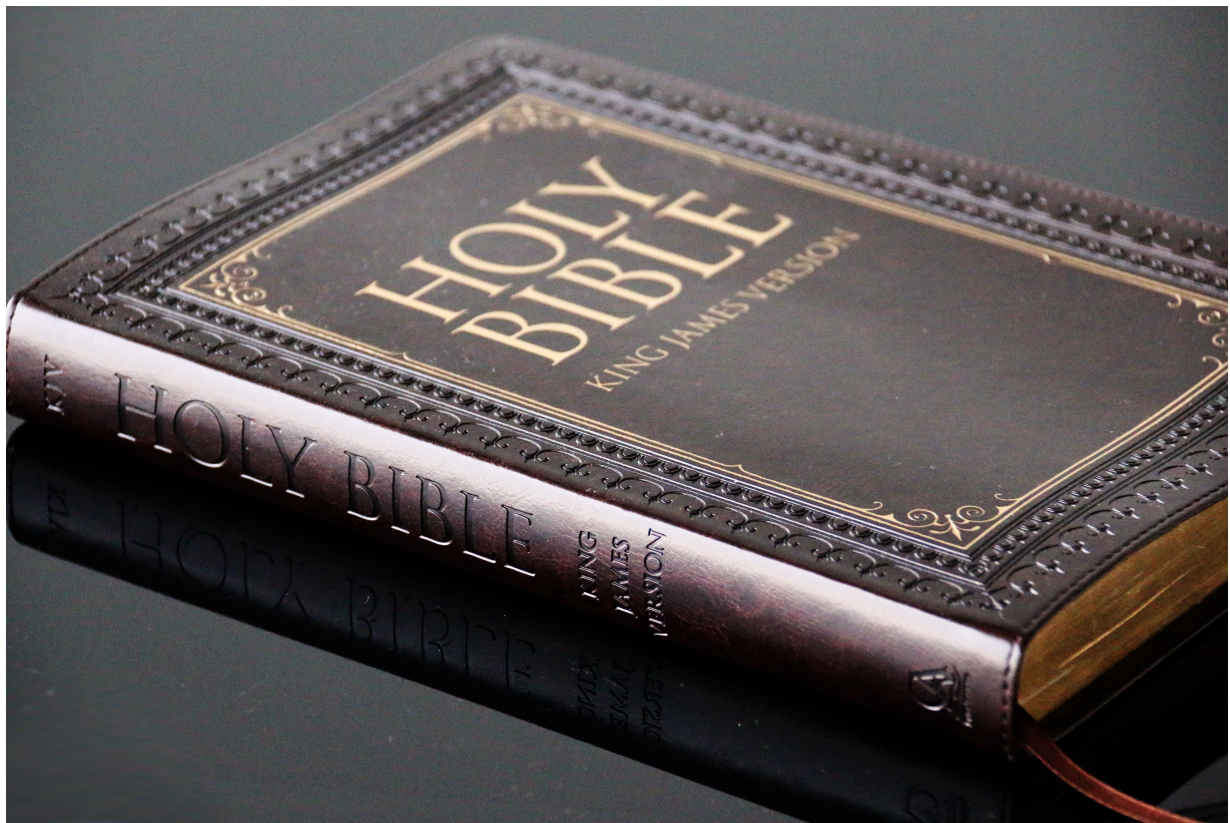


What the Bible really says about heaven, hell, judgement, death, evil, sin, and salvation



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Important! Read this introduction first:

As nearly everyone knows, one of the most popular doctrines within modern Christianity is the idea 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 place called hell (which most believe is also a reference to a place called the lake of fire), or at least by ceasing to exist permanently after ending up there. I myself believed quite strongly in the popular doctrine of never-ending torment for unbelievers as well, earlier in my life. However, a number of years back, I discovered some Christian believers in the popular doctrine arguing with a seemingly strange group of people who believed Scripture doesn't actually teach that at all, but rather that there are multiple different types of salvation referred to in the Bible, and that while nobody will enjoy *every* type of salvation, everyone will experience at least *one* form of salvation because of what Christ accomplished.

Now, I was already quite familiar with the passages of Scripture typically used to defend the doctrine of never-ending punishment, having grown up learning and teaching them myself, so I found it unlikely that those who believed that every human will experience at least one form of salvation could possibly win the arguments, but God gave me the curiosity to want to follow the discussions in order to confirm whether what I believed was correct or not (as is something every Christian should be wanting to do when it comes to their most important doctrines, instead of simply assuming that they and/or their religious leaders can't possibly be wrong about any scriptural interpretations — especially if they don't want to look hypocritical and full of pride when trying to convince *other* people that *they're* wrong about something important *they* believe the Bible teaches), and after watching these people provide not only strong scriptural

reasons for their own soteriological position (soteriology being the theological label for the study of salvation, for those who don't know), but also solid arguments demonstrating why the passages used to defend never-ending punishment were actually talking about something entirely different from what nearly all of us assumed they meant, while also proving that we were completely misunderstanding the meaning of certain key words which we assumed easily proved the popular doctrine, I was forced to change my mind and accept that all humans will indeed eventually experience at least one form of salvation, because those who believed the popular doctrine just didn't seem to be able to counter the interpretations and arguments that those who believed all humanity will experience at least one form of salvation were providing.

To put it really simply, I discovered that the only way to conclude the Bible teaches never-ending punishment is to not only ignore the actual context of the passages most people assume are teaching the doctrine (forgetting the old saying that a text read out of context is just a pretext for a "proof text"), but also to ignore all the passages which would then make the Bible contradict itself if these supposed "proof texts" actually did teach never-ending punishment.

To demonstrate this, I've laid out the scriptural interpretations of certain passages which those who believe all humanity will experience at least one form of salvation used to convince me that their doctrine is indeed biblical, as well as explained why I now believe that every single argument for the idea of never-ending punishment I've ever encountered, be it a scriptural interpretation, a philosophical argument, or even an emotional attempt to defend their doctrine, isn't (and I took the time to research all the arguments for that position I could find before writing this, in case there were any I didn't

already know from my time believing the doctrine, although if I missed any, please let me know), and put them all together in this one large Bible study. Thus far, despite many promises to do so over the years by some of the thousands of people I've provided this study to, nobody has sent me a refutation of the arguments made in it yet (although literally every Bible believer I'm aware of who has actually read the whole study from beginning to end has come to believe what I now believe too). That said, I welcome any and all attempts to refute the conclusions recorded in this Bible study, because if it somehow was the case that we're wrong about this, I would definitely want to know (and I'd think you'd also want to show me where we went wrong).

Of course, based on my past experiences, most believers in the popular doctrine who are reading this are thinking of simply quoting one or more of those "proof texts" from the Bible to whoever sent them this study, rather than taking the time to read the whole thing to learn why someone might interpret the Bible differently than they do. The problem is, since those of us who have come to believe this doctrine already believe and agree with those passages of Scripture (just as we do all passages of Scripture), but simply interpret them differently than they do, if they ever want us to change our minds and believe as they do, they're going to have to show us where we went wrong in our interpretations of Scripture. Because until they do, we have no reason at all to believe we are incorrect in our interpretations of the passages used to defend either soteriological position, especially considering the fact that I haven't been able to locate a single refutation of the particular arguments made in this Bible study by anyone, and I've looked hard for one, because I wanted to make sure we weren't mistaken (although, if you know of one, please point me to a refutation that *does* prove the *specific arguments* in this particular study wrong).

Now, I realize this is a very long study, but it was necessary to make it as long as it is in order to help explain what every single passage in Scripture relevant to this subject actually means (because if I didn't, some people would inevitably turn around and say, "But what about this passage?" in order to ignore everything else in the study), and I know there will be times when it feels to you like I'm going off on a long and irrelevant tangent, but each one of those seeming detours are actually very important because they're there to help provide crucial details one needs to be aware of in order to understand what Scripture really says about salvation. So please don't get impatient and simply skim through it quickly, or just search for passages you're curious to learn our interpretation of. If you read the whole thing carefully, and if God permits it, you'll come to understand what it is we believe about the topic. But if you get impatient and search for passages you want to know our interpretation of, you'll almost certainly miss some of those crucial details required to properly understand what the interpretations we hold to are and why, and what you find probably won't make sense anyway (that's actually the reason this book-length Bible study isn't divided up into chapters, because I was concerned that if it was, people would skip ahead and just read the parts they're curious about, resulting in missing those crucial details).

Likewise, **it's very important that you read all the scriptural references in the footnotes, or else you'll *definitely* misunderstand some of the most important points.** And while most English studies on this topic written by members of the body of Christ these days tend to primarily use more literal translations of Scripture (particularly *Young's Literal Translation* and the *Concordant Literal Version*, but sometimes *Rotherham's Emphasized Bible* and the *Dabhar Translation* — also known as *the Writ* — among others, as well), for various reasons, not the least of which are copyright concerns, but also because I wanted to demonstrate that even the KJV (the *King James Version*,

which is the Bible version that uses the word “hell” more often than any other English translation of Scripture) teaches that all humanity will indeed experience at least one form of salvation, all of my scriptural references in this study are from the KJV (and for the sake of familiarity among those who are still more used to it, I also tended to favour more KJV-type language in this study rather than the terminology from literal Bible versions that English-speaking members of the body of Christ typically use when discussing this topic these days), although if you aren’t a fan of the way the KJV renders certain things, you can look the references up in a translation you prefer, since the scriptural truths revealed in this study can be gleaned from nearly any English version of the Bible. (And while I do get a little into the Hebrew and Koine Greek that Scripture was originally written in, so as to strengthen specific arguments at certain times because I wanted to make sure to reach as many people as possible, for the sake of any KJV-Onlyists who might read this, I also made sure to always demonstrate the truth of the points I’m making using *just* the KJV in those sections as well.)

With all that in mind, please don’t stop partway into the study to try to argue with me, or to complain about a point you disagree with (and I likely *will* test you to confirm you have indeed read the whole thing before responding to what you have to say, if you do). Outside of evangelism, at this point I generally won’t discuss much about soteriology at all with someone who isn’t already familiar with all our interpretations of Scripture as I’ve laid them out here, since I just don’t have the time or energy to waste arguing with people who aren’t serious about understanding why it is that the people they disagree with believe what they do, and experience has taught me that anyone who won’t carefully read this whole study just isn’t serious about learning what our interpretations of Scripture really are, but rather they simply want to tell us we’re wrong (and I see no reason to waste my time on them). One of the

reasons I originally began writing this study in the first place was so I wouldn't have to keep repeating myself over and over again every time this topic came up, and since any thorough discussion of this topic would have to cover all of the points in this study anyway, it saves me time by only having to explain our interpretations of Scripture related to soteriology once — by writing this study — and it also saves you time because you can find our primary arguments and relevant interpretations in one place and don't have to go back-and-forth with me (or whoever sent it to you) to learn what I'd just be repeating from this very study anyway (and in order to convince us that our interpretations of the passages related to this topic are incorrect, you'd first have to know what all of our interpretations of the relevant passages actually are, which would require you to learn everything covered throughout the entire study). Besides, it will take you far less time to read this whole thing than it took me to write it, so go *“study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”* (and if you're planning to write a refutation of this study, please read the whole thing through at least once before beginning, including all the scriptural references in the footnotes throughout it, because otherwise you'll invariably end up wasting your time making arguments that have already been demonstrated to be incorrect farther on in the study, as has happened more than once by people who have tried to argue against some of the points made in earlier editions of this study prematurely). With all that being said, let's get into it.

When considering the meaning of passages in the Bible, 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 (which 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, they'll just assume the inclusion of these words in the text proves that the doctrines must indeed be correct (because those words are also included in the doctrines they hold to), and they won't bother to actually do any study to confirm whether this is truly the case or not. Of course, as the old saying I already quoted 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, which means they aren't aware that the same word or concept doesn't necessarily always mean the same thing every time it's used in Scripture. As an 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 sends the rain,² and we can understand that both of these statements are equally true when we recognize that God is the rain's origin

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

from an absolute perspective (since all is of God³), even while the clouds are rain's origin from a relative perspective.

And even when the perspective principle doesn't come into play, words just don't always mean, or at least refer to, the same thing anyway. Certain words (such as the word "fire," as just one example of many) are used literally in some passages⁴ while also used figuratively in other passages,⁵ and unless you think being saved in whatever way it is you believe that Jesus saves us today — which, according to most Christians, is being saved from suffering never-ending torment in fire — is the exact same sort of salvation that Peter⁶ and the rest of Jesus' disciples experienced⁷ when they were saved from drowning, that it's the same sort of salvation the Israelites experienced when they were saved from Egyptian slavery,⁸ or that women are required to give birth⁹ in order to experience that sort of salvation from inescapable torment in fire, I trust you

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

⁶ 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

⁷ 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

⁸ 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

⁹ Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. — 1 Timothy 2:15

agree that the words “salvation,” “save,” and “saved” are not all referring to the same type of salvation every time they’re used in Scripture, thus demonstrating that the point I mentioned in the introduction about there being multiple different types of salvation referred to in the Bible is correct (although, if you don’t agree, please let me know how those *are* literally all the exact same sort of salvation). Additionally, the way we use words today isn’t always the same way words were used when the Bible was translated into English (for example, the word “ass” today is used literally to refer to a specific part of our human anatomy, and is also used figuratively to refer to someone who is being unpleasant, while the way it was used in the *King James Version* of the Bible¹⁰ was simply referring to a donkey). So just because you see a word in one passage, don’t just automatically assume it *has* to be referring to the exact same thing as it does in another passage, or that you even know what it means to begin with, but instead take the time to consider whether it might actually mean something else from what you assume it’s referring to altogether.

And so, with all that in mind, I’m going to take you through the passages that are most commonly cited when discussing heaven, hell, judgement, death, evil, sin, and salvation, looking closely at what they actually say, in order to determine what the Bible *really* teaches about these things, because most of us have been taught some extremely unscriptural ideas about what Scripture teaches when it comes to *all* of these related topics.

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

¹⁰ And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. — Exodus 4:20

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

These two parallel passages are among the most commonly quoted in order to prove the doctrine of never-ending torment in hell. 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 know that the words “everlasting” and “eternal” are generally figurative terms in these less literal Bible translations which use the words, and that they rarely ever actually mean “never ending,” as I'll demonstrate a little later in this study, although 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 carcasses 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 who are suffering consciously in an ethereal afterlife realm. Why do I say that? Because, in that prophecy, Isaiah wrote about carcasses — meaning corpses, or dead bodies — 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.

Of course, the fact that Jesus was referencing a passage from Isaiah about carcasses also tells us that these passages aren't talking about anyone who is alive or suffering consciously, at least not if we're taking the passage in Isaiah that Jesus was calling back to in that warning at all literally (and I see no reason

not to, especially since there wouldn't be new moons and sabbaths¹¹ in the ethereal afterlife realm that most Christians assume this "hell" is referring to, nor would there be anyone with flesh in an afterlife realm, as Isaiah said there would be in the location this punishment takes place in, as I already mentioned), which means we have no reason to believe that anyone suffers in this particular hell fire at all (since dead bodies don't have functioning nervous systems). And while it's said that there will be "worms" that won't die there, there's little reason to believe these "worms" are a reference to anything other than maggots — especially when you consider the fact that Isaiah wrote "carcasses," not "ghosts" or "souls," as well as the fact that he didn't say any *humans* in that location would never die, which makes sense when you remember that carcasses are *already* quite dead — and maggots are simply larval flies which go through a process known as pupation and grow into adult flies, so they won't die while still in their larval, "worm" form, but will instead grow up and lay eggs so that there are then more "worms" to consume more of the dead bodies in this location (although, since worms do burn up and die when they're set on fire, this would mean that the entire location won't be on fire, but will have portions which will burn corpses alongside portions where corpses that aren't on fire will instead be eaten by worms). So if there actually is a place called "hell" that people end up in as conscious beings after they die, we have no good reason to look at passages which talk about *this* particular "hell" to describe or defend its existence (yes, 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

¹¹ 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. — Isaiah 66:23

translated from the Greek word γέεννα/“gheh'-en-nah,” which is why it’s often referred to today as Gehenna, as it’s also sometimes transliterated, depending on your Bible version). And neither can we look to these passages to prove that anyone will remain in any version of “hell” without end either, since these two passages just don’t claim anything of the sort.

Now, I have heard it claimed that, while the majority of the passage in Isaiah 66 actually *is* referring to what happens on earth (although verse 22 suggests that this might actually take place on the New Earth after the Great White Throne Judgement rather than on our current planet after the Tribulation¹²), 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-fulfilment, 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 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 anyone reading it at the time it was written could possibly have interpreted as meaning it isn’t simply physical carcasses being consumed by actual fire and worms (especially since there hadn’t been anything written in the Hebrew Scriptures — meaning the books of the Bible generally referred to as “the Old Testament” — that

¹² 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

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 study would be pure eisegesis (and, if you read the rest of this study, you'll see strong evidence as to why it couldn't possibly mean what they're assuming it does there anyway, so please do read the whole thing carefully, all the way to the end).

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, perhaps, you're Jewish). 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," as He told His disciples in Matthew 15:24,¹³ 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 righteousness¹⁴ to end up enjoying the type of salvation Jesus taught about during His earthly ministry

¹³ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. — Matthew 15:24

¹⁴ 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

(presuming they also believe in Jesus), as evidenced by Cornelius¹⁵ (as I already mentioned, it should be clear that the words “salvation,” “save,” and “saved” have different meanings in different parts of Scripture, and that there are

¹⁵ 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

various different types of salvation, unless we're simply rescued from drowning in water by Jesus when we get saved), this sort of salvation is still primarily for Jews and other Israelites,¹⁶ 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 gave, 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 will be a judgement of the nations.¹⁷ (That's not to say there won't be any Gentiles in any version of "hell," but the particular warnings Jesus gave regarding any of the "hells" technically weren't for them, nor should the contents of these passages ever be taught to Gentiles as reasons they might end up in any of the "hells," because these passages just aren't relevant to Gentiles.)

And just as the punishment referred to as "hell" there will be "experienced" by certain dead people right here on earth, 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, the fact that Jesus said the salvation He taught 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 Jesus' statement that "*the kingdom of God is within you*" (which they often interpret that way largely because they've misunderstood a handful of other statements by Jesus — not seeming to realize that He generally spoke in ways that kept the masses from fully understanding what He was getting at when they were

¹⁶ Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. — John 4:22

¹⁷ 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

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,¹⁸ 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 everyone¹⁹ — ultimately forcing them to descend into contradiction and even outright absurdity in their interpretations of large portions of Scripture, as I'll demonstrate in parts of this study). This passage really shouldn't be interpreted as meaning the kingdom is literally inside our bodies, though, since Jesus said that specifically to the Pharisees,²⁰ 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 telling His audience that the kingdom had been present within the midst of the people He was speaking to—in the Person of its Messiah and future King—for as long as He remained among them in Israel. In fact, that the term “the kingdom of heaven”²¹ was really just a reference to the kingdom of God being ready to come fully into effect on the earth,²² specifically in Israel, is made quite clear in many places throughout the Bible.

First of all, we know that Jesus' primary message of salvation was about the coming of the kingdom and how to get to live in it when it begins fully for

¹⁸ 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

¹⁹ 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

²⁰ 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

²¹ And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 3:2

²² Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. — Matthew 6:10

certain humans, and we also know that Jesus' messages were simply confirming "*the promises made unto the fathers*" (which were primarily promises for the circumcision, meaning for Israelites), as Paul wrote in Romans 15:8,²³ and since Israelites were promised they'd get to dwell in the land God gave to their fathers²⁴ (meaning the land of Canaan,²⁵ now known as the land of Israel), as prophesied in the book of Ezekiel²⁶ (and really all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures), this tells us that the kingdom will have to be located in Israel. The fact that the kingdom of heaven will have some pretty clear geographical boundaries on the earth²⁷ (and not in heaven, or even "in our hearts," or

²³ 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

²⁴ 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

²⁵ 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

²⁶ 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

²⁷ 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, Sibram, 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

whichever organs in our bodies some people think the kingdom exists inside) when the promises God made to Israel are finally completely fulfilled,²⁸ 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 (we're told that it will contain a new temple with some pretty specific dimensions at that time as

²⁸ 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 uncleanness: 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

well,²⁹ 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), also 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.

