions into their interpretation of the word πορνεία in this and other parts of Scripture rather than exegeting what Scripture actually means by the word.

Of course, some try to argue that Paul did tell them to avoid premarital sex a couple chapters later (in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7[841]), when he wrote, *"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband,"* supposedly telling them to get married rather than have premarital sex, but that's not what he's actually trying to get at

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[840] It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. — 1 Corinthians 5:1

[841] Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. — 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

there at all. It would take a much longer study to get all the way into the full meaning of this chapter, but along with actually taking the context of the passage into consideration, there are also idioms in the original Greek text that aren't obvious if you're not aware of them (for instance, the phrase "not to touch" was a figure of speech that literally meant "not to have sex with," and the word "have" was euphemistically referring to having sexual intercourse in that passage as well), so what Paul meant there was essentially: "Now, regarding what you wrote to me – where you said, 'It is ideal for a man to avoid having sex with a woman' – well, whether or not that's true, in order to avoid the temptation that would almost certainly arise to have sex with temple prostitutes instead, let every man continue having sex with the wife he's already married to, and let every woman continue having sex with the husband she's already married to." Basically, this passage is talking about married Corinthian believers who had come to the conclusion that it would be more righteous or holy to avoid sexual intercourse with their spouses altogether (quite possibly because of outside Gnostic influences), but Paul warned them that they should not stop sleeping with their already existing spouses or they could end up inadvertently committing idolatry, as their biological urges would very likely lead the men to sleep with temple prostitutes instead (because they were the easiest people to find sex with aside from with one's spouse, since people generally didn't have romantic relationships back then as we do today; marriage was more of a business arrangement until very recently, so outside of marriage and adultery, the easiest and most common way for a man to have sex in that time and place was with a temple prostitute), and the women could even end up committing adultery. Yes, avoiding marriage is honourable if one can handle it (the reason for this isn't because sex is somehow dirty or less than righteous and something that should be avoided in general, however; it's simply because it helps one hold lightly to the things of this earth so they can focus solely on the things of

God instead of the concerns of a spouse[842]), but as the writer of Hebrews put it (even if this is a Circumcision writing, I doubt anyone would disagree that this is a trans-dispensational truth which applies to those under both Gospels), marriage (and sex in marriage) is just as honourable,[843] and one shouldn't defile their marriage bed by sleeping with temple prostitutes or by committing adultery (both of which would be temptations if a married couple stopped sleeping with each other in an attempt to keep each other and themselves pure).

Contrary to what most have been taught, Paul wasn't telling single people to find marriage partners rather than commit the supposed sin of having premarital sex in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 (they generally didn't have boyfriends and girlfriends like we do today anyway, so the idea of unmarried, romantic "couples" having sex probably wouldn't have even crossed Paul's mind); the context of this chapter and the previous chapter makes it pretty clear that he was talking to people who were already married in the first seven verses, telling them that the husbands risked going to temple prostitutes if married couples stopped sleeping with each other (to be clear, it wasn't visiting sex workers that Paul was concerned with, but the fact that visiting the type of sex workers who

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[842] But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. — 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

[843] Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. — Hebrews 13:4

would have generally been available in Corinth would result in idolatry since these were temple prostitutes, which would necessarily involve the men visiting them in worshipping other gods in the process; I'll go into a little more detail on this point shortly, but married men were, in fact, free to have sex with other women as long as it didn't result in some form of πορνεία-based sin or in adultery with an already married woman).

As for those who were once married and wished to remarry (even if this might also be perfectly valid advice for those who haven't ever been married yet, the word "unmarried" in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9[844] actually refers specifically to widowers, which – for those who aren't aware of the patterns in the Greek that makes this even more clear[845] – should really be more obvious to more people, considering the fact that to say, "the unmarried and the widows," and to be referring to *everyone* who is currently unmarried, would be entirely redundant, making about as much sense as saying "the dogs and the beagles," so obviously that can't be what Paul meant; and if it simply referred to those who have never been married, then widowers would have been left out of this instruction, so the only logical way to interpret this is as meaning "the widowers and the widows," with "the unmarried" presumably being used as metonymy for "widowers" in the KJV, since the translators should have been aware of this), while he'd prefer for them to remain unmarried like him rather than get re-married, so they can focus on the things of the Lord rather than on a spouse, he does still say that getting married is better than burning with the desire to be married if they can't control their desire for marriage (it's basically impossible that he was talking about burning with sexual desire here; based on the context of the topic of marriage in general throughout this part of the chapter, and the fact that he was saying it would be good for them to remain unmarried like him,

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[844] I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. — 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

[845] *1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV* by Gordon D. Fee: https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/23/23-4/23-4-pp307-314_JETS.pdf

it seems far more likely that he would have simply been referring to the desire to be married – particularly since sex outside of marriage hadn't actually been condemned anywhere else in Scripture prior to his writing this, at least as long as it wasn't illegal or idolatrous, and there's no reason to believe that Paul would have been suddenly adding a new sin that had never been mentioned previously in Scripture to the list of already existing sins mentioned there, although even if he somehow was talking about burning with sexual desire, remember that they didn't have romantic relationships back then, so sex with a spouse or sex with a temple prostitute were the two main ways to have sex at the time Paul wrote to this particular audience, and Paul certainly wouldn't have wanted them to choose the latter option). And as far as those of us in this day and age go, at least here in the western world, there are other ways for unmarried people to have sex without resorting to visiting temple prostitutes, although if they are "burning" to get married, they certainly should.

In addition to these more literal interpretations of πορνεία, there was also a figurative meaning to the word (and its Hebrew equivalents in the Hebrew Scriptures), having nothing to do with physical sex at all, but simply being a metaphor referring to outright idolatry. The one thing it never meant, however, is premarital sex, or at least by now it should be obvious that there's quite literally zero scriptural basis for claiming it did, despite the fact that your parents and pastor might prefer you believed it did. Of course, they likely only think they want you to. If they understood just how many STDs and unwanted pregnancies this teaching is responsible for, they might change their minds (unless they're the vindictive sort who want those they consider to be sinners to be punished physically for defying their rules; sadly, there are Christians out there with this mentality). The idea that premarital sex is sinful causes many parents to actively make sure their kids don't learn about protection and birth control, but since pretty much an equal number of Christians have premarital sex as non-Christians (the religious can't fight nature and biology any more than the rest of the world can), only without any knowledge of how to minimize the

potential risks, young people in conservative areas or with religious parents tend to end up with more diseases[846] and unwanted pregnancies[847] than those who don't, and if you're going to judge a doctrine or religious teacher by its or their fruit, it's easy to see that the conservative Christian view on sexuality is rotten to the core.

Even with all that being said, many Christians will try to defend their indefensible claims about premarital sex based on Jesus' comment about "lust" and "committing adultery in one's heart" in Matthew 5:28,[848] attempting to convince us that this makes premarital sex sinful by default since you wouldn't have sex without sexual desire (they like to use this argument to condemn masturbation and pornography too). However, because so few understand the difference between the teachings relevant to the body of Christ vs the teachings relevant to the Israel of God, as we learned in the first chapter of this book, not to mention what Scripture says in its original languages, they don't realize that He was actually speaking about something else altogether in that passage from what most people assume. In fact, when you discover what "lust" really refers to in Scripture you'll realize that it's actually often encouraged, and that it's also time to reconsider your thoughts on pornography as a general concept as well.

To put it plainly, to "lust," in Scripture (with ἐπιθυμέω/"ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o" being the verb form of the word in Greek, and ἐπιθυμία/"ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah" being the noun, as well as חָמַד/"khaw-mad'" being the Hebrew verb), doesn't simply mean to have sexual attraction to someone the way that most people who read

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[846] *How Abstinence-Only Sex Ed Is Driving Up STD Rates* by Jenelle Marie: https://www.yahoo.com/news/abstinence-only-sex-ed-driving-std-rates-203137849.html

[847] *The States With the Highest Teenage Birth Rates Have One Thing in Common* by Matt Essert: https://www.mic.com/articles/98886/the-states-with-the-highest-teenage-birth-rates-have-one-thing-in-common

[848] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. — Matthew 5:28

this sort of False Friend of an English word assume it does, but is rather a synonym for coveting something,[849] or strongly desiring to own or obtain something or someone, and sometimes lusting/desiring is a good thing (the Lord's statutes and judgements are to be lusted for/desired more than gold,[850] and even Jesus "lusted/desired" according to Luke 22:15[851] – in fact Paul himself encouraged ἐπιθυμέω at times as well, such as in 1 Timothy 3:1,[852] for example; simply put, there's nothing about sexuality inherent in these Hebrew and Greek words that are sometimes translated as "lust" in Scripture, even though they can refer to a strong desire to obtain someone sexually, of course, depending on the context of the passage they're included in). What Scripture *does* condemn when it comes to lust is desiring to take something that already "belongs" (so to speak) to someone else, such as someone else's property (or wife, since, again, women were considered to be property back then, unfortunately), which is what the 10th Commandment is all about. But to enjoy the way someone looks, or even to fantasize sexually about someone, isn't what is being criticized when ἐπιθυμέω actually is spoken against in Scripture; intent to take someone else's "property" without permission also needs to be there for the coveting to be wrong (otherwise, accepting something you desire as a gift, or even finding your own spouse sexually appealing, would also technically be wrong). So for ἐπιθυμέω over a woman to be considered

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[849] What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. — Romans 7:7

[850] The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. — Psalm 19:7-10

[851] And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: — Luke 22:15

[852] This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. — 1 Timothy 3:1

"committing adultery in one's heart," in addition to needing to have intent to actually possess her (meaning the man in question would have to intend to follow through with the act if he could), she would have to also belong to someone else already, which is, thankfully, not possible in the western world today since women are no longer considered to be property. And, of course, that passage only applied to Israelites, and even then only to some of them (it was a part of the Sermon on the Mount, which was all about elaborating upon the Mosaic law, something that never applied to Gentiles, and doesn't apply to Jews saved under Paul's Gospel either, so even if Jesus did mean what most Christians assume He did here, it wouldn't apply to most people anyway).

But even if those saved under the Gospel of the Uncircumcision did somehow fall under this particular point in Jesus' sermon (which they don't, but for the sake of argument, let's pretend they do), the word "adultery" in that passage really tells us everything we need to know about the context of the passage. By definition, a man (even a married man, which should be obvious based on the fact that Scripture allows for Jewish men to have concubines) couldn't "commit adultery" with a woman who wasn't married (or at least betrothed) back then, since in Bible times the word translated as "adultery" in our English Bibles (μοιχεύω/"moy-khyoo'-o" in the original Greek, and נָאַף/"naw-af'" in the original Hebrew) didn't have the same meaning as the English word "adultery" does today, and was actually a property violation rather than a purity violation back then[853] (as also demonstrated by the fact that Jesus didn't condemn women for lusting after men in that verse,[854] sexually or otherwise, because it wasn't possible for a woman to do so in the biblical sense of the word, since a wife was always the property of a husband and never the other way around at that time, and hence a woman couldn't own a man through marriage). In fact, while

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[853] *Biblical Discussion of Adultery* by Dave of Liberated Christians, Inc.: https://www.libchrist.com/bible/adultery.html

[854] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. — Matthew 5:28

"adultery" by its modern, English definition is certainly possible to commit (and is something one shouldn't do, since it isn't a loving action), it's quite impossible for anyone today in the western world to commit adultery in the manner the Bible uses the term, because women are no longer considered to be property. So no Gentile (or Israelite in the body of Christ) has to worry about even accidentally committing this particular sin here in the western world – or anywhere else that women are no longer considered to be property – today. (And just as a quick but related aside, this also means that in most parts of the world today, married couples with "open marriages" technically aren't committing the sin of μοιχεύω either, since the wives in a modern marriage aren't "owned" by their husbands, and so as long as it's completely consensual for everyone, and also not against the secular law where they live, of course, there's no scriptural reason to say it's forbidden.)