We can 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 during the 40-day period between His resurrection and His ascension up to heaven,³⁰ and yet, just before He ascended to heaven, when His disciples asked Him if He'd be bringing the kingdom 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*

²⁹ 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

³⁰ 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

*for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,”*³¹ 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 — 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.

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”*³² in his explanation of the parable of the wheat at the tares³³ (after which, *“the righteous shine forth as the sun in the*

³¹ 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

³² 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

³³ 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

kingdom of their Father”³⁴). 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, 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 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,³⁵ 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,”³⁶ meaning “the end of the age,” as the KJV tends to translate the Greek word αἰών/“ahee-ohn” — literally meaning “eon” or “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 is a reference to hell (although, contrary to what most Christians assume, the mention of “fire” in this passage is actually very figurative, and isn’t talking about hell or the lake of fire at all, but I’ll get into why that is later on in the study). Or, if the kingdom was literally inside our bodies instead, it would

³⁴ 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

³⁵ 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

³⁶ 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

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 world³⁷ — this time actually referring to the 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 Isaac³⁸ dwelling in the land of Israel³⁹ and reigning over the earth⁴⁰ and its people as “kings and priests”⁴¹ (presuming they’re included in Israel’s first resurrection,⁴² or are “overcomers” and survive the Tribulation⁴³) during the thousand-year

³⁷ 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

³⁸ 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

³⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. — Psalm 37:29

⁴⁰ But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. — Psalm 37:11

⁴¹ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. — Revelation 5:10

⁴² 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

⁴³ 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

period of time⁴⁴ that the kingdom of heaven exists in the land of Israel, thus fulfilling a prophecy from the Hebrew Scriptures⁴⁵ (and it seems unlikely that there would be any Israelite priests on the New Earth, since there presumably won't be any need for them to be priests with no physical temple in the New Jerusalem⁴⁶ like the one that will be in Israel when the kingdom finally begins there, as we just discussed, so this salvation seems to specifically be referring to the thousand years that the kingdom exists in Israel, although it's true that, until John wrote the book of Revelation, nobody would have known how long this type of salvation would last, and it's also true that anyone who experiences this type of salvation will get to go on to live in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth, but 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), as well as finally being able to keep the Mosaic law perfectly because the New Covenant will have finally come fully into effect for the house

⁴⁴ 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

⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁶ And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. — Revelation 21:22

of Israel and the house of Judah⁴⁷ (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,⁴⁸ it should be pretty clear that the New Covenant is 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 the time⁴⁹ have been returned from their exiles⁵⁰ back to the land of Israel.⁵¹ Bringing His people into the New Covenant (which was inaugurated by Jesus'

⁴⁷ 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

⁴⁸ 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

⁴⁹ 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

⁵⁰ 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

⁵¹ 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

death,⁵² 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”* when the New Covenant comes fully in effect,⁵³ and that sure isn’t happening anywhere in the world yet, especially not in Israel) is how Jesus will *“save his people from their sins,”* as the angel put it in Matthew 1:21⁵⁴ — 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,⁵⁵ as well as finally being redeemed out from among the nations and Gentiles they’ll have been living among⁵⁶ — because pretty much any reference⁵⁷ to *“His people”* in

⁵² 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

⁵³ 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

⁵⁴ 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

⁵⁵ But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. — Psalm 130:4

⁵⁶ 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

⁵⁷ 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

Scripture⁵⁸ is specifically a reference to faithful Israelites.⁵⁹ And since the promises God gave concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah are without repentance,⁶⁰ we know that these prophecies will indeed be fulfilled for exactly the very people that they were made to (i.e., Israelites), in the exact location He said they'd take place in (i.e., the land of Israel).

And 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 (although that is an equally valid type of salvation for those it applies to), but rather, in addition to having to believe that Jesus is Israel's Messiah (or Christ), as well as the Son of God,⁶¹ 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 sins⁶² (as opposed to the type of repentance Paul wrote about, which simply referred to changing one's mind about who, or rather "capital W" Who, could actually save his readers), as well as making sure to do⁶³ various sorts of good

⁵⁸ 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

⁵⁹ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, — Luke 1:68

⁶⁰ For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. — Romans 11:29

⁶¹ 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

⁶² I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. — Luke 5:32

⁶³ 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

works,⁶⁴ including baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ⁶⁵ (and there are multiple other types of baptisms when it comes to this type of salvation too, including baptism *with*—or *in*—the Holy Spirit, as well as with fire,⁶⁶ among others), following the commandments Jesus taught His disciples during His earthly ministry,⁶⁷ which includes the commandments within the Mosaic law,⁶⁸ doing whatever it takes to be extremely righteous⁶⁹ and to avoid

⁶⁴ 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

⁶⁵ 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

⁶⁶ 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

⁶⁷ 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. — 1 John 2:3-4

⁶⁸ 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

⁶⁹ 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

sinning⁷⁰ (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 sinning⁷¹ (not to mention also forgiving others who sinned against them⁷²). In addition, they're not only required to turn from pride and be extremely humble⁷³ (since, while doing good works is required of Israelites, good works on their own don't save them, and, in addition to faith,⁷⁴ humility and repentance are even more required for Israelites than almost anything else⁷⁵), as well as having to make

⁷⁰ 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

⁷¹ 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

⁷² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. — Matthew 6:12

⁷³ 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

⁷⁴ 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

⁷⁵ 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

sure they're both meek⁷⁶ and poor in spirit,⁷⁷ they also can't be greedy or selfish⁷⁸ (these sorts of warnings⁷⁹ directed towards the rich are given all throughout the Bible,⁸⁰ 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 Jesus⁸¹ 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 Israel), and they do also have to endure to the end⁸² (of one's life or of the period commonly known as the Tribulation, whichever comes first) as well (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).

⁷⁶ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. — Matthew 5:5

⁷⁷ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. — Matthew 5:3

⁷⁸ 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

⁷⁹ 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

⁸⁰ Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. — James 5:1

⁸¹ 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

⁸² 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

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 believe when they're saved,⁸³ 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 itself would be a very difficult work in and of itself), 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 the

⁸³ 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

Mosaic law after sharing the parable was, “Go, and do thou likewise”⁸⁴). 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 study on 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 study), 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*”⁸⁵ 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

⁸⁴ 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

⁸⁵ 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

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 even been taught prior to Paul doing so,⁸⁶ at the time they were preaching to the inhabitants of Israel, not even Jesus' disciples understood that He was going to die,⁸⁷ 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 spent three years preaching basically useless messages, considering this would mean they didn't once explain how to *actually* be saved from said "hell" fire, if the common understanding is correct, and people like Zacchaeus couldn't have actually been saved, despite what Jesus said in Luke 19:8–9⁸⁸ (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 imply⁸⁹ — if it were a belief which was required in order to avoid this particular hell, since not even they believed He was going to

⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁷ 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

⁸⁸ 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

⁸⁹ 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

die or be resurrected until after they saw it all finally happen.⁹⁰ This 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 believing 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 believe that His death was *for our sins*, 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), and 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

⁹⁰ 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

want to continue believing that their doctrinal assumptions are correct). And so, while not everybody will experience this sort of salvation⁹¹ because, 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 members of his house will be saved in this way because of Israelites⁹² and their rise to prominence in the future.⁹³ (And before someone brings him up, no, I don't believe the Ethiopian eunuch was a Gentile, but rather it seems likely that he was actually Jewish himself, of the diaspora, because not only was he visiting Jerusalem to worship⁹⁴ like those a few chapters earlier in Acts 2 were,⁹⁵ 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 deal⁹⁶ is made of Peter's time spent going to minister to Gentiles in the same book⁹⁷ — and he wasn't he referred to as a proselyte the way Nicolas of Antioch was just two

⁹¹ 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

⁹² 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

⁹³ 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

⁹⁴ 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

⁹⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. — Acts 2:5

⁹⁶ 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

⁹⁷ 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 either⁹⁸ — 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;⁹⁹ although, even if the eunuch actually was a Gentile, 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,¹⁰⁰ just as Cornelius later learned from Peter,¹⁰¹ 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 God,¹⁰² lining

⁹⁸ 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

⁹⁹ 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

¹⁰⁰ 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

¹⁰¹ 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

¹⁰² 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

up exactly with what John wrote that a member of the Israel of God had to believe in order to be saved.¹⁰³)

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 quickened¹⁰⁴ (sometimes also referred to as being vivified, depending on your Bible version, which refers to having our mortal bodies be made immortal¹⁰⁵ as happened to Jesus after His resurrection,¹⁰⁶ being "*made alive*"¹⁰⁷ beyond the reach of death,¹⁰⁸ which means being incapable of dying,¹⁰⁹ as well as never being subject to the corruption¹¹⁰ and the humiliation of mortality ever again,¹¹¹ which is something that will only happen to certain people who experience the

¹⁰³ 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

¹⁰⁴ 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

¹⁰⁵ 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

¹⁰⁶ 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

¹⁰⁷ For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

¹⁰⁸ 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

¹⁰⁹ Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. — Hebrews 7:16

¹¹⁰ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. — 1 Corinthians 15:53

¹¹¹ 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

sort of salvation that Jesus taught about during His earthly ministry, at least at the time they're experiencing it — specifically those who are raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just¹¹² — with those who are still living at the time they begin enjoying what the KJV figuratively refers to as “everlasting life,”¹¹³ or “eternal life,”¹¹⁴ 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 angels¹¹⁵ and will no longer marry or reproduce, 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 kingdom,¹¹⁶ as well as later on the New Earth¹¹⁷), and finally being made truly sinless because of that immortality (which is what salvation will eventually be for those who

¹¹² And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. — Luke 14:14

¹¹³ 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

¹¹⁴ 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

¹¹⁵ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. — Matthew 22:30

¹¹⁶ 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

¹¹⁷ 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

experience the type of salvation that Paul primarily wrote about), or to experiencing that particular salvation (immortality and sinlessness) before anyone else, while reigning¹¹⁸ with Christ in the heavens¹¹⁹ (which is what the **special** salvation Paul wrote is “**specially**” for those that believe is,¹²⁰ at least in part, and which can only be experienced by someone who has been quickened, as I’ll explain a little later), since the citizenship of those he wrote to is in heaven¹²¹ rather than in the land of Israel where the citizenship of the people Jesus preached to is located. Those of us who get to enjoy this special sort of salvation (*also* referred to figuratively as “everlasting life,”¹²² or as “eternal life,”¹²³ in the KJV) are the members of the church that Paul (and only Paul) referred to as the body of Christ,¹²⁴ which consists *only* of those who truly understand

¹¹⁸ 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

¹¹⁹ 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

¹²⁰ 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

¹²¹ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: — Philippians 3:20

¹²² 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

¹²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:23

¹²⁴ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

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 this all seems confusing, please read on, because it will become more clear as you do). This obviously isn't something that anyone to whom Jesus and His disciples preached during His earthly ministry could have believed because, as we just discussed, at the time they were preaching to the inhabitants of Israel, not even they 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 church Jesus began¹²⁵ — one which was just as special as the church¹²⁶ that Paul was the first member of¹²⁷ — and their church was known as the Israel of God¹²⁸).

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 apart from any works of any kind, as already noted.¹²⁹ In fact, even if we don't do any works at

¹²⁵ 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

¹²⁶ 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

¹²⁷ 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

¹²⁸ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. — Galatians 6:16

¹²⁹ 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

all, we can still be justified,¹³⁰ 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,¹³¹ but he would have eventually stopped completely as he progressed in receiving revelations of truth from the Lord,¹³² particularly after learning the truth that there's only *one* sort of immersion, or baptism,¹³³ for us, which is immersion *by* the Holy Spirit, *into* the body of Christ,¹³⁴ including into what He experienced in His body, such as His death¹³⁵ (and he was careful to point out that Christ *didn't* send him to baptize at all,¹³⁶ 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

¹³⁰ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. — Romans 4:5

¹³¹ 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

¹³² It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. — 2 Corinthians 12:1

¹³³ 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

¹³⁴ 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

¹³⁵ 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

¹³⁶ 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

someone wet—and so this baptism, or immersion, 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 one *type* of baptism for us—one which doesn’t involve water at all; and while not everyone uses that interpretation, because others will instead claim that 1 Corinthians 12:13 should actually be translated as saying “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” *were* the best translation—and the assumption that it is a better translation is based on nothing more than their dislike of the idea that water baptism might not be meant for believers in the body of Christ today, and is not a translation that most English Bible versions I’ve read agree with, I should add—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,¹³⁷ it isn’t required for salvation for us the way it is for Israel¹³⁸ since we aren’t

¹³⁷ And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

¹³⁸ 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

under the Mosaic law¹³⁹ 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,¹⁴⁰ but we aren't required to do so in order to be saved, and since Paul told us that "*we are his workmanship*" in the verse where he said that, 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 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, 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 yet a light to the Gentiles¹⁴¹ as they one day will need to be for Gentiles to be led to salvation,¹⁴² which will be at the time when the law shall go forth of Zion¹⁴³ (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).

¹³⁹ 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

¹⁴⁰ 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

¹⁴¹ 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

¹⁴² 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

¹⁴³ 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

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 Christ¹⁴⁴ with the people called the Israel of God¹⁴⁵ (the words "and upon" in Galatians 6:16 mean there are two separate groups of people being wished peace and mercy by Paul in that verse; there's no reason to think that Paul was actually saying, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and, oh yeah, these people are also called the Israel of God, by the way," especially in light of everything else he'd just finished teaching in that epistle, not to mention everything we've just gone over about the kingdom of heaven and the different types of salvation, which means there are two separate groups being written about there: the first group being "as many as walk according to this rule," referring to members of the body of Christ, and the second group being those known as "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.

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 everyone needs to build a literal ark out of literal gopher wood,¹⁴⁶ to get naked when they preach,¹⁴⁷ or needs to own a

¹⁴⁴ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

¹⁴⁵ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. — Galatians 6:16

¹⁴⁶ 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

¹⁴⁷ 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

sword,¹⁴⁸ it should be pretty obvious that there are things in Scripture which 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 (one for the body of Christ and one for the Israel of God). And if a declaration regarding one of those particular types of salvation could be referred to as a proclamation of "glad tidings,"¹⁴⁹ 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 you believe Christ 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 good news, perhaps even giving each of these proclamations different titles? Well, it actually does just that — and even tells us the names of these respective proclamations — in Galatians 2:7,¹⁵⁰ where we're told that they're called the Gospel of the Circumcision (also known as the Gospel of the Kingdom,¹⁵¹ which is what the

¹⁴⁸ 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

¹⁴⁹ 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

¹⁵⁰ 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

¹⁵¹ And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. — Matthew 9:35

proclamation of good news that “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*”¹⁵² which Jesus and His disciples preached while He walked the earth is called) and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision (also known as the Gospel of the Grace of God,¹⁵³ as well as Paul’s Gospel, since it was referred to by him as “*my Gospel*”¹⁵⁴ — and 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*,” not “*my Gospel*” — which is the good news that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day¹⁵⁵).

Unfortunately, since most Christians mistakenly assume that there’s really only one kind of salvation, and also that there’s only one type of proclamation of good news about salvation anywhere in the Bible as well, they’ll insist that because the next two verses in Galatians explain how both God and the pillars of the circumcision church sent Paul to the Gentiles while Peter and the rest

¹⁵² From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 4:17

¹⁵³ 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

¹⁵⁴ 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

¹⁵⁵ 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

focused on the Jews,¹⁵⁶ 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, causing them to then read that assumption into verse 7, 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 different proclamations of good news with the titles of “the Gospel *to* the Circumcision” and “the Gospel *to* the Uncircumcision,” if that’s how you prefer 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 news which is good 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.

That there isn’t only one type of pronouncement of news which is good in the Bible should really 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 from any mortal humans, but rather learned it directly from the glorified Jesus

¹⁵⁶ (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

Christ.¹⁵⁷ 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 from Christ couldn't have been the same Gospel he was persecuting the Jewish church for preaching since 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,¹⁵⁸ yet he immediately preached the Gospel that Peter and the rest of the apostles were preaching after being healed by Ananias,¹⁵⁹ so the obvious 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 in Damascus, as well as in

¹⁵⁷ 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

¹⁵⁸ 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

¹⁵⁹ 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

Jerusalem three years later, where the apostles and Jesus' brother James became acquainted with him for a couple weeks,¹⁶⁰ 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 that time as well¹⁶¹ (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 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?¹⁶² Peter and the rest of the apostles (as well as James) would have already learned what the Gospel he preached was from his previous visit if it was the *same* Gospel, so what was the Gospel he preached among the

¹⁶⁰ 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

¹⁶¹ 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

¹⁶² 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

Gentiles that he had to explain to them, exactly, if they already knew the Gospel he preached?

But all that aside, the definition of the word “Gospel” 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” can’t be said to be the exact same news as “that thing you’ve been anticipating is nearby,” 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 close by). 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 that Paul preached is indeed what Jesus' disciples were preaching when they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom during Jesus' earthly ministry.

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 preached another Gospel will be accursed.¹⁶³ Unfortunately, those people 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, 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 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

¹⁶³ 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

says “*another gospel which is not another*” in the verses before his warning.¹⁶⁴ 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 be both another Gospel and not another Gospel at the same time, at least not if we’re reading that 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,” 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.

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;¹⁶⁵ he was only saying 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 apostles could preach their particular Gospel as something to be followed to anyone that they wanted to without fear, **as long as it wasn’t**

¹⁶⁴ 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

¹⁶⁵ 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

to 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 “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 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” actually 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 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,” but that might be the most nonsensical one of them all. 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 other passages, since we already know that the same word can have different meanings in different passages, but it should be clear by this point that Paul wasn't using ἕτερος as another word with the same meaning as ἄλλος in this passage, but that he was instead using the two words with different definitions, 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 drill in my point.) And even if we just look at the way the KJV renders the verse, that translation is obviously saying the same thing (just very poetically, since a literal interpretation on its own would be contradictory, as I already mentioned), so it has to be interpreted as meaning: "another" 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,¹⁶⁶ 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, literally meaning to "preach this good

¹⁶⁶ 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

news” in that passage. So simply put, there’s no way Paul could have been saying there’s only one message allowed to be called words of good news/a Gospel/glad tidings 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, 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 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 this passage can’t be used to refute the idea, since the wording does allow for another/ἄλλος legitimate Gospel to exist, even if they don’t believe it’s specifically saying there is one.

And yet, even though the idea of including all proclamations called good news/Gospels/glad tidings 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 it 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 (meaning one 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) 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). 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. 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, and the second one being about the *work* of Jesus), 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 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 — 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, proclamation of news which is good into *two* separate sets of news which is good, proclaimed at *two* different periods of time, about *two* different things needing to be believed (and perhaps performed) in order to be said one is saved: one preached prior to Paul (or prior to Christ's death, 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, we have no good basis for assuming it was) and one that Paul first taught, 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 of news which is good that were preached by two different sets of people at two different periods of times (which we've already determined is

the case, one being about Jesus' identity and the other being about His work on the cross), since the phrase "news which is good" is literally the definition of the word "gospel," then 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 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 say there is only one Gospel, progressively revealed over time, it still ultimately results in two Gospels once all the facts about how it has to be divided into two separate messages preached in two separate timeframes are taken into consideration. And with all that being said, there's now 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 parts, but for the sake of clarity, I'm still going to go over them quickly.

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.¹⁶⁷ However, that's only the case within the body of Christ, because one's nationality is irrelevant

¹⁶⁷ 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

for those in Christ's body,¹⁶⁸ 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 important¹⁶⁹ — based on everything we've now covered, it should be clear that Paul was reducing the scope of membership within the Israel of God in Romans 2:28–29¹⁷⁰ 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.