Few Christians seem to remember, especially when reading passages about sexuality and lust, that it's extremely important to interpret a passage of Scripture using the definitions of the time it was written rather than basing our interpretations on modern definitions of English words (using modern definitions rather than the definition of a word at the time it was written is how we ended up with all of the confused and unscriptural doctrines of the Christian religion we've been discussing throughout this book in the first place). It's also important to remember that, prior to this sermon by Jesus, neither sexual fantasy nor enjoying the way someone looks (sexually speaking) had ever been condemned anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (or anywhere else in the Greek Scriptures either, for that matter; and before someone brings up Job 31:1,[855] they need to remember that this was spoken during his defence of his self-righteousness, which isn't an example anyone should be bragging that they're following, and Job's personal decision there wasn't based on any rule laid out anywhere in Scripture anyway). When one realizes all this, it becomes

[855] I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? — Job 31:1

apparent that Jesus wasn't creating a new law for Israelites to follow (or informing them of a sin that God had somehow forgotten to inform them of until that point), but was simply expanding on a rule His audience was already familiar with (the 10th Commandment), pointing out that for a Jewish male to covet his neighbour's wife with the intention of actually having her would basically be the equivalent of breaking the 7th Commandment[856] as well, but there's absolutely no reason to believe He was even hinting that finding other people sexually appealing, or admiring their bodies (or even fantasizing about them) was at all wrong.

In fact, those who do try to force sexual desire out of their (and others') lives are actually demonstrating a symptom of a far more pernicious form of lust than any mentioned already, one which affects (and infects) Christianity to a fatal degree. This, of course, would be the religious lust[857] known as self-righteousness.[858] So if a religious leader tries to convince others that simple sexual attraction and fantasy (or even premarital sex) is sinful, it would be wise to question any and all of their teachings, since they're demonstrating how little they likely know about Scripture, and it seems unlikely that they've even been saved yet (relatively speaking, of course), since they probably don't even understand the Gospel (considering the fact that they clearly don't seem to know the difference between the Gospel of the Circumcision and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision). Of course, another reason that religious conservatives are so opposed to "lust" (and anything even related to premarital sex) is simply basic erotophobia. Thanks to the harmful purity culture that conservative

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[856] Thou shalt not commit adultery. — Exodus 20:14

[857] *The truth about sexual lust; Part 13. — Religious Lust, Part 1* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.24.pdf

[858] *The truth about sexual lust; Part 14. — Religious Lust, Part 2* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.25.pdf

Christianity has inflicted upon the world,[859] too many people grow up with the idea that sexuality (anything from simple sexual desire to any form of sexual activity itself) is inherently dirty and shameful. Most Christians will deny this and claim that sexual thoughts and acts are only "dirty" or sinful when they're outside the context of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage, but aside from misunderstanding what the Bible says about sexuality in the first place, they also don't realize just how deeply the effects of purity culture have rooted into their subconscious, eventually blossoming into full-blown erotophobia, which in turn forces them to have to believe that their misinterpretations of Scripture are true because anything else could allow the sexuality they so fear to enter their lives.

It's also important to keep in mind that something generally has to be spelled out as a sin in the Hebrew Scriptures or else it's very unlikely to actually be a sin. Neither Jesus nor Paul (nor anyone else writing any of the Greek Scriptures, for that matter) were adding new sins to the list of sins when they wrote or spoke about these topics, nor were they revealing actions that were actually always sinful but which weren't recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures (if they were, that would mean the Israelites under the Mosaic law had no way of knowing what was *actually* expected of them until these new sins were first revealed – long after the giving of the law or even the writing of the final book of the Hebrew Scriptures – and that God didn't tell them how to truly avoid all sins until that time), so these passages in the Greek Scriptures have to be interpreted in light of what came before (and while the cultural context at the time does need to be considered as well, aside from the fact that Paul wouldn't have been adding new actions to the definition in the first place, especially not without explaining exactly what the precise actions were and why they were sinful, it's not like premarital sex was considered wrong by the Gentile culture

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[859] *Purity culture harmed thousands of evangelical teens; what did the Church get wrong about sex?* by Leah MarieAnn Klett: https://www.christianpost.com/news/purity-culture-harmed-thousands-of-evangelical-teens-what-did-the-church-get-wrong-about-sex.html

of those he was writing to anyway, so there's literally no reason to assume it was suddenly being included in the definition of πορνεία in Paul's epistles). And since the Hebrew Scriptures didn't call premarital sex a sin, but did call idolatrous sex and incest sins, it stands to reason that one or more of these have to be what Paul was actually talking about (especially since, for Paul to suddenly add new sins that had never been included in the definition of the word πορνεία into its definition would mean he'd have to be very careful to explain what these new sins are, exactly, that were now being included in its definition, if he expected anyone to understand that these actions were *now* considered to fall under its definition and be sinful, which Christians have to admit is something he didn't do in any of his epistles, since there's no verse anywhere in Scripture where Paul says, "premarital sex is included in list of actions referred to as πορνεία"). Likewise, Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light,[860] and since we know that A) "lusting" the way religious conservatives interpret the word (enjoying the way someone looks, and even fantasizing about them sexually) had never been condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures, and B) there's no way that avoiding "lusting" in the manner that today's religious conservatives understand the concept could ever be considered to be easy, or a burden that is light in any way whatsoever (anyone who isn't asexual or doesn't have a hormonal imbalance – and no judgement to anyone who is or does – who is being truly honest with themselves knows I'm right), it has to mean something other than what most people assume (which it does, as I've already covered). This also means that those who try to avoid – as well as try to convince others that they need to avoid – their completely normal biological drives are perverting not only what Scripture actually teaches, but the natural instincts God gave us as well, and this is why those who teach the conservative religious perspectives on lust and sexuality are the true perverts.

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[860] Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. — Matthew 11:28-30

There is a lot more that can be said about this complex topic (and I recommend digging more into it for yourself to learn other details that I didn't get into here[861]), but the bottom line is that there's literally no scriptural reason to assume consensual sexual relations between an unmarried couple today – as long as no worship of other deities is involved, and it isn't actually illegal where they live – is wrong.

Premarital sex and lust aren't the only activities that religious leaders incorrectly consider to be immoral and have insisted that people shouldn't participate in, however. There are so many other traditional religious ideas about supposed sins that aren't actually in the Bible but which you've no doubt been told you must abstain from as well. I'm not going to get into all of them, but I'll cover some of the most common actions.

Perhaps the action that is most connected with what we've just gone over has to do with the biblical False Friend commonly referred to as "modesty." As you know, most Christians assume that revealing too much skin or the outline of one's body is both immodest and a sin. Modesty, however, is the opposite of vanity, not nudity. Nudity was extremely common in Bible times, yet never called a sin in the Bible. God did not condemn Adam and Eve for being naked (in fact He created them naked and saw them as "very good,"[862] and if nudity wasn't inherently sinful before the fall then there's no reason to claim it suddenly became sinful after the fall), but rather asked them who told them they were naked after they sinned and realized they were. He didn't say, "Oh no, your nakedness has been exposed! How could this have happened?!" (He made them that way and left them to enjoy the garden in that state, so it would have been strange to suddenly consider their nudity to be wrong just because

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[861] *PORNEIA: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm* by Kyle Harper: https://www.academia.edu/1368753/PORNEIA_The_Making_of_a_Christian_Sexual_Norm

[862] And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. — Genesis 1:31

they'd sinned when He didn't consider it to be wrong a moment prior to their sin.) The reason they sewed and put on clothing was because they were suddenly ashamed, not because they were suddenly naked (and the reason God made new clothes for them out of animal skins[863] was because the dead animals covering them were a type[864] of Christ covering sin, not because they suddenly needed clothing – they already had clothing at that point, after all[865]).

The truth is that sin distorts our perceptions and makes people feel ashamed of their bodies, just as it makes them feel guilt and shame over all sorts of innocent things. Puritanism over our physical bodies is not a scriptural virtue, but it is a form of gnostic dualism, which is enough to tell us we should be avoiding that kind of prudishness. In fact, God even sent Isaiah out to prophesy naked,[866] so obviously nudity just can't be considered sinful or else God would have been commanding Isaiah to sin. Modesty is still important, but it's about not showing off wealth, position, or power, not about not showing skin or curves. When Paul called for modesty in the church called the body of Christ, and asked women to dress modestly, he meant to dress *"with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women*

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[863] Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. — Genesis 3:21

[864] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typology_(theology)

[865] And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. — Genesis 3:7

[866] At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. — Isaiah 20:2-4

professing godliness) with good works."[867] It had nothing to do with their bodies and everything to do with their attitudes. Basically, he was telling them not to wear fancy outfits that would make them appear more important than those who weren't able to appear as wealthy as them. Similarly, Peter wrote to the church called the Israel of God telling them that they should not let their adorning be *"outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."*[868] Nobody in their time would have looked twice at somebody showing a bit of skin, or even at being completely naked, and Scripture certainly didn't condemn it, so neither should we. But the Bible *is* clear that we should not try to make ourselves look better or more important than those around us with expensive clothing and lavish hairdos, so true modesty (which is based on humility) is something we should certainly aim for. And as for the concern that not dressing like a prude might cause men to lust, we've already covered what "lust" really means, and that the idea of "lust," as religious conservatives understand the concept, isn't actually a problem at all. So if someone tries to use that argument, they need to go back and learn that.

This all means that there's no basis for the idea of pornography and masturbation being sinful either, contrary to what many Christians claim (at least publicly). If God was okay with people being naked in public, viewing naked people couldn't be a sin either, even on paper or on a screen, and we

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867 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. — 1 Timothy 2:9-10

868 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. — 1 Peter 3:3-4

already know that there's no command against fantasizing sexually about someone, since the form of "lust" that Jesus condemned had nothing to do with that at all, as we've now learned. And there's nothing in Scripture condemning masturbation either (no, the sin of Onan wasn't masturbation, but was just not providing his dead brother's wife with a child as God specifically commanded him to do,[869] and which was later also required under the Mosaic law[870] – a law the body of Christ is not under), so the idea that either of these things are sinful is just more extrabiblical conservative puritanism. In fact, not only is masturbation harmless, it's actually good for one's health.[871] And it's definitely the safest form of sex, so Christian leaders should really be recommending it, along with pornography to assist with it for those who find porn useful for such purposes (especially because multiple studies[872] have demonstrated that where porn usage increases, instances of rape and other forms of sexual violence

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[869] And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore he slew him also. — Genesis 38:1-10

[870] If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. — Deuteronomy 25:5

[871] *What Religion Gets Wrong About Masturbation* by Phil Zuckerman: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-secular-life/202010/what-religion-gets-wrong-about-masturbation

[872] *How the Web Prevents Rape* by Steven E. Landsburg: https://slate.com/culture/2006/10/proof-that-internet-porn-prevents-rape.html

actually decrease[873]). And I know some Christians will point to Romans 13:14, which says, *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."* But if we're going to apply this to actions that aren't actually condemned as sinful anywhere in Scripture, this would really have to apply equally to *anything* one finds physically pleasurable (from watching a sunset to playing sports to even eating a good meal that one enjoys), so limiting that verse to things which actually are sinful is the only way to go if we want to avoid descending into absurdity and even harmful cult-like behaviour.

Another very common assertion by conservative Christians is that being gay (or being a homosexual) is forbidden in the Bible, but the truth is, Scripture says nothing about the topic of being gay at all. That might seem like a strange statement, since I'm sure you can think of plenty of verses which you believe talk about the topic, but like many of the things discussed in this book, this is an assumption based on a misconception. Remember, "homosexuality," or "being gay," is simply the state of being attracted (sexually and/or romantically) solely to members of the same sex, and doesn't inherently have anything to do with actually having sexual intercourse with – or even touching in a romantic or sexual manner – someone of the same sex at all (someone who is gay might never have sex with anyone of the same sex, and someone who is heterosexual or bisexual very well might – in fact, I've been told that a lot of gay porn is actually filmed with straight actors, who do it not because they have any attraction whatsoever to people of the same sex but rather do it for the money), and simply being attracted to somebody isn't a sin, in and of itself (even if same-sex relations were sinful, being tempted is not a sin, since even Jesus was

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[873] *More Porn, Less Rape? The Controversy Revisited* by Michael Castleman: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/all-about-sex/201707/more-porn-less-rape-the-controversy-revisited

tempted and He never sinned[874]). That said, as far as same-sex relations go, the absolute most one could possibly argue is that the Hebrew Scriptures *might* forbid anal sex between males outside the context of rape and/or idolatrous prostitution (which is always wrong, and quite possibly what it's actually forbidding according to many scholars, although there are other possible interpretations of the passages generally interpreted as forbidding it too[875]), but even if so, this would only apply to those who are under the Mosaic law since the Hebrew Scriptures are the only part of the Bible where it *might* have forbidden it on its own outside the context of rape and/or idolatry; it's never forbidden on its own anywhere in the Greek Scriptures, as I'll discuss shortly.

And regardless of whether it does forbid anal sex between men, it doesn't say anything about love, romantic relationships, or other forms of sexuality between males. The passage about a man lying with a man in Leviticus would have to be strictly referring to anal sex – presuming it's referring simply to sexual intercourse between men at all, and not referring to temple prostitution or something else altogether, as many believe it does (for those who disagree with me here, if it were including other forms of sexuality, such as oral sex, for example, there would have also been a verse forbidding women from lying with other women or from performing oral sex on other women, and since there isn't, there's literally no good reason to believe it's including that particular act between men either). On top of that, the Bible definitely never says anything *anywhere* about love, romantic relationships, or sexuality between females. The passage in Paul's epistle to the Romans about idolatry that

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[874] For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. — Hebrews 4:15

[875] *Leviticus and Paul on Homosexuality* by Andrew P.: https://universalistheretic.blogspot.com/2022/11/leviticus-and-paul-on-homosexuality.html

many mistakenly use to argue against homosexuality[876] does not actually condemn women lying with women as many believe, and is most likely talking about women lying with animals (an action that actually *was* forbidden in the Hebrew Scriptures) when the context of worshipping the creature in that passage is taken into consideration – although some argue that it instead refers to women participating in a certain sort of shrine prostitution,[877] which is also possible, but either way, the idea of women lying with other women hadn't ever been forbidden in Scripture. You see, the prohibitions for men that most people think literally forbid men from lying with other men don't include women in the passages, all while being next to other rules which *do* forbid women from specific sexual actions, so even if the commandment they're thinking of means what these people assume, it can't be applied to both sexes without ignoring important hermeneutical principles, which means there's no justification for claiming it was all of a sudden being forbidden by Paul in Romans (again, Paul

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[876] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. — Romans 1:21-32

[877] *Does Romans 1:26 condemn lesbians?* by Rick Brentlinger: https://www.gaychristian101.com/does-romans-126-condemn-lesbians.html

didn't make up new sins that were never previously mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures). And, of course, there's also the fact that the actions mentioned in this passage in Romans were actually negative "consequences." Paul's point in this passage wasn't that he was telling people to avoid certain sexual sins, but rather that the sin of idolatry would lead, or more likely led (past tense, probably referring to "sacred orgies" that included same-sex intercourse performed in worship of Baalpeor in "Old Testament" times), certain people to certain negative consequences, such as performing acts that went against their nature. And the fact that the passage talks about men going against their nature is very telling as well. The phrase "leaving the natural use of the woman" implies that these men were, by nature, heterosexual. You see, the word translated as "leaving" in the KJV is ἀφίημι/"af-ee'-ay-mee" in the Greek, which means to leave behind, forsake, neglect, or divorce. Simply put, the men in question divorced themselves from their own heterosexual nature when they were consumed with passion for one another during the idolatrous ceremonies in the past that Paul was almost certainly referring to in that passage in Romans.

As far as the rest of the passages in the Greek Scriptures that people normally use to argue against same-sex relations go, those passages are also terribly misunderstood. I don't have room to get into all the details here (although others have done a good job of digging deeper on the subject, so I recommend looking at some of their studies on the topic[878]), but when Paul wrote about same-sex relations in his other epistles, it's very likely only idolatrous prostitution between males that he's specifically condemning (much like the πορνεία issue between men and women was in many cases when he wrote against it). Most versions say things like, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall*

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[878] *The Bible, Christianity and Homosexuality* by Justin Cannon: https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/the-bible-christianity-and-homosexuality

inherit the kingdom of God."[879] That translation from the KJV makes it somewhat confusing if you aren't aware of the Greek words it's translated from, since the word "fornicators" there is πόρνος/"por'-nos" in the Greek, referring simply to a man who has illicit sex with a woman, specifically a man who has sex with a female temple prostitute (a πόρνη/"por'-nay" in the Greek) in this particular case, based on the context of the latter part of the chapter[880] (the context of a passage is always extremely important to consider when trying to determine the meaning of a part of Scripture, or even of a specific word within it), which is men committing idolatry and worshipping other deities by joining themselves with a temple prostitute (or a "harlot," which is what the KJV translates the word πόρνη as). With that in mind, and based on the fact that sexual intercourse on its own was never forbidden between unmarried men and women, apart from specific circumstances primarily involving idolatry, as we learned earlier in this chapter (which tells us there's basically no reason to assume there's something wrong with sex between men and other men either; and definitely not between women and other women, which I trust you've noticed is *not* a situation mentioned in this passage, a passage that is *very* specific about what gender – or at least sex – a person committing each sexual sin listed in it is, as is made particularly evident in the original Greek: while certain types of male/female and male/male relations are condemned in it, female/female relations aren't even hinted at as they certainly would be if they actually were forbidden), it stands to reason that the two Greek words which are used for same-sex

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[879] Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. — 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

[880] What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. — 1 Corinthians 6:16-20

relations between men in this passage are also referring to an idolatrous form of same-sex relations between men. When we again consider the context of the rest of the chapter, it suggests that the two words are almost certainly referring to temple prostitution, just like πόρνος and πόρνη are. The first word is μαλακός/ "mal-ak-os'," likely referring, at least in this case, to a male temple prostitute (the word can technically be used to mean other forms of same-sex relations as well, which is likely why it was translated as "effeminate" in the KJV, but based on the context of the passage it seems pretty likely to be what Paul meant when he used the word in his epistles), and the second word being ἀρσενοκοίτης/"ar-sen-ok-oy'-tace," which the KJV rendered as "abusers of themselves with mankind," and is a word some people believe that Paul actually had to make up (it doesn't appear to occur in any Greek writings prior to Paul's use of it in his epistles, at least none from before that time have been discovered that I'm aware of as of the time this book was first written) because there didn't seem to be an equivalent word to πόρνος for a man who slept specifically with male temple prostitutes (and those who want to argue that, because the compound word ἀρσενοκοίτης is made up of two Greek words which when placed next to each other in a sentence would mean something along the lines of "man bedders," it *must* simply refer to "men who have sexual relations with one another" – despite the fact that there were already existing Greek words Paul could have used instead rather than making one up – have to *also* believe that the insect we call a butterfly is actually either a stick of butter that flies or a fly made out of butter, based on the same logic). So, to break it down, in Paul's epistles a πόρνος would almost certainly be a male who sleeps with female temple prostitutes, a πόρνη would be said female temple prostitute, an ἀρσενοκοίτης would likely be a male who sleeps with male temple prostitutes, and a μαλακός would then be said male temple prostitute. Bottom line: it's all about committing idolatry and doesn't seem to have anything to do with simple sexual desire or same-sex relations outside of temple prostitution and the worship of other deities (at least in the Bible; knowing how some of these words might have been used outside of Scripture can be helpful, but considering

consistent context – not only of the specific section a word is used in, but of Scripture as a whole – can be even more important when it comes to biblical interpretation, since words can mean different things in different parts of Scripture, as well as mean different things from the way they were used outside of Scripture at times too). Even if someone does decide to ignore all of the above, however, they should be warned that Scripture is very clear that it's the anti-gay conservatives who are actually guilty of "the sin of Sodom"[881] (which, contrary to the popular misunderstanding of the term, had nothing[882] to do with homosexuality[883] at all[884]) today, and I wouldn't want to be in the shoes of these religious conservatives at the final judgement. Even if only indirectly, homophobic (and transphobic) conservatives are responsible for many homeless youth,[885] as well as for numerous suicides,[886] not to mention all the assaults against, and even murders of, people who are different from them when it comes to their sexuality and gender identity, and pretty much each and every conservative (whether they're religious or not) is going to have to answer for their culpability in these horrors when they're standing at the Great White

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[881] Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. — Ezekiel 16:49-50

[882] *What Was the Real Sin of Sodom?* by Patrick S. Cheng: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-was-the-real-sin-of_b_543996

[883] *The Sin of Sodom: A Study in Homophobic Interpretation* by Andrew P.: https://universalistheretic.blogspot.com/2022/11/the-sin-of-sodom-study-in-homophobic.html

[884] *Anti-gay Evangelicals admit the Sodom story is NOT about homosexuality* by Rick Brentlinger: https://www.gaychristian101.com/Sodom.html

[885] *Homeless rates for LGBT teens are alarming, but parents can make a difference* by Jaimie Seaton: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2017/03/29/homeless-rates-for-lgbt-teens-are-alarming-heres-how-parents-can-change-that

[886] *Homosexuality and Suicide: LGBTQIA+ Suicide Is a Serious Issue* by Natasha Tracy: https://www.healthyplace.com/gender/glbt-mental-health/homosexuality-and-suicide-lgbt-suicide-a-serious-issue

Throne Judgement. Because even if they're only indirectly responsible, they all still have a responsibility for all of this suffering nonetheless.

Another common Christian rule when it comes to sexuality is that monogamy is the only acceptable form of romantic relationship, and that polygamy is forbidden, even though nearly every Christian I've met is well aware of the fact that polygamy and other forms of non-monogamy *were* considered to be an acceptable practice for people by God in the Bible, with the possible exception of local church overseers/elders (which are referred to as bishops in the KJV[887]) and deacons[888] (although there's good reason to believe that the passages about "bishops" and deacons are actually just saying that an elder or deacon should have at least one wife – meaning they should not be single – not that they can't have more than one wife). God even told David that if he had wanted more wives, rather than taking someone else's wife, he should have just asked God for more,[889] and if polygamy is a sin, that would mean God would have been offering to help David sin, which is not something God would have done. So basically, those religious conservatives who claim they're fighting to promote "traditional marriage" really aren't (if they were, they'd be promoting polygamy at the very least[890]), and if monogamy was actually natural, cheating wouldn't be so common in so many relationships (yes, even in Christian relationships).

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[887] A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; — 1 Timothy 3:2

[888] Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. — 1 Timothy 3:12

[889] And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. — 2 Samuel 12:8

[890] *The Truth of Polygamy — A Brief Presentation* by Brian R. Kelson: https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn746.pdf#page=3

Whether a Christian sees this next prohibition as sinful depends a lot on where one lives, but many Christians believe that swearing is indeed a sin as well. The only thing that looking down on profanity does, however, is demonstrate what an unspiritual (and likely hypocritical) snob one is.[891] I'm not going to exegete all the passages in the Bible about language, though I will quickly point out that saying "oh, my God" isn't taking the Lord's name in vain, since "God" isn't even close to being the Lord's name (His actual name is likely pronounced as either Yahweh or Jehovah in English, or something along those lines anyway), but is actually just a title, similar to the title of "President" (and the commandment in question[892] – which is technically a part of the 10 Commandments, and as such isn't directed to the body of Christ anyway, although taking the Lord's name in vain is still good to avoid doing – isn't even talking about profanity; it's basically referring to perjury after swearing not to while using the Lord's name in your oath). Instead I'll point out the hypocrisy, not to mention haughtiness, of having trouble with profanity. All profanity means is "outside the temple," i.e., anything that isn't sacred. I won't get into the problems with the secular/sacred dualism most Christians hold to (which is essentially Gnosticism), but technically anything non-religious (such as eating a hamburger) is, by definition, "profane," not just certain words.