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

¹⁶⁸ 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

¹⁶⁹ 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

¹⁷⁰ 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

same book¹⁷¹ (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,"¹⁷² so to speak (meaning that specific part of his messages wasn't recorded in Acts, unless you think "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*"¹⁷³ 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), whereas the sermons of Peter recorded in Acts are a lot more comprehensive, and in fact contained his explanation of exactly how his listeners could get saved as far as the Gospel he preached is concerned (and while these sermons telling his audience members how they could be saved often did include the fact that Jesus Christ died, exactly *zero* of these sermons contained the information that His death was *for our sins*, or that it was necessary to believe that this is *why* He died in order to be saved). 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 Paul¹⁷⁴) 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.

¹⁷¹ 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

¹⁷² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. — Acts 16:32

¹⁷³ 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

¹⁷⁴ The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. — 2 Thessalonians 3:17

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 1:18-19¹⁷⁵ and in 1 Peter 2:24¹⁷⁶) 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 concerned¹⁷⁷). And while what Peter wrote in his 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, specifically those of the diaspora¹⁷⁸), 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,¹⁷⁹ and also to note that we already know what the *actual* message called "the good news" which Peter taught his audience could be saved by following 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

¹⁷⁵ 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

¹⁷⁶ 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

¹⁷⁷ 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

¹⁷⁸ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, — 1 Peter 1:1

¹⁷⁹ 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

going to die, as we've already discussed. (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,”*¹⁸⁰ just as John was writing specifically to Jewish “brethren” rather than to Gentiles,¹⁸¹ and Jude, who technically didn’t specify an audience, but seemed to also be writing to people who were familiar with Israel’s history,¹⁸² 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 believing members of the Israel of God and not just to those among the diaspora.) So yes, Peter did eventually realize the connection between Christ’s

¹⁸⁰ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. — James 1:1

¹⁸¹ 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

¹⁸² 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

death and Isaiah 53,¹⁸³ but not until much later, 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.¹⁸⁴ 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 sins¹⁸⁵ (presuming they obeyed the Gospel of the Circumcision, which includes

¹⁸³ 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

¹⁸⁴ 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

¹⁸⁵ 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

keeping the commandments Jesus gave while walking the earth¹⁸⁶), 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, and the parts they *did* eventually understand likely not being understood by them until *after* Paul explained it to them). 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 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 race is finished (the Passover lambs left Israel intact while the cross wiped out everything and everyone in its path¹⁸⁷). The 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

¹⁸⁶ 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

¹⁸⁷ 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

explanations.¹⁸⁸ 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,¹⁸⁹ and only in his Gospel is the entire race made new. Yes, the Hebrew Scriptures promised a new birth for Israel, 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,¹⁹⁰ one which comes into the lives of everyone who believes Paul’s Gospel today,¹⁹¹ and which will eventually come into the lives of every human who will ever have lived (as will be demonstrated later in this study). This new creation eliminates fleshly distinctions such as Gentile and Israelite,¹⁹² but Peter wasn’t able to teach this because he has to remain an Israelite in the kingdom, seeing as Jesus promised him that he would sit on one of twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel¹⁹³ (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

¹⁸⁸ For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

¹⁸⁹ 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

¹⁹⁰ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. — Galatians 6:15

¹⁹¹ 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

¹⁹² 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

¹⁹³ 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

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*,"¹⁹⁴ 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 at all the way they might think it does either.

On a somewhat related note, certain Christians also argue that because Paul wrote to believers in Galatia,¹⁹⁵ and because Peter also wrote to believers in Galatia,¹⁹⁶ 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 labeled as being to the Ephesians in our Bibles, and because John was also

¹⁹⁴ 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

¹⁹⁵ 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

¹⁹⁶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, — 1 Peter 1:1

given a prophecy for a local church in Ephesus,¹⁹⁷ 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 in the Bible. In addition, they sometimes also argue that because Paul wrote specifically to the same audience Peter wrote to at least once,¹⁹⁸ 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 in the last paragraph). But again, that doesn't mean he didn't *also* teach *different* things to those under *his* Gospel. Besides, as we've also already covered, we know from 1 Peter 1:1 exactly who Peter's audience was, and it didn't include Gentiles, since it was specifically addressed to “the strangers,” and the word “stranger” — translated from the Greek 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

¹⁹⁷ 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

¹⁹⁸ 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

writing to Jews of the dispersion (or diaspora), and not to the Gentiles Paul was writing to in his epistle to the Galatians at all.

Meanwhile, other people have also argued that Paul wasn't teaching how to get saved in his epistles, since he was writing to people who were already believers, and it's quite true that his written audience *was* primarily made up of believers. However, this is irrelevant because he also said in the passage where he explained what his specific Gospel consists of that it was A) the Gospel he preached unto them,¹⁹⁹ and also B) the Gospel by which they are saved,²⁰⁰ so we know exactly what he preached unto them as how they're saved, which means that argument doesn't actually help the way the sceptics might think it does. 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), but was instead originally written to discuss bodily resurrection (since some of the members of the church in Corinth had stopped believing in their own physical resurrection, thinking the term "resurrection" was instead a "spiritual truth" rather than an actual future event), 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 this fact about the point of this chapter is actually important to keep in mind for when someone attempts to claim that Peter and the others were preaching the same Gospel as Paul based on verse 11, when Paul wrote, "*Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*" If

¹⁹⁹ 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

²⁰⁰ 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

Paul's Gospel was the point of that chapter, that would be a valid claim, but if you read this verse in its context with the rest of the chapter, it becomes clear that Paul was simply saying that both he and the others all saw the risen Christ because He was indeed resurrected from among the dead,²⁰¹ not that they both preached the same Gospel.

And finally, no, the body of Christ has not been "grafted into Israel," as many misunderstand Romans 11:16-25 to be saying. 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 natural olive branches in this passage, not the whole tree.²⁰² Remember, not all of the natural olive branches are pruned out of the tree in that figurative explanation of present and future events. Instead, some of the natural olive branches remained attached to the

²⁰¹ 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. — 1 Corinthians 15:5-11

²⁰² 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 11:16-25

tree (with these particular branches referring to Israelites who believed the Gospel of the Kingdom) while the wild olive branch was grafted into the tree *next* to them rather than replacing them (this should also be made obvious by the fact that branches don't actually change species when grafted into a tree of a different kind). And as Paul made clear, Israel is not cast away permanently,²⁰³ but is only “cast away” temporarily²⁰⁴ (the phrase “*cast away*” in Romans 11:1 was translated from a different Greek word in the KJV — ἀποθέω/“ap-o-theh'-om-ah-ee” — than the phrase “*casting away*” in Romans 11:15 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 “casting away” of verse 15 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), until the full complement of the nations may be entering the body of Christ,²⁰⁵ at which point the nation of Israel will become the focus of God's purposes once again. If this seems confusing, it 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 (although pretty much only the KJV reveals this fact

²⁰³ 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. — Romans 11:1

²⁰⁴ 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? — Romans 11:15

²⁰⁵ 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. 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 11:25-26

to English readers, by using the Second Person Singular “thou” in verses 17²⁰⁶ and 24²⁰⁷ of Romans 11, rather than the more catch-all “you” that most English Bible translations used to render the Greek word σύ/“soo” in those verses) — as opposed to the *plural* natural branches — telling us that it 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 effect²⁰⁸ rather than simply referring to those Gentiles who join the body of Christ. And since the *whole* wild branch will eventually be removed from the tree so that the temporarily-removed natural branches can be grafted back “into their own olive tree,” every Gentile member of the body of Christ would lose their salvation if that’s what being grafted into and pruned from the tree was referring to. 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, the wild olive branch being temporarily grafted into the tree simply refers to the fact that Gentiles currently have access to God (via justification by faith²⁰⁹) without having to go through Israel as they’ll have to do once again in the future. Which means they 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 (in which no national distinction is made, contrary to the national distinction this

²⁰⁶ 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

²⁰⁷ 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? — Romans 11:24

²⁰⁸ If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: — Ephesians 3:2

²⁰⁹ 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

tree analogy uses), at least until the full complement of the nations has entered, at which point the dispensation of the grace of God will come to an end, and the only way to God again (at least for 1,000 years) will be to go through Israel.

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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 28, Nehemiah 9:13–14, Psalm 147:19–20, Romans 2:14–15, Romans 9:3–5, Ephesians 2:12).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Spoken of by the prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21–25).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: A secret until Paul (Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:8–10).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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 body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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 body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Proclaimed among Israelites (James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Proclaimed among the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:8).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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) be referred to as the bride of the lamb (John 3:29, Revelation 21:9), and are also referred to as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: The saints of this church are referred to as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 5:30).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Racial distinctions important (Matthew 15:26, Matthew 19:28, Revelation 21:12, Zechariah 8:23).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Racial distinctions irrelevant (1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Believers known *from* the foundation of the world (Revelation 17:8).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Believers known *before* the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Believers called first, then chosen (Matthew 22:14).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Believers chosen first, then called (Romans 8:30).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Water baptism required (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Water baptism not required (1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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: Must be born again in order to become saved (John 3:3).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Those who are saved become an entirely new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), proleptically — and perhaps spiritually — for now, and literally at our quickening.

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must have circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16, Acts 7:51, Romans 2:29).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must have works, since faith without works is dead for them (James 2:20).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: *Must* keep His commandments, and live as Jesus did (1 John 2:3–6).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: *Must* forgive others or God will *not* forgive them (Matthew 6:15).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must not eat things sacrificed to idols (Revelation 2:14, 20).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Are permitted to eat things sacrificed to idols as long as conscience permits it (Romans 14:14, 1 Corinthians 8:4).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must be an overcomer to avoid second death (Revelation 2:11).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Saved from second death by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Hoping for grace, which will be brought to them when Jesus returns to the earth (1 Peter 1:13).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Already standing in grace (Romans 5:2).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must be waking and watching, not sleeping (Matthew 25:1–13, Luke 12:37, Hebrews 9:28).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Whether waking or sleeping (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Must be wise, not foolish, or will not be chosen (Matthew 25:1–13).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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: Can be put to shame at His presence if not careful (1 John 2:28).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Will go through day of wrath (Revelation 6:1–17).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Not appointed to wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Will meet Christ on earth (Acts 1:11–12, Zechariah 14:4).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Will meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: The resurrection of the just, also known as Israel’s “first resurrection” (Luke 14:14, Revelation 20:1–6), occurs after Christ’s second coming to the earth, 75 days *after* His feet touch down 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 body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Will reign on the earth as a kingdom of priests over the nations (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:5–9, Revelation 2:26–27, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 20:6, Isaiah 61:6).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Will reign in the heavens (Ephesians 2:6–7, 2 Timothy 2:12).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Will display God's wisdom among the principalities and powers in the heavens (Ephesians 3:10–11).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Our citizenship is in the heavens (Philippians 3:20).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Mortal “flesh and blood” is not able to inherit in the part of the kingdom of God that is in the heavens (1 Corinthians 15:50–54).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: The 12 apostles will judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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 Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Their Gospel is also called the Gospel of the Kingdom, and it was the good news that the kingdom of God was near, meaning ready to begin if Israel met the required conditions (Mark 1:14–15), which they did not, so its fully coming into effect on earth — specifically in Israel — has been pushed back while the Gentiles are temporarily saved apart from Israel (Acts 28:17–28, Romans 11).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Our Gospel was also called the Gospel of the Grace of God, as well as referred to as “my Gospel” by Paul, which is why we now call it Paul’s Gospel, and it’s simply the Good News that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day (Acts 20:24, Romans 2:16, Romans 16:25, 2 Timothy 2:8, 1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: The cross was only bad news to those hearing the Gospel of the Kingdom — 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 body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: The cross is only good news for those hearing Paul’s Gospel, and is even something to glory in because it is how we are saved (1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, Galatians 6:14).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: 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).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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: 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 salvation of Paul’s Gospel.

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: 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).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Abraham being justified by works given as an example (James 2:21–23).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Abraham being justified by faith rather than by works given as an example (Romans 4:2–3).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Gentiles will be blessed by Israel's rise in the future (Isaiah 49:6, Acts 3:25).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: Gentiles are currently blessed by Israel's fall (Romans 11:11).

The Israel of God/The Gospel of the Circumcision: Salvation will come in the future for them, when the kingdom of God comes fully to the earth, and when Israel's sins are forgiven (1 Peter 1:5, Romans 11:25–27).

The body of Christ/The Gospel of the Uncircumcision: We have already been saved now, and are, in fact, already complete in Christ (Ephesians 1:13, Colossians 2:10).

Now these aren't just minor variations in terminology; these are 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 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 saved²¹⁰ 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,²¹¹ and when Gentiles will in fact only come to know God by following the Jews²¹²), we have a greater "commission" and "one baptism" (into the body of Christ), and are called to

²¹⁰ 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

²¹¹ 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

²¹² 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 8:23

be stewards of the mysteries that were kept secret since the world began just as Paul was,²¹³ 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.

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 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 in Scripture.

Still, if somebody wants to somehow insist that there really is only one Gospel taught in Scripture after reading everything I wrote above, 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

²¹³ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. — 1 Corinthians 4:1

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 (specifically 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) 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 tell me their answers to the various questions I've asked throughout this section of the study so far, 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 study) **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 actually *is* the exact same thing Paul said the people of the nations that he declared the Gospel unto had to do (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 study (a few have sent

attempts at refuting a few points, but they all ignored the majority of my arguments), 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 heard and learned the truth and would *not* have Him crucified after all²¹⁴ (and, in fact, would have done what they could to keep Him from dying, since they don't want humans being made immortal and sinless). 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. 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, that's likely a large

²¹⁴ 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

part of why God had a chosen people in the first place: basically, God plays the long game).

And so, with all that being said, what was Jesus warning about in those passages we began this study with? Well, He was warning His Jewish audience about the possibility of missing out on enjoying something figuratively referred to in the KJV as “everlasting life” (and yes, I will prove later on in this study that this is indeed a figurative translation in the KJV and other less literal Bible versions) 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 Hinnom²¹⁵ (more often referred to today as Gehenna, as already mentioned), to be burned up and 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

²¹⁵ 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

alive at the time of the Tribulation,²¹⁶ 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 salvation would be put on

²¹⁶ 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

hold prior to Paul revealing it was being removed from them,²¹⁷ at least 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 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;²¹⁸ 2

²¹⁷ And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. — Acts 28:17-28

²¹⁸ 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

Chronicles 34:25;²¹⁹ and Isaiah 1:31,²²⁰ 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 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 (if you aren't familiar with what I'm referring to there and are curious, you will have to look that one up for yourself, since I don't have the time to go into detail on it here), but it would have then also found a more literal 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 certain Christians. And if that is the case, it means 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 is still something to be concerned about, of course, even if this is what Jesus meant in His warnings, and also presuming there isn't a double fulfillment for certain people after the Tribulation ends as far as that warning goes (which is what I believe would actually have to be the case if that is the case, since it's easy to see that all the prophecies related to the Day of the Lord were *not* fulfilled around AD 70 as some claim, although that's too big a tangent for this study so I'll leave it at that). And for those who aren't familiar with the concept, *many* prophecies in Scripture had multiple fulfillments, with the most famous

²¹⁹ 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

²²⁰ 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

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 likely a virgin at the time the prophecy was given²²¹ — although obviously no longer a virgin by the time she was pregnant — gave birth to her prophesied son, while the second fulfillment would have obviously been Mary giving birth to Jesus,²²² and the prophecies related to “hell,” along with other “end times” prophecies, could very well have multiple fulfillments as well (and definitely do if they *did* have an earlier fulfillment back in AD 70, considering the fact that the nation of Israel is not currently ruling the world from the land of Israel as Scripture says they will).

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 (which is a word with uncertain etymology,

²²¹ 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

²²² 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

but it basically just means “hole,” or “a place where something is hidden or unseen,” to put it really simply, and has absolutely no inherent meaning of “inescapable torture chamber” at all, even though that’s how it’s come to be used by most people today), but rather literally heard Him say the words “the Valley of Hinnom” in their own language (translated as “hell” in many of the less literal English Bible versions at least partly because a valley is a long depression, or elongated, uncovered “hole” in the ground, although perhaps also partly because the translators had their own theological assumptions regarding soteriology, likely leading them to use that particular English word, which is why those who don’t read the more literal Bible translations, or at least who don’t consult their concordances, might not be aware of this fact, making it extremely important for those who only use the KJV or other less literal Bible translations to dig deeper into the meaning of words — studying to shew themselves approved²²³ — if they want to actually understand the meaning of Scripture), specifically the Greek word γέεννα, as already mentioned (which itself is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase גֵּיאַן בֶּן־הִנּוֹם/“gah'-ee bane hin-nome” — literally meaning “the Valley of the Son of Hinnom” in English — or, more precisely, of גֵּיאַן־הִנּוֹם/“gah'-ee hin-nome” — literally meaning “the Valley of Hinnom” in English — which is what the phrase had been shorted 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 language), and they would have — or at least should have — known this is referring to a place that Jeremiah said would be a place of future judgement²²⁴ (although at the time I wrote this study, the “hell” Jesus primarily spoke about is a pleasant place you could enjoy a picnic in), and those who

²²³ 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

²²⁴ 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

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 all means that the English word "hell" in the KJV and other less literal Bible versions is strictly a figurative translation in passages talking about γέεννα, since it only contains the first half of γέεννα in it (the "hole," or "valley," half), and is missing the second half (the "of Hinnom" half).

I should also say, some people claim that Jews refer to the Valley of Hinnom 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 this particular "hell" 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 using this argument. First, whether or not the Valley of Hinnom was actually sometimes used figuratively to refer to a negative afterlife realm during Jesus' time on earth (and I'm not familiar with any proof that it actually was used in this manner at that 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 anyone should be basing their theology on,²²⁵ nor does it seem like something that the One who corrected people for teaching unbiblical theological concepts as truth by

²²⁵ 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

saying things like “have ye not read...?”²²⁶ and “it is written...”²²⁷ would do. And secondly, we already know that the only humans who end up spending time in this particular “hell” will be carcasses, 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, since 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,²²⁸ if the kingdom had fully begun on earth while they were still alive, would have been a grave threat for them indeed (the fact that Jesus said many will be coming from the east and the west to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven 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,²²⁹ so the “outer darkness” will obviously have to be on earth too). And the “outer darkness” can’t be referring

²²⁶ 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

²²⁷ 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

²²⁸ 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

²²⁹ 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

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), 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 sceptical, 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 with a statement that *"every one shall be salted with fire,"*²³⁰ 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 which could theoretically be interpreted as referencing individuals being burned up don't say they'll be suffering, but rather that there won't be any part of them left after the fiery judgement is complete,²³¹ 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

²³⁰ For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. — Mark 9:49

²³¹ 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

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 *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, 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.*" 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 *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 (remember, this takes place after they've been resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgement, and they won't be resurrected with immortal bodies at that time since immortality for humans is always connected with salvation in

Scripture²³²), 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. 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,²³³ 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 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 bound²³⁴ in another version of "hell"²³⁵ translated from the Greek ταρταρόω/"tar-tar-o'-o"

²³² 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

²³³ 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

²³⁴ 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

²³⁵ 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

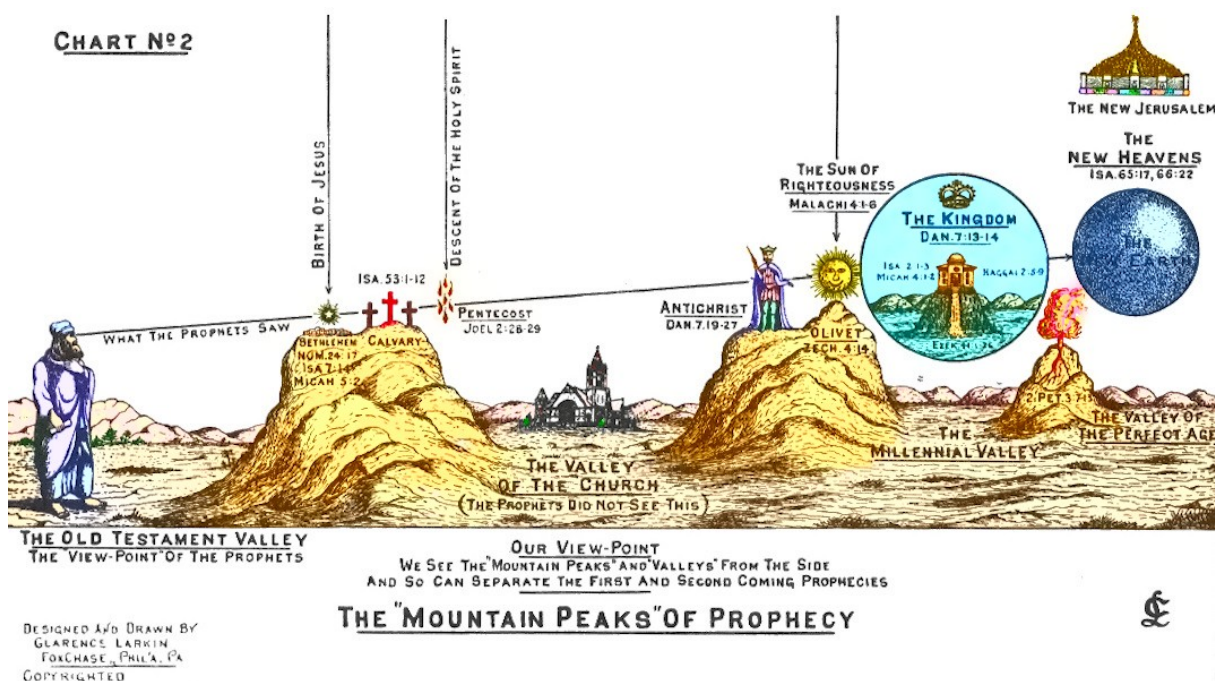
rather than from γέεννα, and which is sometimes instead transliterated as Tartarus, depending on your Bible version). And if they're simply spiritual beings the whole time, with no possessed humans involved, then they themselves will be cast alive into the lake of fire.