However, pretending for a moment that certain words somehow *are* more "profane" than others, the idea that words can be bad in the first place quickly becomes comical when you begin to deconstruct the idea. I mean, it's not like the Bible has a specific list of "forbidden words" included anywhere in it, so what makes a specific word wrong to say? Is it the particular combination of letters, or the specific sound the word makes when spoken, that makes a word wrong to use? It's obviously ridiculous to think so, since otherwise the words

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[891] *The Case of Cussing Christians — An unapologetic look into God's opinion of what constitutes vile language* by Martin Zender: https://www.martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF2.15.pdf

[892] Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. — Exodus 20:7

"damn," "hell," and "ass" shouldn't be read in the Bible, or spoken aloud in a sermon, as they'd be just as inherently bad in Scripture or sermon as when used in everyday parlance. But maybe it's the meaning behind the word that makes it wrong? Well, if so, simply saying "have sexual intercourse" or "sleep with" (or "rats" or "ouch" any other number of expressions) would be just as bad as saying "fuck"; and saying "crap" or "faeces" would be just as bad as saying "shit," as would saying the word "droppings," or even "dung" (which is a word actually used in the KJV itself[893]). But maybe it's the intent behind the words. For instance, is it okay to say "fuck" if you're referring to sex with your partner, or just using it as a playful adjective, but wrong to use in anger against another person? I'm okay with this, but only inasmuch as I am with the idea that we shouldn't be saying *anything* with the intention of hurting another person (whether in anger or not), regardless of what words we're using (in fact, this is a biblical principle[894]).

And on top of all this, there are many words that are considered "swearing" in one part of the world that wouldn't even be blinked at in others (or that are considered to be "swearing" today when they weren't necessarily seen that way in the past), so is it wrong to use a word in one location simply because it's traditionally considered "vulgar" in that area and time period, while not wrong to use it in other parts of the world where nobody is currently offended by the word? If so, that means it's the act of offending people that would be the actual sin there, and we could never do anything that might offend another person (including evangelism, which offends all sorts of people). Just as the existence of so-called "swear words" in our English Bibles proves, this also means that no

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[893] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, — Philippians 3:8

[894] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. — Matthew 5:22

word is inherently wrong to use in and of itself, but is instead only considered wrong by certain people because they've decided the words are wrong, meaning these people have created an extrabiblical doctrine making it immoral to use words they don't like. The reality is, getting offended by these "vulgar" words implies that you think you're too good to hear everyday, common language, and that you probably need to be brought down a peg or two. Honestly, the old childhood saying about sticks and stones is true, and words can only hurt you if you allow them to. But, if you really insist on being offended by certain words, how about choosing to be offended by those words intended to hurt people who don't happen to share your particular values or preferences or skin colour instead of words that simply add a bit of colour to everyday speech. However, I'll make a compromise. Get offended by the many injustices and atrocities being committed not only around the world but even in your own backyard, and I mean offended enough to actually do something about it, and I'll try to pretend you're not a snob when you turn up your nose at everyday language. In fact, I won't even say the word uterus[895] around you if that helps.

Many Christians also believe that drinking alcohol is not allowed. And while it might not be pro-drunkenness[896] or in favour of over-drinking,[897] the Bible actually recommends,[898] and in some places even commands,[899] the

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[895] *Is "Uterus" a Dirty Word?* by Twinkle Um: https://skyenoor.wordpress.com/2011/04/08/is-uterus-a-dirty-word

[896] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; — Ephesians 5:18

[897] The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; — Titus 2:3

[898] Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. — Proverbs 31:6

[899] And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, — Deuteronomy 14:26

consumption of alcohol for certain people (and God certainly wouldn't have commanded it if it were a sin). And in fact, under the Old Covenant, wine was considered to be a blessing,[900] with the absence of wine being considered to be a curse.[901] Besides, as we all know, Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine (and yes, it was wine, not grape juice, as John 2:10 makes pretty obvious,[902] not to mention as the fact that the Greek word for wine in this account – οἶνος/"oy'-nos" – is the exact same word used in Ephesians 5:18 where Paul warns against getting drunk on wine also makes clear, unless you think he was warning against getting drunk on grape juice). And, of course, Jesus used wine to represent the new covenant in His blood,[903] so it should be pretty obvious that drinking alcohol in moderation is certainly allowed.

And finally, most Christians definitely believe that abortion is condemned in the Bible as murder, and hence is a sin. However, regardless of one's feelings on abortion, and even whether abortion actually is a sin or not, it's important to

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[900] And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. — Deuteronomy 7:13

[901] Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. — Deuteronomy 28:39

[902] And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. — John 2:10

[903] And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. — Luke 22:14-20

know that, because murder is a legal term, abortion *can't* legitimately be defined as murder in any place where it's not illegal.[904] Yes, abortion might involve killing, and the killing could even theoretically be a sin – I'm not making a definitive judgement one way or the other as to the morality of the act at this point – but regardless of whether or not abortion *is* a sin, killing can only be classified as murder if the killing is unlawful under one's secular, human government, because otherwise capital punishment and the killing of enemy combatants in war would also have to be called murder, as would killing in self-defence, and so the claim of many anti-abortionists that abortion is murder (at least in most of the western world, or at least as of the time this book was first written) isn't something even worth taking into consideration. Now, some have tried to get around this fact by saying, "It doesn't matter how humans define the word. The only thing that matters is how God defines it." Well, "murder" is an English word, and like all words, if we aren't all using the same definition when we use it, the word becomes entirely meaningless as far as a discussion goes, and there's no point in even using that word to begin with.

That said, even if we were going to redefine the word based on what Scripture says about the topic, something most Christians aren't aware of is that abortion isn't actually condemned, or even ever discussed, in the Bible at all, which means the idea that God calls it murder doesn't appear to be true anyway. Of course, most Christians believe the Bible does condemn abortion, so we should quickly take a look at the passages which they use to defend this claim:

Thou shalt not kill. – Exodus 20:13

That verse isn't going to work if we're going to support the death penalty and war and cops carrying guns in the line of duty, as we've already discussed. Other translations render this verse along the lines of, "You shall not murder,"

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[904] *Abortion Is Not Murder* by Jennifer Wright: https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a19748134/what-is-abortion

which is what the passage had to have meant because otherwise God would have been telling the Israelites to sin when He commanded them to kill various people back in "Old Testament" times, and since murder technically means "illegal killing," if abortion is legal, again, it then can't actually be labelled as murder.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. – Jeremiah 1:5

All this verse really tells us is that God knew Jeremiah before he was born. And unless this mean we exist as spirit babies before we're born, all it does for those of us who aren't Mormons is explain that God foreknew Jeremiah's existence and planned for him to become a prophet beforehand (and what God plans for will happen, as we've now learned).

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. – Psalm 139:13-16

This passage is just more of Jeremiah 1:5, explaining God's foreknowledge and predestination, and doesn't mention abortion at all.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a

loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. – Luke 1:39-42

Apparently fetuses in the womb (the Greek word βρέφος/"bref-os," referred to as "babes" in this passage in the KJV, doesn't strictly mean "baby," as it's also used for embryos and fetuses) can leap when the Holy Spirit causes them to do so, although what that has to do with abortion being wrong I'm not sure.

And with that, I'm out of passages, unless there's been some new ones brought up that I'm unaware of since I last studied the topic. Still, at least we know that God loves children (already born or otherwise) and would never do anything to harm them:

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every living thing that moved on land perished–birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. – Genesis 7:17-23

Huh. It seems that God Himself kills babies (and there's no way there weren't any pregnant women alive at the time of the flood, so fetuses too, it seems). But that's different; God can kill whoever He wants, right? At least He'd never want humans to kill fetuses or children.

Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys. – 1 Samuel 15:3

Well, apparently God not only kills children, He commanded humans to kill children in the past as well (and, again, there's no way there weren't any pregnant women among that group of people, meaning He commanded certain pregnancies to be aborted in the past, which means abortion can't be a sin or else He'd have been commanding the Israelites to sin). So the idea that God believes all fetuses have "a right to life" and wants them all to be born just isn't a defensible claim, at least not based on the Bible, which means the idea that God calls abortion murder doesn't appear to be true anyway. And so, whatever conclusions one comes to about abortion, it seems that people will have to decide for themselves based on an entirely extrabiblical perspective (if you disagree, however, please let me know what passages I missed that prove otherwise), outside of one very telling verse that we haven't looked at yet (at least in this chapter, although we have considered it already in a different – yet still somewhat related – context, earlier in this book):

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. – Genesis 2:7

This verse tells us that it was when God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils that he became conscious, figuratively referred to as becoming "a living soul" in this verse (keeping in mind that "souls" don't exist as ontological objects, but rather that the word is used as metonymy for a human existing as a conscious being in this verse). Now, I can't definitively prove that the time every subsequent human became "a living soul" was at the time *they* breathed their first breath on their own, the way it was for Adam, but this is far more scriptural of an assertion than any of the arguments *against* abortion based on the Bible are, so I'll just leave that there for you to consider. (And to quickly get the

inevitable questions about how fetuses seems to be able to react to outside noises, songs, voices, and such out of the way, if it's true that babies become "living souls" upon their first breath, these would then simply have to be unconscious, autonomic reflexes programmed into developing fetuses; most of us believers would say that, in reality, the "life" of the yet-unborn fetus is the life of the mother, and that it "lives" its mother's life, so to speak, rather than its own – and this applies to the oxygen it receives as well, since it receives its mother's breath through its umbilical cord while gestating rather than having its own breath of life prior to birth.)

Still, based on other doctrines they hold to, it's surprising that most Christians aren't the most pro-abortion group of people out there. Why? Well, most evangelicals, aside from certain Calvinists, believe in a doctrine called "the age of accountability." A child supposedly reaches the age of accountability when they are old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong and can be held accountable for their sins. Up until they reach this age, children who die supposedly go to heaven as ghosts (or so the doctrine goes, although we now know that the dead cease to exist as conscious beings) because they're too young to understand the consequences of, and hence be held responsible for, their actions. However, once someone reaches this age (which supposedly varies from individual to individual) they will end up in an inescapable place called hell if they happen to pass away without first becoming a Christian (or they would if the popular doctrine were scriptural).

Now, I'd estimate that 90% or more of the human population would suffer in hell without end, if the traditional view that this is the fate of non-Christians who die in their sins were true, so if never-ending torment in hell for non-believers past the age of accountability did happen to be true then perhaps abortionists should be considered the greatest missionaries there are since they'd probably be responsible for helping more souls avoid hell than all of the missionaries alive today combined. Not only that, shouldn't those Christians

who have babies be thought of as the greatest monsters there are, seeing as they're willing to risk the souls of their offspring simply to satisfy a desire (either for children, or simply for sex for those who believe that birth control is wrong)? If there was a greater than 90% chance that your child will end up in hell if they reach the age of accountability (the odds might vary depending on where and when you happen to live, but they're still pretty grim), wouldn't you be much better off killing them before they get that old? If you believe in never-ending torment for those past this age, then would not someone like Andrea Yates, who killed her children so they would be sure to avoid such a terrible outcome,[905] be one of the best examples of good motherhood we have? Sure, it might be a sin to commit murder, but sins can always be forgiven while you're still alive, and her children are now guaranteed a place in heaven, or so the logic should go if these traditionalists are correct (especially since we've already determined that abortion *can't* legitimately be considered to be murder in most cases).

If a parent allowed their child to participate in any activity where their kid has a 90% or greater chance of dying, or even just getting seriously injured, one would (rightly) consider that parent to be negligent and report that parent to the child protective agencies, and yet how many Christian parents are willing to gamble their children's soul with a fate far worse, and infinitely longer, than simple death or injury? And as we've already learned, abortion generally can't be classified as murder, so, again, women who have abortions, and even the doctors who perform them, should be seen by Christians who believe in never-ending torment as the greatest heroes ever for saving so many souls.

No matter how horrible this might sound to you, I challenge you to show me where I'm wrong. I've made this challenge before and have yet to have anyone correct my logic, and I don't expect to have it happen anytime soon either.

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[905] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Yates

That said, since I believe in the salvation of all mankind because of what Christ accomplished, I obviously don't believe that anyone ends up suffering in hell without end, so I am not suggesting anyone actually kill their children here. I'm simply making this point to challenge yet another inconsistency in Christian ideology.

Of course, most people today also aren't aware that abortion (at least if performed during much of the first two trimesters) was not actually considered to be immoral by most Christians throughout much of history either[906] (at least among Christians who hold to *Sola scriptura*, and the theological perspectives of those who don't hold to *Sola scriptura* are rarely even worth considering). This doesn't necessarily matter as far as one's consideration of the morality of abortion goes, since those of us in the body of Christ don't base our theology on what Christians have historically considered to fall under the purview of "orthodoxy" or "orthopraxy" anyway (because we consider the doctrines of the Christian religion to be entirely wrong about nearly everything), but it is still useful for us to know that, until relatively recently, evangelicals and other Protestants have actually been mostly okay with abortion,[907] and that it was only due to the machinations of certain politically-minded evangelicals – who decided to join forces with the Roman Catholics in their fight against abortion (although it appears that even Catholic opinions on abortion have changed over the years[908]) in order to create the movement sometimes known as the Religious Right so they could gain political power (mostly so they could fight

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[906] *The Truth About Christianity And Abortion* by Christina Forrester: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-truth-about-christianity-and-abortion_b_58f52ed7e4b048372700dab5

[907] *How Evangelicals Decided That Life Begins at Conception* by Jonathan Dudley: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-dudley/how-evangelicals-decided-that-life-begins-at-conception_b_2072716.html

[908] *The Bishops Are Wrong About Biden — and Abortion* by Garry Wills: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/opinion/biden-bishops-communion-abortion.html

against desegregation and continue to promote racism,[909] at least in the United States, although the rest of the evangelical world tends to follow what American evangelicals do) – that nearly everyone has been swayed into incorrectly assuming abortion has always been thought to be a sin by all Christians.[910]

And it's also important to note that a large number of Christians who today claim the "Pro-Life" label are only actually against abortion when it comes to other people's abortions, thinking that the abortions they themselves have had are somehow okay, but that everyone else's abortions are wrong and should be illegal, basically telling us that they believe the only moral abortions are the abortions they have,[911] as well as that a large reason they're fighting against abortion is actually because they want to punish other women for enjoying sex, and to ensure that those women suffer long-lasting consequences for their actions (they'll argue that it's actually because they think abortion is immoral and that they believe in "the sanctity of life," but their hypocrisy, along with the way they treat those who have been born – especially in the United States, where religious conservatives only appear to care about the unborn until they're born, after which it's up to those who are born to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, as far as they seem to be concerned – reveals the real truth about them to the rest of us: that they don't actually believe in "the sanctity of life," or in ethical practices at all, for that matter). In fact, this quote on Facebook by a Christian pastor named Dave Barnhart explains the real reason most conservative politicians and religious leaders fight against abortion:

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909 *The Real Origins of the Religious Right* by Randall Balmer: https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133

910 *The 'Biblical View' That's Younger Than The Happy Meal* by Fred Clark: https://www.patheos.com/blogs/slacktivist/2012/02/18/the-biblical-view-thats-younger-than-the-happy-meal

911 *"The Only Moral Abortion is My Abortion"* by Joyce Arthur: https://joycearthur.com/abortion/the-only-moral-abortion-is-my-abortion

"'The unborn' are a convenient group of people to advocate for. They never make demands of you; they are morally uncomplicated, unlike the incarcerated, addicted, or the chronically poor; they don't resent your condescension or complain that you are not politically correct; unlike widows, they don't ask you to question patriarchy; unlike orphans, they don't need money, education, or childcare; unlike aliens, they don't bring all that racial, cultural, and religious baggage that you dislike; they allow you to feel good about yourself without any work at creating or maintaining relationships; and when they are born, you can forget about them, because they cease to be unborn. It's almost as if, by being born, they have died to you. You can love the unborn and advocate for them without substantially challenging your own wealth, power, or privilege, without reimagining social structures, apologizing, or making reparations to anyone. They are, in short, the perfect people to love if you want to claim you love Jesus but actually dislike people who breathe.

Prisoners? Immigrants? The sick? The poor? Widows? Orphans? All the groups that are specifically mentioned in the Bible? They all get thrown under the bus for the unborn."[912]

But what are the scientific facts when it comes to abortion? Well, from what I've been able to determine, the brain physically can't have consciousness until at least 24 weeks of gestation have passed (and likely more; maybe much more[913]) because it doesn't have the structures necessary to develop consciousness or sentience (at least based on what I could find when researching for this chapter). Therefore, since only about 1% of abortions take place after the 21st week, abortion in the overwhelming majority of cases doesn't seem to kill something that was ever a conscious being, and hence doesn't seem to be the

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[912] https://www.facebook.com/dave.barnhart/posts/10156549406811031

[913] *When Does Consciousness Arise in Human Babies?* by Christof Koch: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/when-does-consciousness-arise

killing of something that was ever a "person." Sure, it might kill something that has human DNA, but the root of a human hair that has been plucked from a human head also has human DNA and nobody would call its removal from someone's head the killing of a human person because it was never a conscious human itself, and if a fetus was never a conscious being either, there's no legitimate way that I'm aware of to say a "person" is being killed in an abortion performed within that timeframe (in addition, scientists believe that it takes even longer than that – not until at least the 29th week – before a fetus could feel pain,[914] in case that's a concern you might have). And yes, at this point, many people will try to argue that Jews and many slaves weren't considered to be legal "persons" by the Nazis and certain slaveholders in the past either, but this is just an attempt to distract from the point that most fetuses were never conscious beings even once prior to an abortion, whereas the Jews and slaves in question were, which means this is nothing more than a bad faith argument with no bearing on the topic at all.

It's also important to note that abortions in the third trimester basically only ever take place because something has gone horribly wrong and the baby is going to die anyway (often in an extremely painful manner), and many times because the pregnant mother will jeopardize her health (and even her life) if she continues with the pregnancy as well. No woman goes through months of pregnancy only to abort it near the end unless something is very wrong, and it's almost certain that no doctor would do so for any other reason either (and no, the mythical "post-birth abortions" that some people bring up in order to win elections aren't actually a real thing either), so these are all facts to keep in mind whenever someone insists that abortion is definitely wrong.

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914 *7 persistent claims about abortion, fact-checked* by Jaclyn Diaz, Koko Nakajima, and Nick Underwood: https://www.npr.org/2022/05/06/1096676197/7-persistent-claims-about-abortion-fact-checked

Now, some like to argue that a fetus has a soul, and that killing a "living soul" would be wrong. Well, whether or not fetuses have souls, killing someone or something that has a soul isn't necessarily wrong anyway. We kill animals for food (and animals obviously have souls – or, to be more precise, *are* "living souls" – which is a fact the Bible clearly agrees with as well, I might add, since the word translated as "life" in Genesis 1:30[915] is the same Hebrew word – נֶפֶשׁ/ "neh'-fesh" – which is translated as "soul" in other passages[916]), and God commanded the killing of lots of people in Bible times, as we've already discussed, not to mention killed plenty of them Himself, so killing "living souls" is obviously not something God forbids, nor considers to be inherently wrong. So even if fetuses actually were "living souls," it wouldn't necessarily even matter.

All that said, I'm still not here to tell you that you should (or should not) have or perform abortions. This is a very personal matter, and one that people have very strong feelings about. The only thing I'm here to do is to remind you that, regardless of the conclusions you've come to as far as the sinfulness of abortion would be for you, if you're in the body of Christ, you aren't called to condemn the rest of the world for what they do, or to try to influence it to straighten up their walk. All you're called to do is walk after the Spirit, and let the rest of the world make their own decisions about morality, and that goes for all the topics we went through in this chapter, not to mention the many other actions that certain Christians believe should be avoided (including listening to certain types of music, watching certain movies or television shows, playing cards or various other types of games, viewing or participating in sports, gambling, or even

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[915] And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. — Genesis 1:30

[916] And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. — Genesis 2:7

dancing, to name just a few of the various things the religious think we should avoid, despite not being forbidden *anywhere* in Scripture).

Still, if you really want a general principle of morality to live by under the dispensation of the grace of God, I can give you the philosophy of morality I myself live by (just don't take this as a rule; it's simply my own principles that my conscience, faith, and common sense led me to). In no particular order, I ask myself a number of questions, such as, "Is it loving to do so?" If it's done (or avoided) out of actual love or compassion, odds are high that it's fine to do. I'll also consider whether it's harming anybody unnecessarily against their will. This is because certain actions can harm people without being sinful, actions such as defending someone against an attacker, for example, or a doctor amputating a limb to protect against the spread of a disease, as already discussed earlier in this book, so sometimes harmful/evil actions are necessary (and the "against their will" part is because something such as piercing someone's ears when they want it done is technically causing them "harm," or is at least damaging their body – even if only the tiniest bit – but it's not to a fatal or even serious degree, and it's their desire to have it done, so a professional piercer can rest assured that they aren't sinning by causing this sort of harm or damage). But if an action would result in unnecessary harm to somebody against their will, it should likely be avoided. Another consideration is whether an action would get one in trouble with the police or break a secular law of the land. If it would, it's probably best to do something else instead, since Paul advises us to obey the government.[917] Of course, I also look to Scripture to see whether Paul has spoken against a specific action I might be wanting to do. While his teachings were exhortations rather than commandments (meaning they were good ideas to follow, but not required of us, for the most part), it's still a good idea to see what he had to say about things if you're in the body of

[917] Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. — Romans 13:1-2

Christ (and as for those who are members of the Israel of God instead, they should be looking to what the Circumcision writings say they should do and not do). And last (but definitely not least), I think about whether it's an idolatrous action that would result in the worship of another deity (or the worship of anything/anyone other than God). If so, I definitely don't do it. But if something is loving, isn't harming others unnecessarily against their will, isn't illegal, doesn't go against (properly translated and interpreted) Scripture, and isn't idolatrous, I have the faith that it's generally perfectly fine to do so. If you don't have the same sort of faith about a specific action, however, it would be a sin for you to do it, and you should avoid any actions that would go against your own conscience until you have legitimately changed your mind about them being wrong[918] (just don't judge another person for their actions – presuming these aren't actions that harm others unnecessarily against their will, aren't illegal, and aren't idolatrous – if it isn't going against their conscience).

At this point, I should probably say that when Christians learn about my theology as it pertains to issues of morality, they often accuse me of moral relativism. While the reason they make this accusation is generally due to not having actually dug into why I believe what I do (since they assume I'm ignoring what the Bible teaches, when in reality I believe what I do about morality 100% *because* of what I believe the Bible really teaches), they are right about one thing: I am indeed a moral relativist. And if they truly recognized God as God,[919] they would be moral relativists themselves.

Of course, just as with nearly everything I've written, this probably sounds strange to most people who read this assertion for the first time. But as always,

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[918] Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:22-23

[919] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. — Romans 1:21

if you think it over carefully you should realize that it's the truth. I mean, think about it: If morality is absolute rather than relative, it means that there are certain actions which are *always* inherently wrong to do, no matter who the person is, and that would have to include God if the action is inherently wrong in-and-of-itself (this would apply to avoiding actions which are always wrong to abstain from as well, I should add). In fact, if any actions were *always* wrong from an absolute perspective (which would be the case if morality wasn't relative), it would mean there's a "moral law" (for lack of a better term) which is greater than God Himself, a law which even God would be obligated to follow. And if there is something greater than God (even a "law"), then God would not truly be sovereign because He'd be obligated to follow said "moral law," and couldn't decide not to do so.