This also means that if the warnings by Jesus about the hell we covered *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 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*²³⁶ 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” since 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).

²³⁶ 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

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 probably take place at least partly on the New Earth²³⁷ (although we do have to keep the "Mountain Peaks" of prophecy in mind here as well, 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 "hell" and a place 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 referred to as "hell" in the KJV will indeed be the future location of the lake of fire. (Speaking of valleys, for those who aren't familiar with the "Mountain Peaks" aspect of prophecy, it refers to how there can be prophetic "valleys," meaning events taking place within the same timeframe of a part of 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; for example, while Jesus' earthly ministry and reign as King of Israel was foreseen

²³⁷ 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



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 4:14–21²³⁸ where Jesus stopped reading Isaiah 61:1–2²³⁹ before the end of the sentence in verse 2, because the part of that prophecy about “*the day of vengeance of our God*” hadn’t begun at that time yet, since it won’t happen until around the time of His Second Coming.)

Before moving on, however, I should also point out that, 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 destroyed²⁴⁰), 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

²³⁸ 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

²³⁹ 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

²⁴⁰ 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

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 their works²⁴¹ (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 sin²⁴² — but also because all sin was taken care of some 2,000 years ago by Christ), saying, *"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,"* in Revelation 21:8. 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,

²⁴¹ 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

²⁴² 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

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 (although the KJV translators rendered this promise in a more proleptic manner,²⁴³ as they were often wont to do; prolepsis being a figure of speech meaning “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 does in Scripture²⁴⁴) — those Israelites who are given the sort of salvation Jesus and His disciples preached about while He walked the earth do seem to be able²⁴⁵ to

²⁴³ 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

²⁴⁴ 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

²⁴⁵ 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

lose their type of salvation,²⁴⁶ 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, and the rest of the list would then be quite redundant). 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 just²⁴⁷ (and they won’t have been saved the way the body of Christ or the Israel of God are, or 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

²⁴⁶ 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

²⁴⁷ 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

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 (especially not as far as the sort of salvation Paul taught about goes), 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, 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 quickened. 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 a quickened 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 fact²⁴⁸ (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 their quickening 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,*”²⁴⁹ 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 being given “everlasting life” isn’t required to have life that is literally, or quantitatively, “everlasting” (meaning a life that never ends), at least according to the theology of Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul, and hence it 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, the vast majority of Christians *already* interpret terms like “life eternal” and “everlasting life” in a qualitative sense, and understand that they’re both actually simply a figure of

²⁴⁸ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. — 1 Corinthians 15:53

²⁴⁹ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. — John 17:3

speech (at least in the less literal Bible translations that use the terms) connected with salvation rather than literally referring to how long one continues to exist, even if they hadn't fully realized it until they read this.

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 is clear that Christ Jesus is the *only* human to *currently* have immortality²⁵⁰ — 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 human²⁵¹ 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 we *are* inherently “eternal” and immortal, even if it's just our souls which they assume are somehow naturally immortal.

²⁵⁰ 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

²⁵¹ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; — 1 Timothy 2:5

The simple truth, though, is that immortality *isn't* something we're born with (not even our souls are inherently immortal, as I'll prove a little later in this study). 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" 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 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?*",²⁵² 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.
- Mortal humans who are set on fire burn up and die.
- 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), 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 quickened, by telling

²⁵² 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

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 a second resurrection will take place.)

But even if humans can’t suffer in the “hell” that the lake of fire will be located in, if we’re “eternal” beings, as most Christians assume, 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,²⁵³ 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.²⁵⁴

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 pass 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 in from that point onward depends on whether or not you choose to accept Christ before you pass on to that final destination,” it’s clear they’ve forgotten that nobody remains dead, since there’s still a resurrection of the dead in the future, prior to the Great White Throne Judgement. But in addition to this, it also demonstrates that they’re unaware of

²⁵³ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: — Genesis 3:4

²⁵⁴ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures²⁵⁵ tell us the dead know nothing,²⁵⁶ 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 tell me what he would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you he actually *did* mean that they indeed don't have knowledge). Even in the Greek Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as “the New Testament”), death is compared to sleep,²⁵⁷ 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,²⁵⁸ for example. 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

²⁵⁵ 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

²⁵⁶ 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

²⁵⁷ 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

²⁵⁸ 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

soul while in a body²⁵⁹ and isn't conscious itself, since it's actually our soul that is our consciousness, and spirits and souls aren't the same thing²⁶⁰ — the book of Acts says that he himself went to sleep, not that he remained awake.

Scripture also says that David and others fell asleep²⁶¹ — 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 location of their very person is now “in the grave”²⁶² or “in the dust,”²⁶³ in the very same place that everyone ends up,²⁶⁴ including all animals

²⁵⁹ 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

²⁶⁰ 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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. — Hebrews 4:12

²⁶¹ 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

²⁶² 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

²⁶³ 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

²⁶⁴ 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

as well,²⁶⁵ in fact, and there's no scriptural basis for reading these verses in any other way, at least not that I'm aware of). Similarly, bodily resurrection is likewise compared to waking up from sleep in Scripture,²⁶⁶ 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.

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 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

²⁶⁵ 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

²⁶⁶ 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

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 we aren't conscious at all), or was even knocked unconscious with a hard object. 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 air²⁶⁷ 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 God²⁶⁸ will do so at the resurrection of the just, 75 days after the Tribulation ends — and, again, please compare the numbers in Daniel 12:11–13²⁶⁹ to the numbers in Revelation 13:5²⁷⁰ if you aren't familiar with the 75 day difference between the Second Coming and the resurrection of the just, because this is an important

²⁶⁷ 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

²⁶⁸ As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. — Psalm 17:15

²⁶⁹ 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

²⁷⁰ 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

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 hope²⁷¹ we're told to comfort one another with²⁷² 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 resurrected, 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,²⁷³ 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"²⁷⁴ 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; 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

²⁷¹ 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

²⁷² Wherefore comfort one another with these words. — 1 Thessalonians 4:18

²⁷³ 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

²⁷⁴ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

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 sleep 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."

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,²⁷⁵ 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,

²⁷⁵ 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

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.

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 the book of Acts²⁷⁶ (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,²⁷⁷ which was also after Jesus ascended into heaven (Jesus' "red letters" quote should really 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

²⁷⁶ 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

²⁷⁷ 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

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 God of the dead, but of the living,²⁷⁸ 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 dead²⁷⁹ do not praise God,²⁸⁰ or even remember that He exists,²⁸¹ 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 alive. If they just took the

²⁷⁸ For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. — Luke 20:38

²⁷⁹ The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. — Psalm 115:17

²⁸⁰ 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

²⁸¹ For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? — Psalm 6:5

time to examine the context of the whole passage in Luke 20:27-38,²⁸² however, they'd discover that it was really about how the Sadducees, who didn't believe in a physical resurrection 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 "world" (referring to the next age, when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel for 1,000 years; as already mentioned, the word "world," at least in the KJV, doesn't always mean "planet" or "earth," but in many cases, including this one, since it was translated from the Greek αἰών, is a synonym for "age," meaning "a long period of time with a definite end," which is why many Bible versions rendered it as "age" rather than "world," although it can sometimes also refer figuratively to the zeitgeist — meaning the specific "spirit" — of a particular age²⁸³) here on earth. 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 resurrection seem ridiculous. However, Jesus corrected them by not only pointing out that those who are resurrected from the dead at the beginning of

²⁸² 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

²⁸³ 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

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), 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 rather actually only the God of the living (Jesus was using prolepsis in that statement in order to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will definitely be resurrected someday, because otherwise that statement about them²⁸⁴ 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).

The passage just can’t be read as saying they were actually still alive at that time. 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 dimension, 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

²⁸⁴ 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

Jesus' whole point was that, without a physical resurrection, He *couldn't* be their God, since they'd be dead and would never exist again. Because they *will* be resurrected, however, God actually can be said to be their God, even if only from a proleptic perspective at present.

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' statement about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could possibly be used as proof of the resurrection of the dead 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. (Of course, the parallel telling of this discussion in Matthew 22:31-32 makes it 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 even more clear that this statement about God not being the God of the dead, but of the living, is entirely about the resurrection; when Jesus said, "the living," He could only have been referring to living in a physical body in the future, as this particular rendition of the discussion makes clear.)

However, before moving on, if you still believe in the doctrine of 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 still prove the resurrection if 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, which means that no other passage in Scripture one might believe teaches a conscious afterlife can possibly actually be intended to be interpreted that way unless one can first explain that.

And speaking of dead "Old Testament" saints, some people also try to use the appearance of Moses and Elias (also known as Elijah) on "the Mount of Transfiguration"²⁸⁵ to try to argue that the dead are 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 men²⁸⁶ (and Jesus never sinned, so it's clear that this couldn't have been what was happening there), we know that this

²⁸⁵ 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

²⁸⁶ 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

was simply a vision to fulfill the prophecy²⁸⁷ made immediately before this passage that they would “*see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*”²⁸⁸ (meaning that they’d only be seeing, or perceiving, Him coming in His kingdom at that time, which is exactly what happened when they had that vision of Jesus in the glorified form He’ll exist in when the kingdom of heaven comes fully into fruition in Israel in the future), because Jesus outright said that it was simply a vision.²⁸⁹

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*,”²⁹⁰ 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).

²⁸⁷ 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

²⁸⁸ 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

²⁸⁹ 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

²⁹⁰ 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

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 the context of what he said in the previous verses,²⁹¹ 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

²⁹¹ 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

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 we’re caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (at least for those of us in the body of Christ).

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,*”²⁹² 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,²⁹³ not to mention the verses after them as well,²⁹⁴ 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 (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

²⁹² For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. — Philippians 1:21

²⁹³ 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. — Philippians 1:18-20

²⁹⁴ 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 1:22-23

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 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,²⁹⁵ 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 in modern day colloquialism), 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 likely 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

²⁹⁵ 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. — Philippians 1:12-17

that neither of the two likely options were particularly desirable. Now, some Bible translations 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*,"²⁹⁶ 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 just 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, whither I go, you cannot come." 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.*"²⁹⁷ 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,

²⁹⁶ 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. — 2 Corinthians 5:3-4

²⁹⁷ 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

the unbelieving Pharisees at the time,²⁹⁸ prophesying that all those Pharisees hearing that statement would indeed die in their sins and miss out on “eternal life” when He returns). 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 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 certain people would die in their sins.

Likewise, they misread passages such as Revelation 6:9–11²⁹⁹ 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 is obviously meant to be interpreted symbolically, 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 4:9–10³⁰⁰ (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.

²⁹⁸ The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. — John 8:13

²⁹⁹ 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

³⁰⁰ 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,³⁰¹ 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 also like to quote Hebrews 9:27³⁰² 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. Whatever this verse is actually referring to, however, it can't be saying that at all, 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 Throne³⁰³ (presuming they aren't in the body of Christ, in which case they have an entirely different "judgement," so to speak³⁰⁴), so anyone who tries to use this verse to prove an afterlife is forgetting this minor detail. On top of that,

³⁰¹ 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

³⁰² And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. — Hebrews 9:27

³⁰³ 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

³⁰⁴ 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

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 (unless you believe that Lazarus and everyone else raised from the dead are still alive today, not to mention the fact that many people alive today will die a second time too, in the lake of fire³⁰⁵), so whatever this verse is talking about, it can't mean that humans only die once either, thus confirming that pretty much all of the traditional interpretations of the verse are incorrect. As for what this verse is talking about, it's actually a callback to the death of high priests as mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures (specifically in the books of Numbers³⁰⁶ and Joshua,³⁰⁷ as any Israelite reading a book called Hebrews back when it was written should

³⁰⁵ 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

³⁰⁶ 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

³⁰⁷ 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

have recognized), based on the context of the rest of the chapter,³⁰⁸ as well as the existence of the Definite Article before the word “men” in the verse (it’s not as clear in the KJV as it is in certain other translations, but if you look at the original Greek you can see 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, specifically the high priests of Israel — including Jesus, of course — based on the mention of the high priest in verse 25, as well as all the other references to Jesus’ death throughout the rest of the chapter, not to mention the fact that the death and judgement of any other humans just doesn’t fit the context of the chapter at all). Whenever a high priest died, there was a judgement which resulted in the freedom of certain Israelite sinners, as mentioned in those passages in Numbers and Joshua, and Jesus’ death as high priest resulted in the freedom of even more Israelites.

However, the main passage they try to use to defend the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–

³⁰⁸ 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 9:23-28

31.³⁰⁹ This passage uses 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 ᾗδης/“hah'-dace” in the KJV), 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, 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, since Revelation 20:13 tells us that anyone who is in this version of “hell” will eventually leave it when they’re resurrected from the dead so they can be judged at the Great White Throne,³¹⁰ and then possibly cast into the version of “hell” known as the lake of fire to die a second time, and since the particular “hell” translated from

³⁰⁹ 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

³¹⁰ 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

ᾠδης is also said to be cast into the lake of fire, according to Revelation 20:14³¹¹ (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 "hell" and the lake of fire can't possibly be the same thing.

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 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, unless one believes that Lazarus was sitting inside Abraham's chest, that there's actually physical water and fire that ghosts can interact with (not to mention gravity that they're subject to, somehow keeping them from floating over a chasm even though there's no matter there to be affected by gravity) in this supposed afterlife dimension which Jesus is apparently unveiling to Israelites for the first time (remember, no passage of Scripture prior to Luke 16 had ever revealed such an afterlife — in fact, 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

³¹¹ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. — Revelation 20:14

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 already discussed, 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), they're already not interpreting this story particularly literally. Not to mention, if we did take it 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 enjoy good things during his life,³¹² and not because he rejected Jesus (there was no indication in the story that either Lazarus or the rich man had ever even heard of Jesus). 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 their theology), 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, meaning the covetous Pharisees

³¹² 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

who were listening to him tell this story,³¹³ 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” Israelites³¹⁴ — meaning Jesus’ “lowly” disciples,³¹⁵ along with other Israelites who are among “*the least of these,*” currently scattered among the Gentiles,³¹⁶ 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 144,000 Israelites spread among the

³¹³ And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. — Luke 16:14

³¹⁴ 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

³¹⁵ 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

³¹⁶ 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

nations who will be sealed at that time³¹⁷ (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), 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.

³¹⁷ 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 Nephtholim 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

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

- The body returns to the dust,³¹⁸ meaning to the ground.
- The soul returns to “hell,”³¹⁹ meaning to unconsciousness. 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 “hell” in the KJV, also transliterated as “sheol” in some other Bible versions, since this “hell” is translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל/“sheh-ole’.” This verse just tells us that our consciousness 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 translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל or from the Greek ᾗδης, which itself is the Greek translation of the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל, as we know from the fact that Acts 2:27³²⁰ (which translated “hell” from the Greek ᾗδης in the KJV) was quoting Psalm 16:10³²¹ (which translated “hell” from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל in the KJV). 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” the dead end up in can’t be what most Christians assume it is because it means they’ve already

³¹⁸ 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

³¹⁹ The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. — Psalm 9:17

³²⁰ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Acts 2:27

³²¹ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Psalm 16:10

“been there” before, figuratively speaking, meaning they didn’t exist at one time, and will return to that state of nonexistence again in the future, with their soul, meaning their consciousness, being “hidden or unseen” at that point, which is why it’s said that one’s soul is in “hell” when one dies.

- The spirit returns to God Who gave it,³²² although not as a conscious entity, since our spirits aren’t conscious on their own without a body (soul, or feeling and consciousness, is an emergent property of combining a spirit with a body,³²³ just like combining the colours yellow and blue creates the colour green — the spirit is our “breath of life,” but it doesn’t experience consciousness when it’s not inside a physical body).

This presents quite a dilemma for the popular view, of course. If the soul of a dead person 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). And what does that say about us if our spirit and soul can 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.³²⁴ On top of that, if those who are saved “go to heaven” as soon as they die, then

³²² Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

³²³ 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

³²⁴ 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

death isn't really an enemy to be defeated (and, really, destroyed³²⁵) at all, as Paul told us it is, 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 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 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, and that He rose again the third day. 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 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 of us *actually* agree that "**He** was buried"? Most 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 they 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, he said,

³²⁵ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

“**Christ** died”; and he didn’t say that only Christ’s body was buried while He Himself went somewhere else, he said, “**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, 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 it’s worded tells us 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*,”³²⁶ 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,³²⁷ and every word God inspired to be written down is meant to be there,³²⁸ 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 the third day,” and left those particular words about His burial out altogether, since

³²⁶ 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

³²⁷ 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

³²⁸ The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. — Psalm 12:6

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 sceptical, 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 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 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,³²⁹ the word "power" in this verse, translated from the Greek ἐξουσία/"ex-oo-see'-ah," is just referring to the sort of right that someone in authority has to have an action they wish to be completed actually be performed. 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"³³⁰ (also translated from the

³²⁹ 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

³³⁰ 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

Greek ἐξουσία) to crucify Jesus, but that doesn't mean he physically performed the actual crucifixion himself with his own strength, but instead 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 again, when He was woken from His sleep by His Father³³¹). Likewise, when Jesus said in John 2:19 that He would raise His body three days after His death,³³² 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 Father³³³ resurrected Him from the dead (which is Who the Bible says actually raised Him from the dead anyway³³⁴). 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

³³¹ 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

³³² Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. — John 2:19

³³³ 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

³³⁴ 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

how the fact that He wouldn't remain dead would be a sign to the people who heard Him.³³⁵

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?"³³⁶ Well, no, it doesn't. He didn't preach to the spirits until *after* His body was quickened/made immortal (which obviously couldn't happen until after He was resurrected from the dead), as we can see from the verse before that one.³³⁷ 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,³³⁸ unlike His soul, which instead was said to have figuratively gone to "hell,"³³⁹ demonstrating 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

³³⁵ 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

³³⁶ By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; — 1 Peter 3:19

³³⁷ 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

³³⁸ 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

³³⁹ 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

instead been spiritual beings, exactly as Peter said they were.³⁴⁰ They weren't the spirits of humans, but rather were the spiritual beings who sinned in Noah's time³⁴¹ by breeding with humans (and creating the giants who became mighty men of renown,³⁴² also sometimes referred to as the Nephilim), and who were then locked up in that other version of "hell"³⁴³ (known as Tartarus in some Bible translations) 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 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, and, as Paul explained

³⁴⁰ 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 3:20

³⁴¹ 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

³⁴² 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

³⁴³ 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

in Romans 3:21–23,³⁴⁴ *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.”