It's only when morality is relative to what God decides it is that He maintains His sovereignty. Ironically, most Christians who protest moral relativism actually already believe that God is the basis for morality, not realizing that they're actually teaching moral relativism when they say this. If this still doesn't sound right, though, let's take a look at an example to really demonstrate the fact that most Christians are already moral relativists (even without realizing that they are).

Perhaps the best example of the moral relativism that pretty much all Christians hold to is the topic of killing other human beings. Is killing always morally wrong, in-and-of-itself, or is it relative to the situation one finds themselves in? Well, if killing humans is always wrong, with no exceptions, then killing people in war, or in the defence of others, or even in self-defence, would, by definition, be immoral. And not only that, it would be wrong for God to ever kill anyone as well, if killing humans is always wrong, with no exceptions, which means that all the times God is said to have killed people in the Bible, not to mention all the times He commanded the Israelites to do so, would have been examples of God sinning (or commanding others to sin). So I trust it's now clear that killing is

only “wrong” under the specific circumstances that God tells us it’s wrong to do so, which means that the morality of killing humans is relative to God’s desire and commands rather than being absolutely wrong (and that the Bible actually does support situational ethics). And if you agree with me on that, welcome to the world of moral relativism.

Before moving on, though, I should reiterate something I wrote earlier in the chapter, which is that some people who have made it this far will have felt their pharisaical flesh crawling, and their self-righteous souls getting stirred up against some of the things they’ve just read. If that’s the case for you, it means you really need to reevaluate whether you’re more interested in holding fast to the traditions you’ve been taught by your denomination and religious leaders, so that you can continue walking in accord with flesh, or in what Scripture actually says, so that you can begin walking in accord with Spirit instead.

Chapter 6: Paul-itics

As Paul essentially asked in 1 Corinthians 5:12,[920] what business is it of ours to judge those outside the church? And so, regardless of one's views on morality, whatever the Bible might actually say about the topic as it applies the body of Christ, it's limited to the body of Christ, contrary to what so many in the Institutional Church seem to believe (although most of the members of the Institutional Church are technically a part of the very world they condemn, since they're not in the body of Christ due to having believed a false "gospel," so it actually might make sense for them to judge the world they're a part of, but they're judging it based on misinterpretations of Scripture, which doesn't help). Trying to force those who are not a part of the body of Christ to live a supposedly "righteous life," by legal means or otherwise, is not even slightly justifiable, since nowhere in the Bible is it even hinted at that the body of Christ is called to influence (or force) our cultures to become more conservative or to follow religious laws. In fact, the only thing we're asked to do regarding our governments is to obey the secular laws and to pay our

[920] For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? — 1 Corinthians 5:12

taxes[921] (even when these laws harm us and should not exist in the first place). Slavery is a good example of this. Contrary to what many people think, when Paul told slaves in the body of Christ to obey their masters,[922] since he was all for trying to gain freedom if it could be done legally,[923] and this exhortation was only for members of the body of Christ anyway (like most of his exhortations, it didn't apply to anyone outside the church), he obviously wasn't promoting slavery as a good thing. It's simply that he was exhorting believers to obey the law, whether it's an unpleasant law,[924] whether the authorities making said laws are ungodly, and even whether we might think the laws themselves might be ungodly[925] (which isn't to say that those who are not members of the body of Christ shouldn't do what they can to make the world a better place where possible, including fighting to completely eliminate slavery; and if that's

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[921] Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. — Romans 13:1-7

[922] Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; — Ephesians 6:5

[923] Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. — 1 Corinthians 7:21

[924] *No authority except under God* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.31.pdf

[925] *God's use of ungodly authorities* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.32.pdf

something you really want to do as a member of the body of Christ, you technically can, but it isn't something we're called to do in Scripture).

Yes, it is true that, in a democracy, "we the people" technically help determine the secular laws to a certain (in practice, extremely limited) extent, but there's still zero excuse for trying to create laws based on religious morality (especially when we consider the fact that most religious morality isn't at all scriptural, as we learned in the last chapter of this book), or for trying to turn one's nation into a theocracy (the world will be a theocracy in the future, but not until Jesus returns to the earth, and no attempt to create a theocracy in the meantime will ever provide anything other than horrific results). And culturally, there also isn't any reason to go around putting down non-believers for doing things that go against one's moralistic sensibilities (particularly, again, since most of the things that religious conservatives think are sinful aren't actually even slightly sinful to begin with), for trying to pressure the rest of the world into acting the way religious conservatives want them to, or for any number of the cruel or unnecessary actions that too many of those who are religious conservatives seem to feel obligated to perform against those in their communities and countries – actions such as trying to get people fired, kicking people out of their homes, or not being willing to sell things to people, all based simply on who they happen to be attracted to or what gender they identify as, for example; or actions such as trying to enforce prohibitions against consuming certain beverages or plants that God Himself made,[926] or at least enforcing prohibitions against purchasing such things on certain days of the week (to name just a few of many examples).

Really, all that attempting to legislate religious morality, or even to pressure the rest of the world into following one's religious leanings, will do nothing but drive people even further away from the faith one no doubt wants them to

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[926] *God's terrible mistake* by Drew Costen: https://www.concordantgospel.com/gods-terrible-mistake

embrace, and will also continue to cause everyone to misunderstand what the Gospel is actually about (hint: it's not about trying to be as big of an asshole as possible towards those who don't believe and act the way you do, as so many conservative Christians act like they think it is).

This is an important factor for parents to keep in mind too, by the way. Raising your kids to be good citizens who live loving, quiet, respectful, and peaceable lives is important,[927] and they should certainly be brought up with the training and instruction of the Lord so that they'll understand what they need to know about God and Scripture,[928] but trying to force people to live "godly lives" misses the entire point of Paul's teachings. You can't stuff the Holy Spirit into somebody (and if God hasn't elected your child for "eternal life," you aren't going to be able to convince them to believe the Gospel – either Gospel – and get saved now anyway), and trying to make people (children or grown adults) live according to religious rules will only cause them to sin and rebel all the more, as Paul makes quite clear (that was the purpose of the existence of the Mosaic law, after all). And even if those within Churchianity were correct about what is right and wrong (which they definitely aren't), getting people who aren't already saved (relatively speaking) to live "righteous" lives and stop sinning isn't going to get them saved, or make them any less lost, unless you believe that salvation actually is by works, so it just doesn't make any sense to begin with to try to force the rest of the world to live by religious standards since it won't help them in the long run anyway (at least not according to the most common soteriology of Churchianity).

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[927] And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. — 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12

[928] And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. — Ephesians 6:4

History is very clear about all of this as well, of course. When religious "morality" gains control of government, people suffer. There's almost nothing scarier, or more antithetical to freedom, than a theocracy or theonomy run by mortal humans (remember, it is for freedom that we have been set free, as Galatians 5:1 is telling us;[929] it wasn't so we would put ourselves back under religious bondage). When religious conservatives run governments without a liberal and secular hand to balance their policies out, people are censored, fired, expelled from their homes, imprisoned, tortured, and even executed simply for their beliefs (or lack thereof), as well as for the most innocent of actions. If someone challenges the religious status quo or does things considered sinful in a theocratic society, religious conservatives become extremely evil towards such heretics, apostates, and infidels (and even today in more secular countries you find religious conservatives trying to take or keep civil rights away from people who might live differently from them for no reason other than the fact that these differences might not line up with their religious beliefs).

This is one reason I like to stay far away from religious conservatives in general (or at least only meet with them in public places). Perjury,[930] assault, torture,[931] theft, and killing[932] are a major part of the heritage of nearly all conservative religions, including the Christian religion, and I have no doubt that many of them would bring that legacy back into practice if they could. That's not to say all religious conservatives would do this if they had the opportunity, but I still wouldn't want to take that chance. And regardless of their propensity towards violence, it goes without saying that most of them would definitely (and happily)

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[929] Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. — Galatians 5:1

[930] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-care_sex-abuse_hysteria

[931] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inquisition

[932] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem_witch_trials

fight against freedoms and civil rights for people who are different from them in various ways, particularly when it comes to sexuality and gender, and I see no good reason to have much to do with people who would be so heartless and cruel.

Religious conservatives sometimes talk about a culture war, and they are right, there is one happening. The problem is, they're on the wrong side of this battle, having exchanged the truth for an attempt at holding political power[933] (although Daniel warned us that the Christian religion, along with all of the world's other false religions – based on Daniel chapter 7, presuming A.E. Knoch interpreted the prophecy correctly in pages 162 to 179 of his commentary on the book of Daniel,[934] which I personally do believe he did – will be utterly destroyed eventually, and that God will kill many within this religion during the Great Tribulation, so they do this at their own peril).

Now, some members of the body of Christ will disagree with me on this next part, because there are a fair number of believers within the body who lean more towards conservatism when it comes to their political preferences, so please keep in mind that this paragraph is simply my own opinion and not necessarily the opinion of the majority of the members of the body of Christ, but in my personal experience (at least as a North American), conservatism appears to basically be about selfishness, greed, hunger for power, paranoia, racism, sexism, homophobia (among other forms of erotophobia), transphobia, and just having a lack of empathy towards one's neighbours in general, rather than loving one's neighbour. All of this ultimately leads to people trying to control the lives and actions of those who might be a little different from what they consider to be "the norm," and religion only makes conservatism worse

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933 *The Lie: Recipe for Babylon — The Seduction of Religion and Politics* by Dan Sheridan: https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn412.pdf

934 *Concordant Studies in the Book of DANIEL* by A.E. Knoch: https://s3.amazonaws.com/unsearchablerich/booksonwebsite/©CPC+Concordant+Studies+in+the+Book+of+Daniel.pdf

since it leads people to believe their harmful mindsets and actions are sanctioned (or even commanded) by God. So if you've ever wondered why some people remain wary of religious (and even political) conservatives, it should be pretty obvious at this point. All that being said, I should add that I'm not claiming political liberalism will save the world (or even your country). Scripture is quite clear that no human government can ever do that. Still, true liberalism is actually about compassion, empathy, and taking care of those in need (basically, the exact opposite of what conservatism seems to be about, at least as far as I've ever been able to see), and those living under truly liberal governments (and not just liberal governments in name only) tend to have much better lives in general than those living under more conservative governments do, so I'd much rather be in a more liberal part of the world any day of the week (which as a Canadian, thankfully, I am, at least at present).

But regardless, as you've already learned, and as you'll continue to learn as you read the rest of this book, members of the Christian religion are wrong about basically everything anyway, and since the vast majority of the members of the Christian religion are conservative, it stands to reason (at least in my mind) that there's literally no way conservatism can possibly be correct if nearly every single member of this religion holds to it. At the end of the day, however, members of the body of Christ are aliens here on this planet, since our citizenship is in the heavens,[935] so the politics of earth[936] really aren't meant for us to begin with.[937]

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[935] For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: — Philippians 3:20

[936] *God and Country — The Dangers of Contemporary Christian Americanism* by Jon Zens and Cliff Bjork: https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn223.pdf

[937] *Politician? or Paulician?* by Alan Burns: https://www.studyshelf.com/art_burns_politician.pdf

Chapter 7: Going to the chapel

As you almost certainly already know, religious leaders don't only tell us that certain things are forbidden. They also try to convince us that certain things are required. If you do attend the traditional church services of the Christian religion and become a member of a particular local assembly, you'll likely sit through a number of sermons meant to make you feel guilty if you don't give them a percentage of your money on a regular basis, sermons which completely ignore the fact that the tithe was meant solely for followers of the Mosaic law. Members of the body of Christ (whether Jewish or Gentile) are not supposed to follow the law of Moses, and those who do try to follow any of it are under a curse of being obligated to follow all of it, according to Paul[938] (that means no more bacon or shrimp, or clothes with certain mixed fabrics, or doing chores or running errands on Saturday).