Unfortunately, because most Christians don’t *actually* believe that Christ *truly* died for our sins and *actually was* buried, instead believing that only His body did and was, while He Himself lived on and went somewhere else altogether, none of these particular Christians 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.

All of the above should really be all the proof anyone needs that the doctrine of never-ending torment can’t possibly be true, 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, 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. 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

³⁴⁴ 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

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

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, where the birds and clouds are (the 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 it isn't only a reference to the 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” 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.

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. As we can see, 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 of Olives³⁴⁵). So, simply put, if someone wants to see heaven now, all they have to do is look up at the sky.

³⁴⁵ 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

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. The truth is, only the living can go to heaven, at least in a conscious state, and those in the body of Christ *will* go there when Christ comes for His body, and will finally "*ever be with the Lord*" there (and if there's no Scripture which says the dead exist consciously in a place called heaven, it stands to reason that nobody will exist consciously in any of the "hells" either). 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 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*";³⁴⁶ we know that flesh and blood *will* inherit the part of the kingdom of God which will be on earth, meaning the kingdom of heaven, because we know that not everyone in Israel will be immortal during the thousand years, 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,³⁴⁷ at least not yet, since the devil and his angels haven't been cast out of heaven yet,³⁴⁸ 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

³⁴⁶ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50

³⁴⁷ Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. — Job 15:15

³⁴⁸ 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

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.³⁴⁹ 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 of Habakkuk 1:13 they like to quote are actually, *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,"*³⁵⁰ with "to behold" in this verse simply being an expression in the KJV that means "to give attention to" or "to look upon approvingly" (which is what the Hebrew 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 instead from the Hebrew 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.

And this is going to seem like a bit of a tangent here, but I should probably point out that this is obviously 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 for fun would be wrong; simply put, the word "evil" in Scripture is just

³⁴⁹ 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

³⁵⁰ 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

referring to anything that breaks something or causes suffering, whether with good intentions or bad), and don't realize that God actually takes responsibility for the existence of evil.³⁵¹

Of course, most people will argue that God *can't* be behind the evil and suffering in the world because that would mean He must be evil Himself, or at least that He certainly can't 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 suffering in the world, and work your argument forward from there), it's easy to 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 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 unmerited suffering are any better (and many are much 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 aren't their fault, such as babies who are born with painful diseases, or people who lose loved ones, among the vast number of other kinds of suffering that nobody chooses to endure or can be blamed for having experienced. So the question we have to ask is, what explanation can we give for this sort of suffering that doesn't take away from God's sovereignty, as well as from His goodness and love. In order to answer that, I'm going to list the seven scenarios that could possibly explain the existence of this type of suffering in the world:

³⁵¹ I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. — Isaiah 45:7

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.** We could technically include a variation of this option where God *does* want the suffering to occur, although couldn't stop it even if He did want to, but any variation of this option removes God's omnipotence and sovereignty altogether, which basically means He wouldn't actually be God, so it's a nonstarter, as far as I'm concerned.
2. **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), 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 anyway.** This option maintains God's sovereignty, 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 but just ignores it for some reason.
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 isn't actively behind it in any way), but while it would be within His power to stop it, the suffering somehow does work out for the greater good, so He simply sits back and lets it happen.** This seems even less likely than any of the other options, 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 good of

every being who ever experienced it, without God being behind it in some way, is statistically impossible, so this option isn't even worth considering.

4. **God wants 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), because the suffering somehow not only does work out for the greater good, but also because He enjoys watching us suffer in the meantime, He sits back and lets it occur.** 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.
5. **God wants 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 suffering (other than God getting what He wants), and while He could stop it at any time, He sits back and lets it occur because He enjoys it.** This option would obviously mean that God isn't very loving, so it isn't really an option at all if we're trying to maintain that God is loving, but I'm including it for the sake of including all the possible reasons suffering might exist.
6. **God wants, and even wills, this suffering to occur (meaning He enjoys witnessing the suffering, and is even actively behind much, if not all, of it in some way), and while there's no ultimate greater good that comes out of the suffering (other than God getting what He wants), He actively makes sure that much of it occurs because He enjoys it (I say "much of it" because some of it might also be incidental to His actively making it happen, but He presumably enjoys that suffering too or it's likely He wouldn't let that particular suffering that He didn't cause 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 the other options that don't really deserve consideration, I'm including it for the sake of including all the possible reasons suffering might exist.

- 7. 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 in some way), because He knows there's ultimately a greater good for all of us that will come out of the suffering.**

As far as I can tell, those are the only logical options available to us as to why unmerited suffering occurs (at least within a theistic framework; and while there might be some possible variations of the above that I missed, I don't think any of them are 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 7 is the only one that actually maintains God's existence, as well as both His sovereignty and 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 7 can only be true if it's also true that nobody will actually be punished without end, since otherwise the majority of the suffering experienced by humans doesn't end up working out in their best interests after all).

Of course, when considering the above, it's important to keep in mind that there's little-to-no moral difference between being 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 selecting that option.

Now, as for the question of what the greater good actually is that explains why God did it this way, the answer which those of us who are in the body of Christ will generally give can be called “the contrast principle.” Basically, the conclusion most of us have come to is that one can’t truly and fully appreciate good without first experiencing evil (referring to suffering, in this case), 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 grace without first experiencing sin). If this doesn’t seem to make sense at first, think about how one can better appreciate the warmth of being indoors after being outside in the cold than they would be able to without ever having experienced the cold. Or, as another example, if the only place snowflakes ever existed was on white sheets of paper of the exact same shade as the snowflakes, we wouldn’t ever actually know what a snowflake really looked like. 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 doing this *for* us; even though we might wish He’d stop already, but I suspect that some of us will wish we’d gone through even more suffering in this lifetime when we’re finally quickened, because it might mean that we’d enjoy existence all the more at that point).

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 so He didn’t have to make any of us suffer (or have to allow any of us to suffer, if you prefer). And while I have to think that He

technically could have indeed 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 in such a manner that we're born possessing this knowledge, and since He must have had a good reason for *not* doing so, we have to once again work backwards from that fact and ask ourselves why He didn't. 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 *at all*, but seems to instead want us to have to learn things as we grow, either through study or through experience (or, really, through a combination of both study and direct experience). As for why God did it this way, one possible reason is that, if we didn't actually experience it, our understanding of good (and of suffering) would simply be academic rather than experiential, and based on the way that God *did* create us (having to learn many things through experience), it could very well be that experiencing suffering will lead to a better possible appreciation of good than simply having the knowledge already in our heads at 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 that contrast principle *is* why God did things this way, willing unmerited suffering 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, since the seven 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, but I’m writing to theists here), I would argue that we’ve now determined this assumption of theirs that God must be evil for this to be true 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 seven options and only those seven 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 we’ve already discussed, “evil” really just means “calamity” or “destruction” (or “suffering,” as I’ve been using it in this portion of the study) anyway, and we already know that evil can be done to serve a greater purpose (for example, we might amputate a gangrenous leg, causing much evil/suffering, in order to ultimately save a life, which means that evil can be done to bring about a good outcome), so doing or causing evil doesn’t necessarily make one evil anyway. (Some will also claim that this 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 so that I can eventually heal them,” to which I would first respond 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 seven options I listed still remain the only options, it might be time for them to accept that perhaps it could be true that it’s better for us to have experienced both the sickness and the healing than to not have experienced them.)

And so, 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 an eighth option, and you’re free to choose it, but that option gives us far less hope than option 7 does — in fact it offers no real hope that our suffering has any meaning at all — so I’m sticking with option number 7 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 can think of another option that you believe I missed which actually works as a better theodicy than option 7 does, please do let me know.

That said, it isn’t just evil that God takes credit for. If Scripture is to be believed, He ultimately takes credit for absolutely everything,³⁵² which would also have to include sin too (unless sin somehow doesn’t fall under the category of “absolutely everything”). This idea can seem confusing to most people when they first hear it, because it would seem logical that God wouldn’t want us to

³⁵² For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Romans 11:36

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 seven 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 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, because 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, perhaps better put, His preceptive will³⁵³ and His providential will³⁵⁴), meaning the difference between His public commandments (or precepts) and His hidden intentions. 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

³⁵³ 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

³⁵⁴ 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

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.³⁵⁵ God made murder a sin, yet He had the murder of Christ planned³⁵⁶ from the foundation of the world,³⁵⁷ knowing full well when He gave the commandment against murder to Moses that without murder there would be no salvation for anyone (and I'm sure it should go without saying that God didn't enjoy seeing His Son tortured and killed, but He still *willed* it to happen³⁵⁸ because He knew it *had* to happen in order to accomplish His purposes).

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 one considers the facts, that while He told them not to eat of it,³⁵⁹ 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), and made it look like good food and pleasant to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise,³⁶⁰ and

³⁵⁵ Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13

³⁵⁶ 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

³⁵⁷ 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

³⁵⁸ Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. — Luke 22:42

³⁵⁹ 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

³⁶⁰ 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

even placed the serpent right there to tempt them (and nobody is anywhere that God didn't specifically place them), not to mention the fact that, without eating it, humanity would not only never understand evil but would never truly understand good either³⁶¹ (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 could be mortal in order that He could implement the plan).

And, of course, the entire reason He even gave Israel the Mosaic law at all³⁶² was so that they would sin all the more.³⁶³ It might seem hard to believe, and some even try to deny it by making the assertion — one that is not only found nowhere in Scripture but that is actually contradicted by it — that "God is not

³⁶¹ 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

³⁶² 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

³⁶³ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

the author of sin,” but the Bible actually tells us that God has not only purposely locked up His human creation in unbelief,³⁶⁴ but that He has also purposely locked us up in sin,³⁶⁵ in vanity, and in corruption³⁶⁶ (meaning in decay, humiliation, and death), all in order that He can later set us all free (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 grace—since, again, without evil we could never truly appreciate goodness, and without sin we could never truly understand grace; contrast is often necessary to fully comprehend things, and knowing this helps us come to understand that the existence of sin was actually necessary for God to complete His purposes).

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, כַּחַטָּה/"khaw-taw'" in Hebrew, and ἁμαρτία/"ham-ar-tee'-ah" in Greek (which we translate as "sin" in English), is a word that simply means "to miss the mark" — for example, to not hit the bullseye on a target with an arrow or 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

³⁶⁴ For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. — Romans 11:32

³⁶⁵ 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

³⁶⁶ 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

miss,"³⁶⁷ with the word "miss" in that verse being the same Hebrew word *אָחַז* that is translated as "sin" in other passages). So yes, Adam missed the mark by failing to avoid eating the forbidden fruit, but God hit the bullseye perfectly when Adam sinned because that was His plan for Adam from the beginning, which means that even though He's responsible for it from an absolute perspective, God didn't sin by ultimately being behind it all because He didn't miss the mark, since sin and death entering the world through Adam 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 intention *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 Romans 5:20 also tells us that He absolutely would 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 — 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 goal. 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 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 make God an extremely irresponsible deity, and His sovereignty would 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

³⁶⁷ 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

one of the most important factors in Scripture, and is taught throughout it. 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 reason for absolutely everything that has happened in creation, and that He has had very specific plans for the ages (and those in each age) from the very beginning. Instead of knowing (and glorifying) God as God,³⁶⁸ 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, 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 crucifixion³⁶⁹ and the devil³⁷⁰ (who was created the way he is today, contrary to popular opinion, and has been a murderer³⁷¹ — and, to put it simply, a sinner³⁷² — from his very beginning, for the purpose of getting Adam to sin, and for bringing about evil in general³⁷³) — was all intended by God from before the beginning of creation.

³⁶⁸ 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

³⁶⁹ 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

³⁷⁰ By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. — Job 26:13

³⁷¹ 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

³⁷² 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

³⁷³ 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

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 indeed is 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.³⁷⁴ Which means that if God's intention truly was a world without any sin, no sin could have ever occurred. To put it simply, everything that has happened and will happen occurs exactly as God planned it, because God is still on Plan A.

But getting back to the topic of heaven, we still have to ask ourselves where people got the idea that the dead go to places called heaven or hell from in the first place. Well, there are a few reasons for this. Their misinterpretation of Luke 16 largely explains why people think dead sinners end up suffering consciously in a place called "hell," but as far as the dead ending up in heaven goes, the main two reasons are verses that refer to God being in heaven,³⁷⁵ as well as a misunderstanding of the word "paradise."

Since we know that the body of Christ will go to the heavens, 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 (the body of Christ goes to the heavens 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 the heavens/outer space to the New Earth rather than being a place anyone who is dead goes to).

³⁷⁴ 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

³⁷⁵ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. — Matthew 6:9

That said, yes, God indeed *is* in heaven. He has a throne room (which can also be referred to *figuratively* as “heaven”³⁷⁶) 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,³⁷⁷ 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.³⁷⁸

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,³⁷⁹ both after Jesus returns and also later on the New Earth,³⁸⁰ which makes sense considering there would be no need to eat from the tree of life in an ethereal afterlife dimension 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 paradise³⁸¹ couldn’t mean what most Christians assume it to mean, because

³⁷⁶ 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

³⁷⁷ But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. — Galatians 4:26

³⁷⁸ 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

³⁷⁹ 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

³⁸⁰ 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

³⁸¹ 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

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 12:4,³⁸² 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 New Earth (and for those who think it would mean that Jesus was being less than truthful by speaking figuratively here, ask yourself if He was also then being untruthful when He spoke figuratively to call Himself a door?³⁸³). This is also confirmed by Jesus' statement that He hadn't ascended to the Father yet in John 20:17,³⁸⁴ not to mention the fact that we're told His

³⁸² 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

³⁸³ 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

³⁸⁴ 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

soul went to “hell” when He died³⁸⁵ (which we now know 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, the thief could not 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.)

Now, there are those who understand what death and paradise are, but who think this passage should be translated differently. You see, some will point out that there are no commas in the original Greek, and tell us that Luke 23:43 would be better translated as saying, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise” (just like Paul used similar expressions in Acts 20:26³⁸⁶ and Acts 26:2,³⁸⁷ not to mention all the times expressions like this were used in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as in Deuteronomy 4:26,³⁸⁸ 39–40,³⁸⁹ and

³⁸⁵ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Psalm 16:10

³⁸⁶ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. — Acts 20:26

³⁸⁷ 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

³⁸⁸ 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

³⁸⁹ 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

5:1,³⁹⁰ to list just a few of *many* examples of this type of figure of speech in Scripture), 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*³⁹¹ — something we already know will be here on earth in the future; but even if the kingdom *were* an afterlife location, which we've already proven it isn't, we know that Jesus went to "hell" rather than to heaven when He died anyway, so He certainly didn't "*come into His kingdom*" during those three days — 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). That said, while we certainly can if we want to, without 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 end result 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. (Of course, you already know I'm going to ask it,

³⁹⁰ 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

³⁹¹ And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. — Luke 23:42

but for anyone who might still be sceptical, if Jesus *was* trying to tell the thief that he'd be with Jesus in paradise when it begins in Israel or on the New Earth in the future, I'd like you to tell me what He would have needed to have said differently there in order to convince you of this.)

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 the story of the rich man and Lazarus ever even suggested that people would go to an afterlife realm to live happily or to suffer in while dead either, 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. Now, yes, there is a certain type of passage which some Christians who don't want to let go of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul will read their assumptions into in order to claim they do teach it, such as Genesis 15:15, for example, which says, "*And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace,*" 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 Abram's (Abraham's) 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 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.”*³⁹² 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.

And so, as I said, nobody mentioned anywhere in the Bible was ever recorded as looking forward to an afterlife of any sort. What they *were* looking forward to was a physical, bodily resurrection³⁹³ in the distant future,³⁹⁴ so figurative passages such as the one in Luke 16, and symbolic statements such as those in the book of Revelation, have to be interpreted in light of this fact (when Job said, *“But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost,”* and then asked, *“and where is he?”*),³⁹⁵ Job wasn’t wondering where the dead are residing while remaining in a conscious state, as some mistakenly assume, but was just 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 gone until their future resurrection by answering his own question, saying, *“As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man*

³⁹² And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. — Genesis 15:15

³⁹³ 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

³⁹⁴ 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

³⁹⁵ But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? — Job 14:10

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"³⁹⁶). The story in Luke 16 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

³⁹⁶ 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 14:11-15

heaven and hell at the exact same time, not that they'd know they were in either "location").

This also means that Enoch and Elijah didn't go to live in heaven rather than dying either (at least not the same "level" 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 study. Genesis 5:24³⁹⁷ 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,³⁹⁸ which seems to line up with the fact that the book of Hebrews includes Enoch in a list of people who lived by faith³⁹⁹ while also saying that everyone in the list died.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. — Genesis 5:24

³⁹⁸ 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

³⁹⁹ 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

⁴⁰⁰ 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

And it's recorded that King Jehoram received a letter from Elijah⁴⁰¹ after the time that Elijah was caught up in the whirlwind to heaven,⁴⁰² 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.

⁴⁰¹ 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

⁴⁰² 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

However, while we now know that no humans can suffer in any of the “hells” (at least not for any longer than it takes to die a second time in the lake of fire), even though none of the passages we’ve looked at so far 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 and made sinless), which brings up the question of whether any of that will actually happen. Well, the answer to that question is found throughout the writings of Paul, who taught that everyone will indeed eventually experience salvation, which means we need to take a look at some of the passages which teach this. But before we do, we also need to be aware that, while everyone *will* experience salvation in the end, not everyone will be saved, and if this sounds like a contradiction to you, please consider the following question: If I pointed out that, among a group of 4 people, they each had a quarter, but that at the same time only 1 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 4 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 mentioned previously, 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 (since not everyone is saved from drowning in the sea the way Jesus’ disciples were, for example). Relatively few people will experience the sort of salvation referred to under the Gospel of the Kingdom, so it shouldn’t be a surprise to hear someone who believes in the salvation of all humanity agree with the assertion that not everyone will be saved, as long as one realizes that we’re referring to specific types of salvation that not everyone is guaranteed to experience when we say that.

But that aside, how can we even suggest there's a type of salvation that everyone will experience? Well, it's because there are a *multitude* of passages in Paul's epistles which seem to plainly teach the salvation of all humanity (even though many Christians who don't want to accept the possibility of the salvation of all humanity will do anything and everything they can to come up with explanations as to why these passages actually don't mean that). Of course, it's also true that there are other passages in his epistles which say only certain people will be saved, and at first this seems like it would be a contradiction if the salvation of all were true, but only until one once again remembers that there are different types of salvation, and realizes that any passages in Paul's epistles which seem to teach the salvation of all could easily just be referring to one type of salvation which everyone experiences, while passages which teach that *not* everyone will be saved would then simply be referring to another type of salvation that not everyone experiences, and the fact of the matter is, this absolutely is the case. (And if this sounds confusing, don't worry; it will all become clear as you read the rest of this study.)

So what are these passages which teach that everyone will experience salvation? Well, to begin with, Paul's Gospel *itself* teaches us this (and that's really all the proof one should need). In fact, not only does it teach the salvation of all humanity, the "*Christ died for our sins*" element of his Gospel also means 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, 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). Not only that, though, it also means

that someone who believes a person can only be saved by choosing to believe something specific aren't in the body of Christ either, because it isn't our belief that saves us, but rather it's Christ's death for our sins, along with His subsequent burial and resurrection on the third day, that saves us (I'm referring specifically to a general salvation that everyone experiences when I discuss verse 3 of 1 Corinthians 15, and not the special "eternal life" type of salvation referred to in verse 2 — it's important to keep in mind that both types of salvation are being discussed in the first four verses of 1 Corinthians 15). To believe that one has to choose to believe something specific in order to be saved 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 (which is a form of salvation that not everyone experiences) known as membership in the body of Christ, 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"), it *can* legitimately be said that "the salvation of all humanity *because of what Christ accomplished*"

is *essentially* Paul's Gospel. (Again, of course, referring to a general salvation, 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 the 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 Corinthians specifically believed (and it’s also true that what Paul wrote in this chapter about his Gospel includes a reference to a form of salvation that not everyone will experience, since those he brought the Gospel to weren’t saved if they have “*believed in vain*”), 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 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 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, 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 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 saved (referring to general salvation, of course; not the special "eternal life" type of salvation), since 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) saviour 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 without someone else doing something, such as choosing to

believe something specific, to add to it as well) into an action that finally helped accomplish something for 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 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 hearing this proclamation of good news *before* Paul spoke those words to anyone. And so, unless every single Corinthian Paul spoke to believed his words, if Christ’s death for our sins is what saves us, 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). 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 salvation really was in the first place).