[938] For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. — Galatians 3:10

Of course, a truly biblical tithe is actually in the form of food, drink, or livestock, and only goes to the Levitical priests[939] or to the needy[940] (with the exception of the tithe that wasn't given away at all, but was rather consumed by the tithers themselves[941]). Unless your pastors are Levites who perform animal sacrifices, they have no scriptural basis for demanding it from anyone (no, not even Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek helps their case, unless perhaps one's pastor is the king of Salem and they're tithing of the spoils they took from their enemies in battle[942]). There's absolutely nothing in the Bible about the body of Christ having to give a tenth (or any amount) of their money to their religious leaders or organizations.

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[939] At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. — Deuteronomy 14:28-29

[940] When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; — Deuteronomy 26:12

[941] And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, — Deuteronomy 14:24-26

[942] For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. — Hebrews 7:1-4

Still, while tithing isn't a biblical idea for members of the body of Christ, what is recorded as having happened during Paul's time is members of local church assemblies giving financial gifts to those in need.[943] And while this seems to have only been done for the sake of helping members of the Israel of God who were living in Jerusalem[944] (perhaps because they were struggling due to a famine at that time[945]), it is still good for us to help the poor.[946] What believers didn't do at that time, however, was just give money to pastors who simply wanted to live off church members' hard-earned money or keep the power running in a church building.

Those church buildings and pastors themselves, by the way, are also a big problem, since modern church services and the buildings they take place in don't have any biblical justification for existing in the first place. The church known as the body of Christ in Paul's time didn't gather in chapels or temples.

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[943] Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. — 2 Corinthians 8:1-4

[944] Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. — 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

[945] And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. — Acts 11:27-28

[946] Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. — Galatians 2:10

Instead, they met in the homes[947] of members[948] of their local assemblies.[949] And a gathering wasn't a few songs and then a sermon by a pastor. There might have been songs, and even a speech or two, but the early church gatherings apparently included a meal and discussions, not just a bite of bread, a sip of wine (or grape juice), and a sermon.

"The Lord's Supper" for example, appears to have been a part of a real dinner meant to demonstrate the communion, meaning the unity, of the members of the body of Christ[950] – at least as it was partaken of by those in the body of Christ – and so it wasn't just a tiny snack they were partaking of.[951] The idea that this was a ritual or ordinance which believers had to participate in for salvation or otherwise is a concept that arose later among those who apostatized from Paul's teachings by merging his Gospel with Israel's Gospel (thus creating the false "gospel" of the Christian religion), likely because they misunderstood certain things that Jesus was recorded as saying in John 6.[952] Of course, even if Jesus *did* literally mean for His listeners to eat His flesh, what He

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[947] Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. — Romans 16:5

[948] Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. — Colossians 4:15

[949] Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: — Philemon 1:1-2

[950] For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. — 1 Corinthians 11:29

[951] For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. — 1 Corinthians 11:21

[952] Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. — John 6:53-55

said there was only for members of the Israel of God, not the body of Christ, as we learned earlier in this book. As we now know, our salvation is based 100% on what Christ accomplished, and not on any actions we take, so the idea of partaking in rituals related to the bread and wine would contradict everything Paul taught us about salvation. And since our dispensation has no rudiments (meaning elements) or ordinances,[953] because we are complete in Christ[954] (who is the end of all religion for those in His body), returning to the shadows and types of rituals and rites in any way whatsoever would rob us of the full enjoyment of both our possessions and freedom in Christ. (That said, the idea that Jesus was literally referring to eating His flesh when He spoke to Israelites is a misunderstanding of His words, as He made clear by using the *exact same Greek phrase* translated as *"hath everlasting life"* in verse 47 of the same chapter to say they gain it by believing on Him,[955] and as *"hath eternal life"* in verse 54 to say they gain it by "eating His flesh," telling us that these are one and the same action, only stated metaphorically the second time He says it, in order to scare away those who were not among the elect, since they also missed this fact,[956]

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[953] Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, — Colossians 2:20-23

[954] Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: — Colossians 2:8-10

[955] Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. — John 6:47

[956] These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. — John 6:59-66

after which Peter, who *was* among the elect, confirmed that Jesus really was just referring to believing on Him,[957] which for them meant to believe that He's their Messiah and the Son of God.)

Very few members of the body of Christ actually do partake of this meal anymore, though, partly due to the fact that many actually believe – for reasons that I don't have the time to get into here – that it was meant to end around the time of Paul's imprisonment, and partly due to the fact that there are so few members of the body of Christ alive today that it's difficult to actually gather together in person anymore anyway. Still, while practicing the Lord's Supper as a ceremony would not be at all scriptural, choosing to share a meal together in a manner that demonstrates our communion with one another (so long as it isn't a practice that's enforced upon us, and we're actually sharing the meal with everyone in the church rather than selfishly consuming it all before everyone has arrived), meaning that it helps us recognize that we're all members of the same body,[958] seems like the exact opposite of a religious ritual to me, and I see no problem with doing just that when gathering as a local church in one's home (if one is able to find such a church) if the group so desires.

As far as the rest of the "church service" goes, it appears they had actual conversations and dialogues rather than just a monologue by one preacher. This is demonstrated by how, when Paul spoke to the believers at Troas in Acts

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[957] Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. — John 6:67-69

[958] The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. — 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

20:7,[959] the Greek word translated as "preached" in the KJV there is διαλέγομαι/ “dee-al-eg'-om-ahee,” which literally means “to converse with someone,” or “to argue or discuss something with someone,” as is also made clear by the way the KJV translated this word as “disputing” in Acts 19:8.[960] Still, this isn’t to say that the occasional lesson or presentation isn’t helpful, and there *are* plenty of great messages preached at our various conferences, but it wasn’t why the original members of the body of Christ were gathering together in the first century.[961]

Just remember that church buildings and the current structure of the Institutional Church’s weekend “services” didn’t exist until some time later (in fact, the word “church” is translated from the Greek ἐκκλησία/“ek-klay-see'-ah,” which is why it’s sometimes also transliterated as “ecclesia” in certain Bible versions, and which is a word that simply refers to a “group” or “assembly” of people, by the way; it never referred to a building in the Bible). To be fair, though, it’s not the buildings themselves that are the real problem; it’s the “organization” and lack of real, spontaneous, Spirit-led fellowship, not to mention theological and spiritual dialogue between members. Yes, you will almost certainly hear the word “fellowship” in most traditional church meetings, but you also almost as certainly won’t experience much (if any) there, despite how much so many pastors seem to love the word (it’s hard to fellowship with the back of someone’s head while sitting in pews listening to a sermon). But you can technically meet in a home and still be an Institutional Church, or rent a room in a building other than a home and be a relational, open church (as church gatherings that follow the pattern of the first assemblies

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[959] And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. — Acts 20:7

[960] And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. — Acts 19:8

[961] *Problems and Limitations of the Traditional "Sermon" Concept* by Darryl M. Erkel: https://www.truthaccordingtoscripture.com/documents/church-practice/traditional-sermon.php

are sometimes called[962]). As nice as a home gathering is, it's really the openness and fellowship and discussions about Scripture that are the important factors. That said, if a local assembly owns a whole building that they meet in – even if they just call it a chapel or a hall – you should probably stay far away. Perhaps there's a slim possibility of the rare exception existing, but in general, owning a building for worship and sermons seems to be a good litmus test for a local church, demonstrating that they likely know extremely little about biblical theology and what Scripture actually says. In fact, you'd be much better off spiritually (and even physically) in a strip club than in a so-called "house of God"[963] (as many mistakenly call these buildings). At least in a strip club nobody is deceiving you about what Scripture teaches when they try to take a percentage of your money.

Speaking of teaching, the idea of a pastor or priest or any professional preacher who rules over a church isn't in the Bible either. Local churches were overseen by a group of unpaid elders or overseers[964] (or "bishops," depending on your translation), not run by one paid man (that's not to say that evangelists shouldn't be paid to evangelize,[965] but elders and evangelists aren't necessarily always the same people). If you have one person leading (and basically performing the entire ministry in) a local gathering of believers, I would suggest not having much of anything to do with their gatherings if you value your spiritual well-being (and while not all clergy are dangerous or are con-artists –

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[962] *The Open Church* by James Rutz: https://www.amazon.com/Open-Church-James-H-Rutz/dp/0940232502

[963] *Clanging Gong News, Volume 3, Issue 5* by Martin Zender: https://www.martinzender.com/clanging_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue5.pdf

[964] *Is the One-Pastor System Scriptural?* by Mark Frees: https://web.archive.org/web/20210225190103/http://www.cnview.com/churches_today/is_the_one_pastoral_system_scrip.htm

[965] Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. — 1 Corinthians 9:14

many are just confused – I'd suggest you do play it safe and be cautious when interacting with them, just in case, since a lot still are[966]).

Also, just as a quick aside on the topic of spiritual things, the "charismatic" spiritual gifts that some pastors say one should have really aren't meant for those under the dispensation of the grace of God today either (meaning for those in the body of Christ). They might still be active for some people saved in connection with the Gospel of the Circumcision, I should say (and based on certain testimonies I've heard from some people who I suspect are members of the Israel of God – even if they don't necessarily realize it themselves, not being aware of the difference between the two churches and their two respective Gospels – this very well might be the case), since these gifts were basically meant as a sign for Jews anyway. Even those in the body of Christ in the first century were mostly "speaking in tongues" as a sign for unbelieving Jews[967] (who often required a sign to accept Jesus as their Messiah[968]), but for those of saved in connection with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, these gifts appear to have come to an end when Israel as a whole fully rejected the Messiah, quite possibly around the time recorded in Acts 28 (although, for the record, I should state here that I'm a Mid-Acts "Hyperdispensationalist," to use the theological label, and not an Acts 28 "Ultradispensationalist"[969]), as evidenced by the fact that even Paul, whose simple handkerchiefs could heal those who touched

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966 *Black Collar Crime Archives* curated by Bruce Gerencser: https://brucegerencser.net/tag/black-collar-crime

967 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. — 1 Corinthians 14:22

968 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: — 1 Corinthians 1:22

969 *Acts 28 Dispensationalism Revisited: A Response to "Proof of Paul's Progression" (Part One)* by Aaron Welch: https://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2016/03/acts-28-dispensationalism-revisited.html

them at one time,[970] could no longer heal people by the end of his ministry,[971] and even suggested that Timothy take some wine for his stomach and other ailments[972] rather than seek the gift of healing as those saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision were instructed to do.[973] That's not to say God can't or doesn't ever do miracles for those of us in the body of Christ anymore (and it definitely doesn't mean that God doesn't still guide us through His Spirit), just that they're the exception rather than the rule[974] while the reason for the sign gifts has been mostly paused for the time being[975] (so, until the final Gentile meant to enter the body of Christ does so,[976] and God's focus returns to Israel and the Gospel of the Kingdom becomes the preeminent Gospel to be proclaimed on earth once again).

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[970] So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. — Acts 19:12

[971] Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. — 2 Timothy 4:20

[972] Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. — 1 Timothy 5:23

[973] Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. — James 5:13-18

[974] *Where's Your Miracle?* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/intervention/wheres-your-miracle

[975] *Why Spiritual Gifts Stopped* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/spirit/spiritual-gifts/why-spiritual-gifts-stopped

[976] For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. — Romans 11:25

Aside from tithing (and "speaking in tongues," depending on one's denomination), there's one more unbiblical tradition that religious leaders will condemn you for if you don't do it on a regular basis, and that is regularly attending their gatherings, particularly on the day they believe to be the Sabbath.