So 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."*⁴⁰³ Many Christians assume that Paul was simply referring to being resurrected here (based on the fact that a large part of this chapter is about resurrection), but we know that everyone who Paul said will be "made alive" includes those who will never die,⁴⁰⁴ 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,⁴⁰⁵ 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" and "quickeneth" is translated from) obviously can't simply be referring to resurrection (which is an entirely different word, translated from the Greek word ἀνάστασις/"an-as'-tas-is" instead) since not everyone who will be "made alive" will actually die and be

⁴⁰³ For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22

⁴⁰⁴ 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

⁴⁰⁵ 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

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 simple resurrection, including elements that apply to those who *won't* be resurrected — because they'll never actually die — 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,⁴⁰⁶ 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). 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 word 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 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).

⁴⁰⁶ 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

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") can be made alive/quicken/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 isn't a form of salvation everyone will experience, or the "eternal life" type of salvation Jesus spoke about during His earthly ministry that 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 whether⁴⁰⁷ one does end up experiencing that sort of salvation⁴⁰⁸ is technically predetermined⁴⁰⁹—not realizing that Paul was writing about an entirely *different* sort of salvation here.)

⁴⁰⁷ 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

⁴⁰⁸ 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

⁴⁰⁹ 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

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 wrote. 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 (referring to Christ Jesus),⁴¹⁰ 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 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, in addition to assuming that our salvation is (at least partly) based on possessing a certain attribute 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

⁴¹⁰ 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

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 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 to contribute to our salvation, since us having to accomplish anything at all in order to ensure our own salvation — even if that accomplishment was just managing to choose to change our minds, meaning managing to choose to repent, and choosing to 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 want to place the blame for our mortality, death, and sinfulness on each of us as individuals rather than on Adam as well, but that's not what Paul taught. You see, in addition to what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:22 about how we all die (literally meaning how we're all mortal) because of Adam, 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 the word "for" 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 the verse that way). 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 verse to the part of the verse 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).

I mean, let’s break it all down: 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 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. But if we were to instead interpret the last two parts of the verse as 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. “That all have sinned” *because* “death passed upon all men” answers that question, but reversing the order (making sin the cause and mortality — which the word “death” is simply being used as

metonymy for in this verse — 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 sinning *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 too, and this had nothing to do with that one man to begin with, so I don't know why I even mentioned him in the first place.”

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), or even that guilt for Adam's sin has been imputed upon us, as those who hold to 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 Psalm 58:3⁴¹¹ and Psalm 51:5⁴¹² to defend their doctrine of “Original Sin” as well, I should say, but the first verse is

⁴¹¹ The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. — Psalms 58:3

⁴¹² Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. — Psalm 51:5

talking specifically about “*the wicked*” (who are differentiated from “*the righteous*” a few verses later in the Psalm,⁴¹³ 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 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, not to mention 1 Corinthians 15:22, into a nonsensical lie as would be the case if “Original Sin” *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 furniture⁴¹⁴), it could be using “in iniquity” and “in sin” as metonymy (which is another figure of speech used all throughout the Bible) 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

⁴¹³ 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. — Psalms 58:10-11

⁴¹⁴ 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

way he recorded his past treatment in Psalm 69:4,⁴¹⁵ 7-8,⁴¹⁶ 11-12,⁴¹⁷ and 20-21⁴¹⁸ indicates this as well), and these are just three possible interpretations (there are others I didn't get into here, which you can discover for yourself if you're so inclined), so the concept of "Original Sin" really is a nonstarter.

On top of all that, though, I'm hoping by now you've noticed that Paul didn't simply write "*for all have sinned*" in Romans 5:12 the way he did in Romans 3:23.⁴¹⁹ Instead, he wrote, "*for **that** all have sinned.*" Missing a single word when reading a passage in Scripture, such as the word "that" in this case, can change everything and make you completely miss the point of the passage. Yes, one could perhaps be excused for thinking Paul meant "*because all have sinned*" if he had left out the word "that" in this verse, and if one also hadn't yet considered all of the above points we just covered. But he didn't leave it out, **and so** "*for that reason all have sinned*" is the only thing Paul could have possibly been getting at in this part of the passage, which means the only way to use the word "because" instead of "for" in this verse is to interpret it along the lines of, "*because of that [mortality] all have sinned,*" which doesn't help the idea that sin is the cause rather than the effect either. **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, since it gives us answers to both

⁴¹⁵ 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

⁴¹⁶ 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

⁴¹⁷ 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

⁴¹⁸ 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

⁴¹⁹ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; — Romans 3:23

the question of why we're mortal, as well as the question of why we sin, and also keeps 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.⁴²⁰)

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 used

⁴²⁰ 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

in both Genesis 2:17⁴²¹ and in 1 Kings 2:36-46⁴²² 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), there's no way that Shimei actually died physically the day he crossed the brook Kidron, as Solomon warned 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 had basically signed his own death warrant and knew that he was "as good as dead" on the day he crossed the forbidden brook. And as far as Adam and Eve go, it literally just meant that, to die, they began dying, meaning they gained mortality leading to eventual physical death on the day

⁴²¹ 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

⁴²² 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

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 you will 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. Some people will say, “The reason Jesus didn’t sin is because He’s God, and 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 (they also have to ask themselves whether God, even “God in the flesh,” could have actually died and been buried — meaning lost consciousness for three days — as we’ve already determined happened to Jesus, but that’s a topic for another time). Instead, the reason is because 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 being in this state as being “semi-mortal,” for lack of a better existing term that I’m aware of), 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, along with having the Spirit without measure,⁴²³ meant He was strong enough

⁴²³ For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. — John 3:34

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 die⁴²⁴ and willingly gave up His life⁴²⁵). This means Adam could have also theoretically 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 (for various reasons that I don’t have the time to get into right now), leading to the mortality and sin that all of us now get to experience.

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 18–19,⁴²⁶ when 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.

⁴²⁴ 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

⁴²⁵ 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

⁴²⁶ 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

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. And for those who are wondering why Paul wrote “many” rather than “all” in verses 15⁴²⁷ 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 by Adam’s sin to a certain extent as well, in that He too was condemned to die because of Adam’s action, since He had to die for the sins we now commit because we’re mortal, thanks to Adam (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 again, being a parallelism, all the people who *“were made sinners”* because of *“one man’s disobedience”* will also *“be made righteous”* because of *“the obedience of one”* — and please re-read that carefully: because of *“the obedience of one,”* and **not** because of *their own obedience* to choose to repent and believe the right thing — or else the parallelism wouldn’t work; and remember, this is referring to the general salvation everyone will experience,

⁴²⁷ 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

not the special “eternal life” type of salvation that only a relative few will get to enjoy).

But for those who still really want to blame our 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.

Now, some 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 how parallelisms work), based on the inclusion of the word “receive” in verse 17,⁴²⁸ 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.⁴²⁹ Since he would have experienced those lashes whether he first purposefully chose to receive them or not (at no point did he say 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

⁴²⁸ 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

⁴²⁹ Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. — 2 Corinthians 11:24

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), 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). And so, rather than being offered money as a gift 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 directly deposited into one's bank account entirely without their knowledge (with evangelism being about telling people the money is there, whether or not they happen to believe it, or "choose to receive 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 have no say in, which is why they also insist that we're entirely responsible for our own condemnation, mortality, and death as well, contrary to what Paul wrote. You see, if our condemnation is based entirely on the action of one (Adam), as Paul said it was, then our salvation 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,” and many 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).

I should quickly add, some will point out that 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 also talks about “receiving” the Gospel Paul preached unto them,⁴³⁰ and that the salvation referred to in that passage seems like it could possibly be said to be conditional, 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 that 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 quickened and made sinless) that’s discussed throughout the rest of the chapter (as well as that’s discussed in Romans 5), so even if someone *did* have to choose to “receive” this special form of salvation, it doesn’t mean anyone

⁴³⁰ 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

has to choose to receive the general salvation Christ won for all of us through His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection on the third day.

This all means it's time to recognize that the idea of the (general) salvation Paul primarily wrote about 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. This also means it's time to stop ignoring the scriptural truth of predestination,⁴³¹ although the thing almost everyone gets confused about when it comes to this topic is that, if everyone will experience general salvation, as Paul said we all will, yet only certain people are chosen,⁴³² or elected,⁴³³ for salvation, as he also said, then the sort 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 that predestination is actually about *when* someone experiences salvation, not about *if* they get to experience it. 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, among other things — Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 that *everyone* will *eventually* experience the salvation that involves

⁴³¹ 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

⁴³² 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

⁴³³ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. — 1 Thessalonians 1:4

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, many people are uncomfortable with the idea of predestination, and so they like to say things along the lines of, "God doesn't want robots," and teach that God gave us something called "free will." These people don't understand that "free will" is a complete impossibility from a purely logical and scientific perspective, however, and that it can't actually exist in reality at all. You see, while everyone agrees that we can make 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, meaning they aren't subject to causality (although a choice is simply the act of selecting between two or more existing options, regardless of whether the selection that's made was predetermined or not, which is why the ability to make choices can't be the definition of "free will" in and of itself). This ignores reality, however, since every choice has to be predetermined, by our nurture and/or nature (meaning our life experiences and/or genetics), and/or by influences outside the sphere of the physical universe (such as⁴³⁴ by God Himself⁴³⁵). You see, even though it might feel like our choices are independent of any cause, and even though the relatively few people who have actually taken the time to try to figure out what the term "free will" even means have concluded that it indeed refers to a choice which is independent of a cause (which it has to be, because if a choice one makes does have a cause, it means the choice was predetermined by that cause, since that's what it means to be subject to causality), 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

⁴³⁴ A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps. — Proverbs 16:9

⁴³⁵ 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

being predetermined). The bottom line is, because an event has to either have a cause or not have a cause, there's no way for any event (even an event such as selecting a specific option or options) to be anything other than caused or uncaused, or at least nobody has ever been able to provide a third option that works within the limits of reality (although, if you disagree, please let me know what that third option is), which is why "free will" is really an entirely meaningless term altogether, unless one is simply using it as a synonym for "random chance." (And yes, I know that the term "freewill offering" is used in the KJV,⁴³⁶ but it isn't the same thing as the so-called "free will" we're discussing here, as it's simply a label for a certain kind of voluntary offering that wasn't required by God, and in fact *can't* mean the same thing unless you believe the performing of the *required* sacrifices and offerings *was* predetermined by God to be performed by those who chose to do so, meaning they had no ability to choose of their own "free will" to not perform *those* particular sacrifices and offerings, if "free will" actually existed.)

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). 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

⁴³⁶ 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

consequences this might result in (to put it simply, it's largely because they want to make sure 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).

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 all the variables that were present at the time a choice was made into account, 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 did?"

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 were in any way meaningful, or 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 be wrong about it.)

But even if we were to ignore all the passages in Scripture that tell us God is ultimately responsible for our salvation (including both everything we've already covered, as well as what we've yet to cover), 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 (our 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, 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 an option is selected. This means that, at the end of the day (presuming God doesn't interfere), it's ultimately our life experiences and our genetics that determine what choices we make, which means our choices are, at the very least, predetermined by our nurture and nature. And so the answer to the question of whether, in a hypothetical duplicate parallel universe — with every particle and wave being in the exact same state as it was here when a specific choice was made, 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 identical to ours up until the point they selected the different 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). The problem is, aside from the fact that this is clearly both unscientific and unscriptural (as we've already covered, consciousness, or "soul," is generated by an unconscious spirit powering a biological brain, and can't exist separately from a living body), even if this idea were true, it couldn't actually help support their ideas so much as simply push the problem back a level. A supposedly "spiritual mind," whatever that's supposed to actually be, still has 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 still has to make decisions or 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 were the case. Basically, to simply stop at the level of "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).

In fact, along those lines, other Christians have 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 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 very close to the truth because, yes, most people do prefer to love themselves over God, and don’t want to let go of their current way of life. These facts don’t help the common Christian arguments either, though, since it’s still getting down to a matter of the nature of “the chooser” while ignoring the question of why the nature of “the chooser” is what it is (basically, why “the chooser’s” biological brain, or even “spiritual mind,” if you prefer, is “wired” the way it is at the time an option is selected), with the ultimate blame (again, presuming God doesn’t interfere) being on that particular selfish and/or evil nature. And if it comes 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 the 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 was generated by their life experiences and genetics.

I’ve also heard some Christians suggest that, while God doesn’t predetermine everything Himself by manipulating every particle in existence (including the particles that ultimately make up our brains) in order to control every detail of the universe that way, 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, though, 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 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, at the end of the day, the end result of this idea is still predestination by God, and 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 outside the brain), the action would still end up being predetermined by God.

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 give a third option, and until they do, those remain the only two options available for us to work with, which means that even though we do all have a will, our wills can not be said to be free (particularly before we're saved — can a slave to sin⁴³⁷ 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 is fully in control. And don't worry, this doesn't mean we're robots. Because, considering the fact that robots can do all sorts of neat things on their own (relatively speaking), while the Bible refers to us as merely clay in God's hands,⁴³⁸ well, that would actually give us too much credit.

All that being said, the existence of “free will” is completely irrelevant anyway, at least when it comes to salvation, because whether “free will” could exist or not, Paul still places the responsibility for both our condemnation and our eventual salvation (at least our general salvation) on two men, and on two men

⁴³⁷ For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. — Romans 6:20

⁴³⁸ Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? — Romans 9:21

alone, rather than on each individual human who will ever have lived (and 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 to⁴³⁹). 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. (And 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 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 this hard to accept, 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 be 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), not 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

⁴³⁹ 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

decision to “accept Adam,” then, “*even so*,” our salvation would also have to happen without our conscious decision to “accept Christ,” since this is a parallelism), or chose 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, at the very least, it would be extremely unlikely that third trimester abortions could even be performed), 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). “All” (“x”) are mortal/dying “through Adam” or “because of what Adam did” (“in a”) rather than because of any choice of their own (our mortality precedes any choice of our own, and is in fact the reason we sin, as we just covered), and they will “all” (“x,” again) also eventually be “made alive”/become immortal “through Christ” or “because of what Christ did” (“in z”) rather than because of any choice of their own. And the same applies to when Paul uses the words “many” and “all” in his parallelisms in Romans 5 as well (go ahead and put an x in place of the words “many” and “all” in the passages 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 (believers) will be quickened/“made alive” 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 Christians 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, 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; but even among the relatively few who do realize that these are different types of salvation, most aren’t aware of the fact that, outside of the cases where he *was* discussing Israel’s salvation under the Gospel of the Kingdom, which is a type of salvation that not everyone will get to enjoy, Paul was sometimes writing about the sort of salvation everyone will experience — which refers to being made immortal, and hence sinless — because of what Christ did, and sometimes simply writing about the special salvation only some will experience, which refers to joining the body of Christ and getting to experience their immortality early, and which itself has different “levels” of rewards that not every member of the body of Christ will necessarily be included in either, and so they make the assumption that he always meant the exact same thing whenever he mentioned salvation or being saved, causing them to end up with the inconsistent and contradictory doctrines they’ve come to believe instead)—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 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 (either literally or figuratively, 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 these two people (Adam and Christ), figuratively speaking, just at two different points of time in each of their 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 sceptical, though, 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 that there's a specific sequential order when it comes to each mortal human being made fully alive beyond the reach of death⁴⁴⁰ (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*." Now, there is some debate as to exactly who is included in each of these two orders, with some people believing that the first order refers only to Jesus and that the second order includes everyone who will be quickened around the time of His Second Coming, while others believe that the first order refers to the body of Christ and that the second order is only those in the Israel of God who are quickened after He returns. And while this isn't something I'm dogmatic about, and, in fact, I'm not entirely sure we can even know for certain until we're able to ask Paul what he meant when we see him, I'm personally inclined to interpret the first order as being the whole body of Christ⁴⁴¹ (at the time Christ comes for His body, although with this order of quickenings not

⁴⁴⁰ 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

⁴⁴¹ 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

actually including the Head of the body Himself, since otherwise 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* quickened⁴⁴² — past tense — by the Holy Spirit, not that He *will* be quickened/“made alive” — future tense, which is the tense verse 22 uses — by His own power, as though He isn’t already immortal now), including those dead members who will be resurrected, as well as the members of the body of Christ who are still living, finally experiencing their immortality at that time (the dead members of the body of Christ will be resurrected first, after which they and the remaining living members of the body of Christ 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 would be God withdrawing His ambassadors⁴⁴³ 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.

With that in mind, I personally interpret the 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 Jesus returns to earth and the Tribulation period has concluded (people such as “Old Testament” saints, for example, at least from the point of Abraham onwards, as well as those who died following the teachings that Jesus and His disciples gave). I should say, for a long time I

⁴⁴² 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

⁴⁴³ 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

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 shortly 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 leaves⁴⁴⁴ of the tree of life⁴⁴⁵ on a monthly basis, and won't be made truly immortal until 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,⁴⁴⁶ 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 instantaneously⁴⁴⁷ 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, it seems that there must be two different methods of remaining alive on this earth and the New Earth (quickenings 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

⁴⁴⁴ 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

⁴⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁴⁶ 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

⁴⁴⁷ 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

quickened three-and-a-half 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 and on the New Earth if every member of the Israel of God were quickened when Jesus returns, as I've also previously mentioned (and the fact that all the living members of the body of Christ are 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 Him in the air, yet those who are raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just are still dead 75 days *after* Jesus' Second Coming, 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). 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" 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 that we now know also need to 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,⁴⁴⁸ 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 to mean 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, or perhaps even the end of Christ’s reign, 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*

⁴⁴⁸ 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

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 (or even the end of Christ’s reign) were going to occur *immediately* after “*they that are Christ’s at his coming*” are quickened then 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 as the Doctrine of the 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, which is when Christ’s reign ends), so a new topic about the end of the world, ages, or Christ’s reign doesn’t really fit there at all because none 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, ages, or Christ’s reign, 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, so it really makes no sense at all for him to have gone from discussing that topic (the specific order of all the 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) 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 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 later⁴⁴⁹).

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 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 be saved (because the final salvation via the

⁴⁴⁹ 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

destruction of death would then have already been said to have taken place when Christ returned, since, if 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, since it will have already been destroyed at that point), this also isn’t possible because verses 24 and 25 tell us that His enemies are subjected, and that death is destroyed, at a point in time **after** “*they that are Christ’s at His coming*” have been “made alive,” and **not** than that His 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 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 1,000 years itself, there’s not only going to be a final (even if somewhat short and one-sided) battle 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,⁴⁵⁰ 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*”

⁴⁵⁰ 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

*an hundred years old shall be accursed*⁴⁵¹), long after “*they that are Christ’s at His coming*” have been quickened. And for those who are thinking that Revelation 21:1–8⁴⁵² means there won’t be any death on the New Earth, a careful study of that passage should make it clear that only those who get to reside within the walls of the New Jerusalem won’t ever drop dead (or suffer in any way anymore), since 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,⁴⁵³ also proves that death continues to exist

⁴⁵¹ 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

⁴⁵² 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

⁴⁵³ 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 carcasses 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

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 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,⁴⁵⁴ 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 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 it's 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), 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*

⁴⁵⁴ 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

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 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, and those who happen to die on the New Earth prior to the destruction of death — as well as 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, along with their descendants, and also any mortal humans who might be living on the New Earth then as well, not having been given access to the tree of life, of course), finally quickened after the final 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,⁴⁵⁵ 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"⁴⁵⁶ (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 actually 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 because of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:6,⁴⁵⁷ what I just wrote about "all" including everyone *other* than God tells us that it *has* to be referring to all sapient creatures other than God in chapter 15 regardless, but that aside, 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).

⁴⁵⁵ When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. — Proverbs 16:7

⁴⁵⁶ 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

⁴⁵⁷ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. — 1 Corinthians 12:6

This means, by the way, that people who use passages which tell us Jesus will reign “for ever”⁴⁵⁸ in order to prove that “everlasting punishment” will also never end because those passages use the same words 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 “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, “That meeting lasted for ever,” I doubt you’d assume I was still in the meeting and that it would, in fact, never actually end, 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

⁴⁵⁸ 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

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," I'm forced to point out that they really aren't thinking things through when they make this assertion, since we've already determined that the "for ever" 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 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 figuratively anyway, as we've already covered earlier in this study). 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 anyway, 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 still remain alive, although not because of any passage that speaks of "eternal life" but rather because of passages that tell us we'll already have been made immortal. Basically, when someone reaches the end of the figurative "for ever" or "everlasting 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 as hyperbole in such Bible versions. This isn't to say it's impossible that these words are 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 topic in the first place, and nearly anyone who did so would likely be wasting their time). And when one looks into Scripture in its original languages, while taking everything we've covered in this study 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 *has* to generally be a figurative term meaning "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), 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 the two aforementioned future ages, depending on the context), although these three terms can also sometimes simply figuratively refer to an indefinite period of time in the present evil age we currently live in, but with a definite beginning and end (similarly, looking at the Greek 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,” 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 quickened/“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.

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 that there is no conscious afterlife, 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 עולם/"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 "everlasting," for that matter, which is also translated from the same Hebrew word), it doesn't mean we should 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 עולם 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 עולם 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 עולם was translated other ways which contradict this conclusion as well, such as when it was rendered as "of old" in Deuteronomy 32:7,⁴⁵⁹ and to insist that the word absolutely *has* to 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 עולם 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." We also read about the fact that the Levitical priesthood will be

⁴⁵⁹ 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

“everlasting” in Exodus 40:15⁴⁶⁰ (with “everlasting” also being translated from עולם 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 ever after the order of Melchisedec*,”⁴⁶¹ 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 priest once there’s no sin or death remaining).⁴⁶² 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 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, and so a priesthood will no longer be necessary).

⁴⁶⁰ 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

⁴⁶¹ 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

⁴⁶² 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

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 Gentiles weren’t under the Mosaic law or connected with the covenants God made with Israel⁴⁶³ — 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,⁴⁶⁴ and that their Old Covenant in fact began to decay⁴⁶⁵ when Christ died⁴⁶⁶ (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.

⁴⁶³ 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

⁴⁶⁴ 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

⁴⁶⁵ 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

⁴⁶⁶ 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 16:16-18.⁴⁶⁷ But since we know that the land of 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 earth is replaced by the New Earth, the "everlasting" period of time that this covenant will last will also expire when our current planet 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 עולם always means "without end" in Ecclesiastes 12:5,⁴⁶⁸ where they used the word עולם 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 עולם meant "never ending." (Interestingly, though, some Bible versions actually *do* translate the verse to say "eternal home," telling us that the word "eternal" can be just as figurative in those versions as it is in the KJV, unless we're to believe there's no resurrection of the dead.)

⁴⁶⁷ 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

⁴⁶⁸ 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 example⁴⁶⁹ after example⁴⁷⁰ of things that were said to be “for ever”⁴⁷¹ or “everlasting” that eventually ended in the Bible, but I trust it’s obvious by now that the translators believed those who read the KJV 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,” 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 עולם 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).

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 Hebrew Scriptures, it stands to reason that there’s a good chance they don’t

⁴⁶⁹ I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. — 1 Kings 8:13

⁴⁷⁰ 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

⁴⁷¹ 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

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 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 αἰωνίον/ "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 αἰωνίον 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 αἰωνίον 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," it makes no sense to then say that its Greek translation as αἰωνίον can *only* mean "never ending," as some insist, when we already know from the LXX that it *rarely* means that anyway), and that neither should "never" or "for ever," both of which are also translated from cognates of αἰωνίον: such as αἰών/"ahee-ohn'," which literally means a singular "age" (as already mentioned much earlier in this study), or long period of time with a definite beginning and end (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, based on the definition of the word "age" (which is why this word is sometimes transliterated as "eons," depending on your Bible version), and

which are both translated as “age” and “ages”⁴⁷² in different parts of less literal English translations as well — although the KJV tends to use “world” in places that mean “age,”⁴⁷³ but various other less literal translations use “age” instead of “world” in those same verses—telling us that these words definitely don’t only mean “can’t ever” or “without end.”

In fact, unless we want to believe there are three eternities, including a “past eternity” (we can see from the way the KJV translators rendered 1 Corinthians 2:7 to say “*before the world*”⁴⁷⁴ 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*”⁴⁷⁵ 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 1:9⁴⁷⁶ instead of “before eternity began,” and as “*since the world began*” in Romans 16:25⁴⁷⁷ instead of “since eternity began,” proves that αἰωνίων

⁴⁷² Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: — Colossians 1:26

⁴⁷³ 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

⁴⁷⁴ 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

⁴⁷⁵ 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

⁴⁷⁶ 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

⁴⁷⁷ 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

doesn't necessarily mean "never ending" either (in fact, I'm not aware of a single version of the Bible that renders it as "eternity" in this verse). So if anyone ever tries to claim that αἰώνιον 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 passages I just referred to, 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 which hadn't been disclosed before he did so) 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,"* we have to interpret the word "never" figuratively in the KJV in that passage in John, since Paul was the *first* to reveal the secret that some people will never die prior to being made immortal. 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 mystery, or 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,” telling us that believers (at least believers saved under the Gospel of the Kingdom, 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).

And even in passages where it might seem to make sense to interpret the terms literally on first glance, such as Romans 16:26 for example⁴⁷⁸ (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*,”⁴⁷⁹ 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 (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

⁴⁷⁸ 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

⁴⁷⁹ But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. — Psalm 102:27

passages such as Galatians 1:3-5⁴⁸⁰ and Philippians 4:20,⁴⁸¹ 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 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 now, at least not to the extent He will at that time — when the two greatest ages finally begin (which, as those who are familiar with the Doctrine of the Ages know, is referring to the thousand-year age when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel, as well as to the final age 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). Simply put, with very few exceptions, the Bible doesn’t delve into details pertaining to 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), and He appears to want us to concern ourselves with what happens *during* the ages instead.

But even if we did interpret “everlasting” and “for ever and ever” in those particular passages 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 very often just figurative language that

⁴⁸⁰ 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

⁴⁸¹ Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. — Philippians 4:20

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 only “everlasting,” but also “eternal,” which is often used as a synonym for “everlasting” in the KJV and is almost always translated from the same Greek word — with the one exception,⁴⁸² where it’s instead translated from αἰδιος/“ah-id'-ee-os,” not causing any problem for the doctrine of the salvation of all humanity at all. 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 the English translation wouldn’t contradict other parts of the Bible, in other words. And, just as the scriptural references to an “everlasting” Old Covenant can’t literally be talking about a never-ending covenant, because 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, because 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” at the point we believe the Gospel and are saved, this can really only be said to be the case from a 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

⁴⁸² 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

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 literal perspective until the final ages actually commence, since we now know that the phrase really means "age-pertaining life" when interpreted consistently with the rest of Scripture.) And even if one were to simply ignore everything I covered about the Hebrew and Greek words we just looked at, the facts about the figurative meaning of the 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 sceptical about the salvation of all humanity, 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.⁴⁸³ 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 at the time,⁴⁸⁴ 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).

⁴⁸³ 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

⁴⁸⁴ 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” 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 were 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 — although, if it could, it would then be our belief that ultimately saved us rather than simply Christ Who saved us), 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,⁴⁸⁵ 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

⁴⁸⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. — 1 Timothy 1:15

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 themselves).

That said, there's absolutely nothing *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 the Son of Hinnom yet, at least not as of the time this study was written, and He wasn't crucified or buried in that 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 believers have been crucified as well, so it wasn't simply crucifixion that He endured "in our place" either, if that was the penalty He paid "in our place"). 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” (and I’m assuming nobody actually believes He “died spiritually”) rather than died physically on the cross, 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 Penal Substitutionary Atonement were 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. 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 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,⁴⁸⁶ so any mortal humans who end up sinning (which is all of us,⁴⁸⁷ 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’re resurrected) still need to

⁴⁸⁶ 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 1:28-32

⁴⁸⁷ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; — Romans 3:23

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 occurred⁴⁸⁸ (especially the sins of those who participated in the sacrificial system under the Mosaic law, presuming they didn’t commit “a sin unto death,”⁴⁸⁹ 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 sins⁴⁹⁰ (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 been unjust of God (Who judges according to truth⁴⁹¹) to pass over the penalty of their sins, and treat them as if they *hadn’t* sinned and *weren’t* deserving of death (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*,”⁴⁹² however, Christ became *more* deserving of the authority to save us sinners than we sinners remained deserving of death. In fact, He was given all power (once again translated from the Greek ἐξουσία,

⁴⁸⁸ 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

⁴⁸⁹ 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

⁴⁹⁰ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. — Hebrews 10:4

⁴⁹¹ But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. — Romans 2:2

⁴⁹² 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

which we now know simply means “authority”) in heaven and in earth,⁴⁹³ and so now not only does Christ have the power, or authority, to save all the sinners He died to save from the condemnation our sins made us deserving of, as well as to quicken everyone and destroy death altogether, God is now also able to righteously forgive sins at any time 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 born 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 deserves.

So, while He didn’t die “in our place,” or pay the penalty “in our place” (since most of us still die), Christ *did* die in order that *the penalty could be justly set aside* and everyone can be forgiven, justified, resurrected (if they’ve died), and even made free from ever being able to die (quicken, 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,⁴⁹⁴ but His death also put away sin,⁴⁹⁵ removing sin from the equation for all humanity altogether (thus making Him the antitype of the goat in the wilderness in the Mosaic law,⁴⁹⁶ among other things), and if sin has

⁴⁹³ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. — Matthew 28:18

⁴⁹⁴ 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

⁴⁹⁵ 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

⁴⁹⁶ 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

been put away, it's no longer something anyone needs to worry about. 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, 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 (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 us all, and also getting to experience that salvation before the rest of humanity does too, being quickened long before the majority of humanity will be).

That's not all, though, because Paul also wrote, "*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,*" in Ephesians 1:13. 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 kinds of salvation mentioned in

Scripture, you'll notice that this section of the chapter (verses 3 through 14⁴⁹⁷) 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 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

⁴⁹⁷ 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

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). Simply put, Paul couldn't tell them the good news of their salvation if it wasn't already guaranteed.

Now, 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 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 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 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 Christ guaranteed for all of us 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 given the special "eternal life" form of salvation 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 already discussed).

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 4:10,⁴⁹⁸ 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). 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 is also the origin of the term "**special** form of salvation" that I've been using throughout this study), 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

⁴⁹⁸ 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

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 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 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 2:3-4,⁴⁹⁹ 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” can’t actually 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.

All that is to say, this passage once again verifies that the doctrine of salvation taught by Paul throughout his epistles is indeed that every human who is affected by the curse and locked up in unbelief⁵⁰⁰ — not to mention in vanity⁵⁰¹ (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, if we’d never experienced evil we couldn’t have truly appreciated the contrasting

⁴⁹⁹ 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

⁵⁰⁰ For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. — Romans 11:32

⁵⁰¹ 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

goodness, and if we'd never experienced sin and death, we could never experience, and hence never truly appreciate, grace; immortality wouldn't mean much to us either without having first experienced mortality, I should add) — will also be equally (actually, even more so⁵⁰²) affected by the cross and made immortal, even if it doesn't happen to everyone at the same time (with believers getting a special, earlier experience of salvation, 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 — 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

⁵⁰² 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

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 returns⁵⁰³), 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 Christ⁵⁰⁴ — although we *are* still technically “*children of God*”⁵⁰⁵ as well, even as “*sons of God*”). 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

⁵⁰³ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. — Colossians 3:4

⁵⁰⁴ 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

⁵⁰⁵ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: — Romans 8:16

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, sapient 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 15 through 20 of that chapter⁵⁰⁶ 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

⁵⁰⁶ 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

in Ephesians 6:12 as being the spiritual wickedness in high places⁵⁰⁷) 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 foolish⁵⁰⁸ (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.

It's important to keep in mind that reconciliation means the parties on *both* sides of an estrangement or conflict are now at peace with one another, meaning that God is at peace with them, *and* they're at peace with God, when this reconciliation occurs, which wouldn't be 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 — and 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, although getting into all the details of this figurative translation would take far too many more pages, so I'll just leave it at that), since Christ's defeat of all other enemies takes place just prior to the destruction of death (and if there's a better

⁵⁰⁷ 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

⁵⁰⁸ Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: — Job 4:18

way to put an end to an enemy⁵⁰⁹ than turning that enemy into a willing servant, or even a friend,⁵¹⁰ 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,⁵¹¹ 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.

⁵⁰⁹ 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

⁵¹⁰ When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. — Proverbs 16:7

⁵¹¹ 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

Now, some try to argue that verse 21 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,"* he was simply stating that his readers had already experienced this 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 immediate reconciliation of believers doesn't preclude the eventual 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 perspective, prior to the crucifixion,⁵¹² not realizing that God is actually already at peace with everyone because of what He did through Christ, and that He isn't imputing the trespasses of the world unto them at all⁵¹³ — remember, while evil acts will be judged at the Great White Throne, sin won't be, because sin has already been

⁵¹² God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. — Psalm 7:11

⁵¹³ 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

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 technically 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 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 made peace with them through of the blood of Christ’s cross, 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 to the alienated spiritual beings in the heavens, after Christ takes us up there to be with Him, as well).

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 at present, as we just covered, this translation of the verse could only mean that Jesus isn’t helping angels out *at present* (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).

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 verses 16 to 20 of Colossians chapter 1 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 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 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 to truly be saved 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. (Another way we can put it is that all humanity has been saved from an absolute perspective because of what Christ accomplished, and that everyone will eventually be saved from a physical perspective as well for the same reason, but that only believers have been saved from a relative perspective.)

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 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—to begin with, 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 difference between the various types of salvation mentioned in Scripture—into consideration (not to mention the fact that the dead aren't conscious, and that no humans in the lake of fire remain alive while in there), 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 (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 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 gates⁵¹⁴ can be seen as a trans-

⁵¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
— Matthew 7:14

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 study 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 by certain denominations, 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, since I base my theology entirely on what the Bible says rather than on council meetings of Christian denominations I'm not a part of and that weren't recorded in Scripture). All that said, the actual definition of “heresy” isn't “false teaching” anyway, just as the word “orthodoxy” doesn't mean “truth.” In fact, the meaning of the Greek word which is transliterated as “heresies” in the KJV — ἁϋρεσις/“hah'-ee-res-is” — is simply “sects” (or “divisions”)⁵¹⁵ 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. For example, Galileo was technically put

⁵¹⁵ For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. — 1 Corinthians 11:19

on trial as a heretic by the very religious organization that supposedly 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 wasn't. Meanwhile, that religious organization 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, the entire existence of your church has been officially declared to be heretical by that very same religious organization. But even if your 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 study 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. In fact, both Jesus and Paul were considered to be heretics by the orthodoxy of their day, so consider yourself in good company when someone calls you a heretic, and keep the words of a wise theologian in mind: "Heretic" is the highest earthly title which can be bestowed at this time.

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 aren't thinking things through particularly carefully. But 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 a sin would affect an infinite being more than it would affect a mere human; but aside from the fact that you won't find that assertion made anywhere in Scripture, which means they have no basis for making it in the first place, Scripture actually appears to say the opposite anyway, in Job 35:5-8 where Elihu (the one friend of Job who wasn't condemned by God for his words⁵¹⁶) 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."*

Another argument is that we're putting too much of an emphasis on God's love, but forgetting His justice and wrath. And while I purposely left out the fact that the Bible says God is love⁵¹⁷ in this study so far, in order to demonstrate that one can prove the salvation of all humanity from Scripture without having to even bring that point up, the truth is that none of us have forgotten about the passages which talk about judgement or justice or God's wrath (as everything you've just read should make pretty obvious). It's just that we believe an attribute like His justice and wrath can never outweigh His essence, which is

⁵¹⁶ 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

⁵¹⁷ 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

love. And if love is His very essence, then 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 His justice will always have to be influenced by His love (which always perseveres and never fails) 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 since it would conflict with His love towards all of His creation. And, just as a quick aside, some will try to claim that God might define words such as love differently than we do since "His ways are higher than ours,"⁵¹⁸ but A) Scripture already defines love for us,⁵¹⁹ and B) if we aren't using words in a way that we can actually all understand them, there's no point in using these words at all 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 might not be pleasant would likely be an understatement. Regardless, this argument by Christians could really be used against *any* Christian, since anyone who is saved (according to their

⁵¹⁸ 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

⁵¹⁹ 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

understanding of salvation) is missing out on the same justice that they're afraid non-Christians might miss out on if the salvation of all humanity is true (unless they believe justice is *actually* served by choosing to believe the right thing rather than by Christ's death for our sins, but that would mean we provide our own justice), so it's not really as helpful a point as they might think.

Others will say things along the lines of, "The justice of God demands that the wicked be punished for their sins without end, and if people don't have to choose to receive the gift of Christ's sacrifice in order to experience salvation, then His justice hasn't been satisfied." But no, this isn't true at all. In fact, we now know that Christ Jesus died in order that the penalty for our sins could be justly set aside, meaning so that everyone can be forgiven, justified, resurrected (if they've died), and even made free from ever being able to die again. And so, if someone insists that salvation *isn't* guaranteed for everyone simply because of what Christ earned for us through His death, and that God's justice *isn't* indeed satisfied if people don't also *choose* to believe that Christ's sacrifice was enough to satisfy God's justice, they're ultimately saying that they themselves really don't believe Christ's sacrifice was enough to satisfy God's justice at all, but rather that an individual's choice to believe a very specific thing is *also* required *on top* of what Christ accomplished in order to satisfy God's justice (even though this would mean that they want us to choose to believe something they themselves think isn't even actually true, somehow making what they believe to be a lie — that what Christ did was enough to satisfy God's justice — become true by choosing to believe it), even though this would make us our own (at least partial) saviours. And if any of them do happen to admit that God's justice *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 at least have to 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 — which is the general salvation of anyone who has ever sinned⁵²⁰ — then God actually *would* be unjust, because He wouldn't be giving His Son what He now deserves. 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 experience salvation.

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 it better to believe (and teach) the truth rather than a lie (especially since the Bible so heavily condemns false teachers who teach lies)? But even beyond that, belief in this doctrine helps bring serious peace of mind that almost no Christians truly have (I interact with people on a regular basis who are Christians yet 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

⁵²⁰ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. — 1 Timothy 1:15

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 one has 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 covered in this study, 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 (it's a proclamation, not a proposition). Religion, to those of us in the body of Christ, consists of all the things (believing, behaving, worshipping, sacrificing, etc.) 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 isn't essential to one's ultimate salvation since our ultimate salvation was already guaranteed some 2,000 years ago, 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), and they might also miss out on living through one or two future ages, or at least miss out on "everlasting" life during those two ages, 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 less of a concern than one might think because, if they truly believe 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 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 are also certain rewards to be had in heaven after Christ comes for His body, which is also incentive to evangelize. That said, wanting to share good news is human nature. There's a reason I wrote this study in the first place, after all (not to mention why I share it so widely and never charge for 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 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 I still believe there's nothing I can possibly do to save myself from sin and death, and that only Christ's death for our sins, along with His subsequent burial and resurrection on the third day, saved me), 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 in accomplishing His will that everyone be saved; whereas if I'm right, those who make this claim have actually spoken terrible blasphemy, basically 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, though, 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 an 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 goes if those who believe that the punishment is simply never-ending annihilation are right instead, 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 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 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 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 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 study then they've already believed the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, and has hence already been saved, so it makes no more sense to say this about us than it does about any traditional Christian who believes they've been saved themselves (especially to 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 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 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 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 less⁵²¹ (and not just the Mosaic law, but any religious rules at all, which is what law ultimately is), and so this ends up with

⁵²¹ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

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 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 wrong — 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 the whole study from the beginning up to this point, of course, you already know why this is a bad argument, 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 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 would have almost certainly put two-and-two together and realized that Him dying for our sins and God raising Him would be the only possible way that all humanity could 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.