Almost anybody who has ever suggested they might stop "going to church" for any length of time has been given a guilt trip and has been told that we aren't supposed to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, completely misrepresenting the meaning of the passage in Hebrews 10:25 they use for this purpose[977] (while also ignoring the fact that the book of Hebrews wasn't written to the body of Christ anyway, but was written to those referred to as Hebrews, aka Israelites). The Greek word ἐπισυναγωγή/"ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay'," translated as "assembling" in this verse, is never used to refer to "gathering" in the sense that one would use when speaking of "going to church" when it's used in the Bible. In fact, the only other place in Scripture where ἐπισυναγωγή is used is when Paul was talking about the gathering of the saints to Christ in the air when he wrote his second epistle to the Thessalonians,[978] which tells us that the writer was warning his readers against forsaking the hope of being assembled together to Christ when He returns (also confirmed by the context, as told to us by the words *"as ye see the day approaching"* at the end of the verse), and wasn't speaking of "going to church" at all (although, while the writer of Hebrews and Paul were both speaking about being gathered to Christ around the time of His return, it is important to remember that there is a difference between the time the members of the body of Christ are gathered to Him in the air at the Snatching Away and the time the members of the Israel of God are gathered to

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[977] Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. — Hebrews 10:25

[978] Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, — 2 Thessalonians 2:1

Him in Israel at His Second Coming[979]). That said, gathering with like minded believers, if you can find them, is still beneficial, so please don't think I'm saying that one shouldn't gather with the body if one can find other members nearby, be it on the Sabbath or on any other day.

As far as what day the Sabbath is goes, this is one where various sabbatarian denominations are partially correct, while also being quite wrong about it at the same time. The Sabbath is indeed Saturday, as they claim; nowhere in Scripture does it say that it was changed to Sunday (and Sunday is not the Lord's Day either; the Lord's Day – which anyone who understands how possessive apostrophes work should be aware is also known as the Day of the Lord – is an event that hasn't happened yet,[980] at least not as of the time this book was written). But since those saved under the Gospel of the Uncircumcision are not under the Mosaic law in any way whatsoever, it doesn't really matter to us what day the Sabbath is.[981] In the very beginning of the church, believers didn't pick one specific day to gather together when they did get together for fellowship; they could meet any day of the week (possibly doing so more than one day a week, and very likely often happening later in the afternoon or evening after work rather than first thing in the morning, based on the fact that some were eating all the food and getting drunk before the poor could arrive at their gatherings, presumably due to having to work later into the day than the rich had to[982]). That said, there's nothing technically wrong with meeting on a Sunday. In fact it's often the most convenient day to do so on at this point in

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[979] *Myths and misunderstandings about the Snatching Away* by Drew Costen: https://www.concordantgospel.com/snatching-away

[980] *WHAT IS "THE LORD'S DAY" OF REVELATION 1:10?* by Shawn Brasseaux: https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2016/08/13/lords-day-revelation-1-10

[981] *You Do Not Need Holy Sabbath Days* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/you-do-not-need-holy-sabbath-days

[982] For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. — 1 Corinthians 11:21

history, since the Institutional Church has managed to convince most people that it is the new Sabbath thanks to the influence it's had over our society, but it's really not any different from any other day of the week so don't feel any obligation to treat it like a special day.

And on the topic of esteeming certain days above others, be they new holidays invented by (or pagan holidays that were "Christianized" by) the Institutional Church (such as Lent,[983] such as Easter,[984] and such as Christmas,[985] to name just three) or days that are observed by Jewish followers of the Mosaic law,[986] while it might not always be a great idea, it's not necessarily wrong to celebrate a specific day if it's something one enjoys doing just for the fun of it (or if it's

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[983] *Fat Tuesday and Fleshly Fasting* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/life/fat-tuesday-and-fleshly-fasting

[984] *SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE EASTER? IS IT NOT A PAGAN HOLIDAY?* by Shawn Brasseaux: https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/category/holidays/should-christians-celebrate-easter-holidays

[985] *How Christ Ruined My Christmas* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/holydays/how-christ-ruined-my-christmas

[986] *ARE CHRISTIANS OBLIGATED TO OBSERVE PASSOVER?* by Shawn Brasseaux: https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2014/04/15/christians-observe-passover

something one who is weak in faith still feels they need to do[987]). Just realize that none of these days are required for the body of Christ any more than the Sabbath is (you won't find any commandments, or even exhortations, in Scripture for the body of Christ to celebrate any of these days), and that nobody should be looked down upon for not participating in these "holy days." And, of

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[987] Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:1-23

course, please be aware of the fact that Jesus didn't actually die on a Friday,[988] wasn't resurrected on the day we call Easter on our modern calendars (which should be more obvious than it seems to be to most people, considering the fact that it's on a different day each year), and wasn't born on December 25th either (while it doesn't really matter when He was born, since we aren't told to celebrate His birthday in Scripture, there's good reason to believe it was actually in September or October on our modern calendar[989]). That said, if you're going to celebrate Christmas or Easter, consider doing so mostly from a secular perspective, focusing on the chocolates and eggs and gifts and such. To do otherwise (meaning, to celebrate them as remembrances of Jesus' birth and death) is to know Christ after the flesh, which is something the body of Christ is called to move past.[990]

To sum it all up, we already know that all things are permitted us,[991] so while you certainly can visit church buildings (especially for weddings and the like), and even attend church services and participate in other things that Christians like to do when it comes to church and holidays and such, not all things are a good idea, so please use wisdom if you are going to flirt with such things, because modern Churchianity is not even close to the innocent institution that Christians believe it to be[992] (which should now be very obvious to anyone who has read this whole book from the beginning).

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[988] *WAS JESUS CHRIST REALLY CRUCIFIED ON FRIDAY?* by Shawn Brasseaux: https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/category/denominations-cults-false-teaching/was-jesus-christ-really-crucified-on-friday

[989] *List: Fables Concerning the Nativity of Jesus* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/myths-about-the-nativity-of-jesus

[990] Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. — 2 Corinthians 5:16

[991] All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. — 1 Corinthians 10:23

[992] *Sex with the devil* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF7.49.pdf

Of course, with the rise of Christian Nationalism in certain parts of the world, there is a chance that a Christian theocracy could take control of one or more countries somewhere in the world at some point and mandate church attendance and participation. And if things ever *do* get that bad, as we already learned from the last chapter, it's best to obey the law, so in that case it might be advisable to play along and attend a Christian church as required by the law. Because ours isn't a religion, it's a faith, which means it takes place entirely within, and what happens outside (church attendance and participation) can't affect what you already know to be true, nor will it affect your salvation or how God feels about you (especially considering the fact that He's in charge of everything that happens, at least from an absolute perspective).

Conclusion

I could go on and on about the multitude of ideas that those within the Christian religion are confused about thanks to the flawed assumptions they begin with, and a lack of desire to actually take the time to dig into what the Bible really says, preferring to simply accept what their religious leaders teach instead, but that should be more than enough to explain why I couldn't ever return to Christianity and why I no longer "go to church." Of course, at this point the real question isn't why I couldn't return to the Christian religion, but why you yourself might still consider having anything to do with such an unscriptural, not to mention harmful, institution (and why you would risk your soul within its "sanctuaries").

Nearly everything in this book should really be considered "Scripture 101," and everyone who has read through the Word of God should already be completely familiar with most of what I've covered. However, I suspect that most of what I've written here is brand new for many who are reading it for the first time. Sadly, Satan's false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of righteousness within Churchianity[993] (aka the vain talkers and deceivers[994] who are leading and teaching the followers of the Christian religion today) have hijacked the Bible, convincing billions that Scripture is actually a much more conservative set of documents than it really is (not to mention convincing them

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[993] For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. — 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

[994] For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: — Titus 1:10

that it's a rulebook which every human alive is expected to follow in its entirety), and have also managed to deceive billions into thinking that God is capable of allowing never-ending torture to occur, or is at least willing to leave the majority of humans to remain dead permanently (with both false teachings causing people to reject God altogether thanks to the monstrous false image of God we've been told is the real God). These lies, along with the other errors that seem to keep the majority of humanity (including most Christians) from experiencing "everlasting life," making the Christian religion the most nefarious cult there is (yes, that's what the Christian religion really is). The actual truths of Scripture set people completely free,[995] but the traditional, "orthodox" teachings of Christianity only enslave people through its unscriptural rules, unnecessary shame, unloving discrimination, and threats of unending punishment (although it's important to also keep in mind that, at least from an absolute perspective, it's not ultimately the fault of those people who are leading the Christian religion that this is so[996]).

Unfortunately, this means that some who have made it all the way through this book might not be sure what to believe, or will think it's so foreign to what they were taught growing up that they'll simply reject it out of hand, which could just mean that God hasn't chosen them to be a member of the body of Christ, or at least perhaps hasn't called them yet. However, for those chosen few of you who do dig deeper and then realize that you need to reject organized religion and the teachings and practices of Christianity, you'll be left wondering what you should do instead. Well, first of all, it means that you get to sleep in on Sunday (or Saturday) mornings if you want to (at least as of the time this book was written, since we don't live under a Christian theocracy at present). Beyond that, however, if you can find a nearby church that *actually* believes what

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[995] And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. — John 8:32

[996] *Lies in the mouths of prophets* by Martin Zender: https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF8.3.pdf

Scripture says, it might be a good group to check out. That said, many, if not most, of the members of the body of Christ have to go it fairly alone, or at least without a local church to fellowship with, since it seems there are very few members of the body of Christ in any particular area. I should say that this is not a new problem; the church made up of the body of Christ has been extremely small from almost the beginning, and I'd be surprised to see this change before Jesus comes for His body. It fell into apostasy and people separated from it very early on,[997] some of these divisions and separations from Paul's Gospel and the actual body of Christ becoming the so-called Orthodox and Catholic denominations we know today (a number of the so-called "Early Church Fathers" of these denominations, Polycarp and Irenaeus for example, were from the very province that Paul said "all" had turned away from him in during his imprisonment,[998] which makes any of their teachings, and then any of the later teachings by those who accepted their teachings, suspect to begin with), and it seems to have never regained its original size.

This means that, if you can't find any fellow members to fellowship with where you live, you should just keep studying the Scriptures. You're far better off not participating in any church gathering than you are participating in Churchianity,[999] so I'd suggest leaving the Institutional Church behind

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[997] *The Myth of the First Century Church* by Justin Johnson: https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/history/the-myth-of-the-first-century-church

[998] This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. — 2 Timothy 1:15

[999] *How To Quit Church Without Quitting God* by Martin Zender: https://www.martinzender.com/books/htqc_pb_enlarged.htm

completely if you're able to.[1000] Yes, it's beneficial to fellowship with like-minded believers if you can find them, but you won't find many, if any, of them in the Christian denominations, at least not if you happen to agree with the conclusions I've come to in this book. That said, at least as of the time this particular edition of this book was written, we do have a Discord server (which is a sort of online chat room), and there are also a number of other websites and YouTube channels for English speaking members of of the body of Christ, many of which you can find linked to on the *Concordant Gospel Resources* webpage (along with the link to the Discord server), so please check them out.[1001]

But bottom line, to those of you who are inspired to do so, pull out your Bibles, concordances, and Hebrew and Koine Greek dictionaries, fire up your search engines, and start studying to *"shew thyself approved"* (although, yes, "be diligent," or "endeavour," was another definition of the English word "study" in 1611, and since that's exactly what the Greek word σπουδάζω/"spoo-dad'-zo" that it's translated from in this verse means, it should be clear that this word is actually another False Friend in the KJV; that said, scriptural studying, as we use the word today, is still a good way to show our diligence). And while digging into what Scripture actually means, remember that *"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him,"*[1002] so just because the assumptions Christians make about what the Bible means might sound correct to you at first, investigate carefully as to whether what they're saying actually *is* right, because, as I already mentioned, "*it is the glory of God to conceal a thing:*

[1000] But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. — 2 Timothy 2:20-21

[1001] *Concordant Gospel Resources* curated by Drew Costen: https://www.concordantgospel.com

[1002] He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him. — Proverbs 18:17

but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."[1003] Be warned, however, that if you do come to the conclusions I have about Scripture, you'll likely be called a heretic by the "orthodox" members of Christianity, and even shunned (if not worse[1004]) by many of them. But to that threat I simply repeat the words of A. E. Knoch: "Heretic" is the highest earthly title which can be bestowed at this time.

[1003] It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. — Proverbs 25:2

[1004] Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. — 2 Timothy 3:12