And while there are likely more objections than just these which I could cover here (and if I come across them, I'll try to come back and add them in future revisions of this study), 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 them who make the last objection we just covered seem to imply). Well, if you've read everything I've written in this study

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 will⁵²² 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), most of these people *do* believe that God will instead force people to suffer without end in a place called "hell," 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 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

⁵²² For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Philippians 2:13

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), 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), 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, 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” contempt by those who see their dead bodies 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 carcasses of those in the lake of fire,⁵²³ being translated from the same Hebrew word — דַּרְאוֹן / “der-aw-one” — in both verses). But at the end of the ages, when everyone who died a second time has been resurrected (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 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 Jesus’ statements about “hell” anyway (presuming we ignored the context of those warnings, which we learned from Isaiah and Jeremiah, of course). 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

⁵²³ And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses 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

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”⁵²⁴ (which was obviously a figurative translation in the KJV, as we’ve already discussed, 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 died with Christ when He died,⁵²⁵ 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.⁵²⁶ 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,⁵²⁷ so to be separated from God would mean to cease to exist, if that were even possible at all. 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

⁵²⁴ 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

⁵²⁵ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: — Romans 6:8

⁵²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. — James 2:26

⁵²⁷ 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

really be clear that this figurative warning in the KJV should be interpreted as meaning Adam would gain mortality leading to eventual physical death, as we've previously discussed. (That's not to say death *isn't* ever used as a metaphor in Scripture, but passages like Ephesians 2:15²⁸ which seem to do so — at least depending on your translation, since not all Bible versions translate it in such a manner — have to be interpreted carefully so as to not to descend into absurdity; and regardless, they simply can't be saying that people are literally "spiritually dead," for the reasons we just covered, especially the KJV translation of Ephesians 2:1 which also says we've been quickened, despite the fact that we *haven't* literally been quickened, since we're still mortal.)

Besides, 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"⁵²⁹ 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 some think would be the case if it means what we 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.

⁵²⁸ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; — Ephesians 2:1

⁵²⁹ Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. — Matthew 5:26

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. — Isaiah 14:9–11

The word “hell” in this passage is obviously not referring to the inescapable place of conscious torment that most Christians believe in, since, as we just discussed, nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures had ever threatened never-ending torture (much less torture in fire), so there’s no way anyone who read it when it was written could have possibly interpreted it that way. Instead, it should be 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 “sheol” instead, since it’s translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל), 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,⁵³⁰ including in this very book by

⁵³⁰ Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together — Psalm 98:8

the same prophet⁵³¹) to taunt the king of Babylon⁵³² (no, the reference to “Lucifer” in that passage in the KJV isn’t talking about Satan, as most Christians have mistakenly assumed it is because they haven’t read the whole chapter particularly carefully), pointing out that even someone as proud and powerful as him 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 these dead kings are sitting on literal thrones and

⁵³¹ 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

⁵³² 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 14:4-22

ruling over an afterlife realm, but I'm trusting that you can see just how figurative this whole passage is).

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 this study. 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 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 in an afterlife dimension, which lines up perfectly with what we've already learned from that prophecy about carcasses 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.

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 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 evangelicals and other 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 most Protestants are

correct), they can't really use these passages to defend their assumptions 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 to note is that none of these passages mention either hell or the lake of fire, so any assertion that not being forgiven for this sin means ending up in the lake of fire is simply an assumption one is reading into these passages based on their presuppositions rather than based on what Scripture actually says. It's also important to note that the passage in Matthew tells us how long the figurative “never,” as mentioned in Mark's account, will actually last, which is this “world” and the “world” to come. This is another case of the word “world” being used as a synonym for “age,” and there are at least two “ages” or “worlds” to come still, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:7⁵³³ (note the plural “ages” in this verse). This means that, while someone who

⁵³³ 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

is guilty of this sin won't be forgiven in this world/age, or even the next world/age, they could theoretically be forgiven during the world/age after that (which, as those who are familiar with the Doctrine of the Ages believe, will be the final world/age on the New Earth, prior to the time Christ destroys death), not to mention after the final world/age has concluded (as all ages will have to do, based on the definition of the word "age").

Not only that, none of those parallel passages actually mention what the sentence or punishment actually is. You see, "damnation" only means "condemnation," and is simply the verdict, not the sentence; time spent in the lake of fire is not implicitly meant by the word "damnation" — all it means is "a verdict of guilty" — 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 eisegesis. But even if we did eisegete the lake of fire into these passages, we already know that there's no basis for believing any human is conscious in the lake of fire, much less that they'll remain there without end, anyway, so that doesn't help the traditional interpretation either. Besides all that, though, even if "*hath never forgiveness*" was meant to be taken literally and meant they wouldn't eventually be forgiven, people don't necessarily need forgiveness (although the passage in Matthew tells us that this is almost certainly a figurative translation in the KJV, since it explains how long "never" actually lasts here, as we've already covered). That might sound like a strange statement, but there are two factors to consider here. The first is simply that someone who is condemned doesn't require forgiveness in order for a punishment to end, because even today when someone is sentenced to a certain number of years in prison, 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" is without end is also nothing more than eisegesis, especially

since we already know it only lasts until the end of the next world/age, and that there's a world/age to come after that one ends). But 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 implementing a penalty for their crime (and said forgiveness can be revoked as well⁵³⁴), whereas justification means "not guilty" to begin with, or "declared to be righteous" (it's sometimes well explained 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 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 be, based on everything we went over from Paul's epistles).

⁵³⁴ 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: shouldst 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

But if the actual sentence for the damnation isn't specifically spelled out in those passages, what is the punishment for the condemnation 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 when the kingdom begins in earnest there (regardless of whether the cause of missing out on life in the kingdom is because one is dead at the time — either in the lake of fire or otherwise — or because one has been exiled from the kingdom at the time, missing out on living in Israel during that thousand-year period was basically the bottom line when it came to the punishments Jesus spoke about). 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 period wasn't the end. Jesus said that "*the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you*"⁵³⁵ to the chief priests and the elders of the people,⁵³⁶ but that doesn't mean the chief priests and elders won't ever go into the kingdom of God. In fact, they indeed will, just not until a point in time *after* the first group has already done so (He 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 will be on the New Earth, after the Great White Throne Judgement has ended (since they won't be resurrected until after the

⁵³⁵ 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

⁵³⁶ 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

thousand years are over⁵³⁷), 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 have been forgiven at this point, though. In fact, I'm willing to concede that they probably won't have been 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 that time, so they won't experience 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 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, at least based on every other judgement passage that quotes Jesus talking about Israelites missing out on salvation (simply put, forgiveness is 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,⁵³⁸ 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 study).

⁵³⁷ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. — Revelation 20:5

⁵³⁸ And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

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 world to come"), the kingdom will be located (at least to begin with) in the massive city⁵³⁹ known as the New Jerusalem,⁵⁴⁰ 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

⁵³⁹ 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

⁵⁴⁰ 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

made immortal at that time, which is what the salvation Paul wrote about was largely referring to (although 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 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).

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 Him, and God Himself⁵⁴¹ is referred to as a consuming fire⁵⁴² (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 Scriptures⁵⁴³ are full of examples⁵⁴⁴ of this symbolism being used⁵⁴⁵ to refer

⁵⁴¹ For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. — Deuteronomy 4:24

⁵⁴² For our God is a consuming fire. — Hebrews 12:29

⁵⁴³ 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

⁵⁴⁴ 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

⁵⁴⁵ 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

to judgements of Israel,⁵⁴⁶ 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 (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 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

⁵⁴⁶ 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 mortar, 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

there⁵⁴⁷), 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 — doesn’t mean it’s necessarily referring to the lake of fire, 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, that 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 thing⁵⁴⁸ (the judgement of the body of Christ at the judgement seat of Christ should make clear as well). 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 future⁵⁴⁹), so we’d have no basis for simply assuming that doesn’t apply to the judgement referred to in this verse either, even if we didn’t already know what Paul wrote about the salvation of all humanity.

⁵⁴⁷ 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

⁵⁴⁸ 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

⁵⁴⁹ 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

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), 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. This passage 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. 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 happen⁵⁵⁰), 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

⁵⁵⁰ 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

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 the land the nations live in will be judged harshly, but we know that the “*burning*” language in this prophecy is purely figurative based on what else we know about the state of the rest of the world⁵⁵¹ during the thousand year period of time that the kingdom of heaven will exist in Israel.⁵⁵² 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

⁵⁵¹ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. — Zephaniah 3:10

⁵⁵² 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

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

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 believes these are either similar judgements which take place around the same time, or are 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 learn how you 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. 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 study 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 earlier, 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" likely isn't 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 (or understand that everyone will eventually experience salvation, per Paul's epistles), 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 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, 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,⁵⁵³ 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; besides, believers within the body of Christ will likely *participate* in judging those at the Great White Throne Judgement⁵⁵⁴ — Christ is the judge⁵⁵⁵ 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, this 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

⁵⁵³ 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

⁵⁵⁴ 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

⁵⁵⁵ For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: — John 5:22

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), which means the sheep can't actually represent true believers at all. Not to mention, there's no reference to a resurrection in any of these passages, 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 immediately after 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 a thousand years after Jesus returns.⁵⁵⁶

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 years 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

⁵⁵⁶ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. — Revelation 20:5

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 Tribulation ends. Not only that, it also wouldn't leave⁵⁵⁷ any Gentiles to fulfill⁵⁵⁸ the many prophecies⁵⁵⁹ about the nations⁵⁶⁰ during the thousand years,⁵⁶¹ not to mention the fact that no

⁵⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁵⁸ 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

⁵⁵⁹ 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

⁵⁶⁰ 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

⁵⁶¹ 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

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.

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 works as the fruit of faith rather than good works being the actual cause of the sheep's "life eternal" as that passage says they are when taken literally (and then push the thought that "many non-believers do the very things Jesus seemed to say would result in everlasting life while many believers 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 "life eternal" and "everlasting fire" is figurative, then there's no reason to believe that the actual reward and punishment, or even their durations, aren't also figurative," 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, 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 true 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, "*Which 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,*" it should be obvious what it's referring to. And those are only two of the many references⁵⁶² in the Hebrew Scriptures

⁵⁶² 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

to being judged in a figurative furnace,⁵⁶³ as well as to being “refined in a furnace,”⁵⁶⁴ none of which 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 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

⁵⁶³ 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

⁵⁶⁴ Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. — Isaiah 48:10

negative emotions of the living,⁵⁶⁵ not the dead⁵⁶⁶) 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 kingdom⁵⁶⁷ 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 He 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.

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*

⁵⁶⁵ 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

⁵⁶⁶ 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

⁵⁶⁷ 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

be gathered all nations”) being cursed⁵⁶⁸ for not being a blessing⁵⁶⁹ 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,⁵⁷⁰ presumably those who will be taken into captivity among the nations during the Tribulation,⁵⁷¹ 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 that time⁵⁷² 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

⁵⁶⁸ 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

⁵⁶⁹ 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

⁵⁷⁰ 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

⁵⁷¹ 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

⁵⁷² 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

*one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem*⁵⁷³ at the end of the Tribulation,⁵⁷⁴ 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 since 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, especially since it appears from those prophecies, as well as from elsewhere in Revelation too,⁵⁷⁵ that every nation will be involved in rising up against Israel at that time. 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

⁵⁷³ 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

⁵⁷⁴ 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

⁵⁷⁵ And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. — Revelation 16:12-16

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,⁵⁷⁶ 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*” to tempt them 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 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 hell to begin with.

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, but is just talking about a reward for blessing Israelites.

⁵⁷⁶ 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

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

This passage is obviously also talking about Christ's Second Coming (compare the details of verse 7 here to the details mentioned in Matthew 25:31⁵⁷⁷ 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). 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.

(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

⁵⁷⁷ 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

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 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 have no basis for interpreting figuratively in the manner most Christians do (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) should not fear men who might kill them for their faith, 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 been⁵⁷⁸) to get to live in that kingdom when it begins in Israel in the future. Like Judas,⁵⁷⁹ 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 be 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), 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

⁵⁷⁸ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. — Matthew 6:33

⁵⁷⁹ 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

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 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 "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 time⁵⁸⁰ will be condemned to hell, although not until after the Great White Throne Judgement, since this particular "hell" hasn't even begun burning yet (and so, 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, though, nor does it say they'll be conscious while they're in it (and we know from what we've already learned that they

⁵⁸⁰ 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

won't be), so this really isn't a helpful verse for anyone trying to teach never-ending torment in hell.

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,⁵⁸¹ and nothing can separate us from the love of God,⁵⁸² not even sin, since where sin abounds, grace much more abounds⁵⁸³). 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 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, though, because it's an entirely different sort of salvation, as I've already explained.

⁵⁸¹ 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

⁵⁸² 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

⁵⁸³ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

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

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. 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

Every single Christian out there already interprets basically every part of these passages extremely figuratively, reading “going to heaven” into the word “life,” and “suffering 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 don’t “believe on 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 are generally, if not always, referring to “the world” of Israelites, not the whole planet or every human to ever live). And what does it mean for an Israelite to believe on the Son? Well, it simply means to believe that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah (or Christ) and the Son of God, as John also wrote in John 20:31⁵⁸⁴ (and I trust you noticed the lack of having to believe that “*Christ died for our sins*” in that verse which tells John’s Jewish readers *exactly* what they have to believe in order to have “*life through his name*,” and have 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 John was writing about if it actually *was* a necessary thing for his readers to believe in order to experience the sort of salvation he was writing about, since it wouldn’t make sense for him to leave out such a crucial detail of what his readers needed to believe to have life if that was the main reason he wrote the book, as he

⁵⁸⁴ 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

claimed it was in that verse, especially since he wrote it *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.⁵⁸⁵ To get the obvious out of the way first, nobody can choose to be born a first time, and this second birth is no different⁵⁸⁶ since it happens to those who “received him [Jesus]” and were “given power to become the sons of God” not “of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,”⁵⁸⁷ 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

⁵⁸⁵ 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

⁵⁸⁶ 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

⁵⁸⁷ 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

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 it⁵⁸⁸—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 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*

⁵⁸⁸ 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

*my son, even my firstborn*⁵⁸⁹ (along with similar statements he made in Numbers 11:12⁵⁹⁰ and in Deuteronomy 32:18⁵⁹¹). 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?*”,⁵⁹² prophetically referring to something that will happen to the nation of Israel in the future. Simply put, Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about Israelites experiencing their New Covenant⁵⁹³ (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

⁵⁸⁹ And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: — Exodus 4:22

⁵⁹⁰ 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

⁵⁹¹ Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. — Deuteronomy 32:18

⁵⁹² 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

⁵⁹³ 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. — Jeremiah 31:31-33

land and sprinkled “*with clean water*”⁵⁹⁴ (this is why Jesus said they need to be born not just of the Spirit, but also of water⁵⁹⁵), which will take place at 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.”

⁵⁹⁴ 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

⁵⁹⁵ 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

Now, it is true that Jesus said, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*,”⁵⁹⁶ 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 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.⁵⁹⁷ Simply put, Jesus was just referring to the specific Israelites⁵⁹⁸ 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 25:32,⁵⁹⁹ and because we know that His teachings were pretty much only relevant to Israelites⁶⁰⁰—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 be said to have (at least proleptically, if not literally) experienced the second birth

⁵⁹⁶ 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

⁵⁹⁷ 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

⁵⁹⁸ 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

⁵⁹⁹ 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

⁶⁰⁰ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. — Matthew 15:24

earlier than the rest, such as those⁶⁰¹ Peter wrote to⁶⁰² in his first epistle⁶⁰³ (where he called back to prophecies about this from Exodus 19:6⁶⁰⁴ and from Psalm 22:30–31⁶⁰⁵). 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 in the kingdom of heaven (which refers specifically to the part of the kingdom of God that will exist in Israel for 1,000 years) 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 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

⁶⁰¹ 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

⁶⁰² 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

⁶⁰³ 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

⁶⁰⁴ 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

⁶⁰⁵ 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

until the end of the ages), and there's no reason the word "man" can't be just as context-defined here as "kingdom of God" is in that passage (and, based on the scriptural references I linked to in this paragraph, as well as the other arguments I presented, it should be obvious that it is).

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 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 time). 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 religion⁶⁰⁶ knows, the fruit of Christianity is anything but good, so don’t be tempted to return to it if

⁶⁰⁶ 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

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 righteous and good⁶⁰⁷). 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, and all manner of other actual sins⁶⁰⁸ 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

⁶⁰⁷ 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

⁶⁰⁸ 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

they had the light revealed to them,⁶⁰⁹ 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?⁶¹⁰ (And for anyone who is wondering, yes, members of the body of Christ might have been called Christians at one time,⁶¹¹ and while this label *does* seem like it might have been used by members of the Israel of God in the past,⁶¹² there's no indication that any believers in the body of Christ used it for themselves, but rather it appears to be a label 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 Paul⁶¹³ creating the adulterated “gospel” of the Christian religion⁶¹⁴ by merging parts of each of the two legitimate Gospels into one —

⁶⁰⁹ 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

⁶¹⁰ 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

⁶¹¹ 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

⁶¹² 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

⁶¹³ 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

⁶¹⁴ 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

and simply call ourselves members of the body of Christ, or sometimes just “believers.”)

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 “Lordship Salvation” for the body of Christ, as just one example). As I’ve already explained, however, there are different types of salvation, 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 election⁶¹⁵ of those of us in the body of Christ long before we were even born,⁶¹⁶ and has nothing to 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

⁶¹⁵ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. — 1 Thessalonians 1:4

⁶¹⁶ 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

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,⁶¹⁷ 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*,” which is a crucial part of what we believe when we’re saved (there’s nothing about His burial there either, I 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

⁶¹⁷ 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

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.⁶¹⁸ This sort of salvation/"everlasting life" has nothing to do with the salvation 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,⁶¹⁹ as we've also already discussed), and Jesus' resurrection was only an important part of what they had to believe inasmuch as it proves He's still

⁶¹⁸ 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

⁶¹⁹ 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

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 study 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.⁶²⁰ 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

⁶²⁰ 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 were possible to make such a trade, if everyone will be saved?" Of course, based on everything we've already covered, we now know Paul taught about different types of salvation, and it should be obvious that this 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 we already know that not everyone will experience either of those types of salvation, so 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 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 eventually, and 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.

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 not expecting their dead loved ones to be resurrected, not to the sorrow of people who were already dead, 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

This verse is extremely misunderstood, and is almost always taken completely out of the context of the rest of the section of Scripture that it's in, but just like the last few passages we covered, 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). As for what the verse is talking about, it would take a long study of Romans chapter 2 all the way through chapter 8 to really get into it, but to put it very simply, Paul is basically using this as a metaphor for the ongoing results of his readers continuing to allow Sin to reign over themselves⁶²¹ (Paul anthropomorphized "sin" at times in Romans, although the KJV doesn't make this as obvious as certain other translations do) while they're alive (and the English word "wages" in the KJV is just as figurative as "death" is here, which is something that most Christians already agree with me on, even if they aren't aware of what either word is actually referring to — the Greek word ὀψώνιον/"op-so'-nee-on" that it's translated from really refers more to a ration than to a payment, but that's too big of a tangent to get into here so I'll leave it at that). What's important to note is that Paul wasn't talking about unbelievers in this part of Romans, but rather about members of the body of Christ who haven't fully reckoned themselves to be dead to sin yet,⁶²² meaning they're still allowing Sin to reign over them because they're still

⁶²¹ Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. — Romans 6:12

⁶²² Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:11

having confidence in the flesh⁶²³ and are actively trying not to sin using their own strength — which is what it means to “obey it in the lusts thereof” (referring to Sin’s lusts, not our own lusts), since walking after the flesh is compared to obeying Sin’s desires by allowing it to have dominion over you by following the law,⁶²⁴ with walking after the spirit being compared to being free from law,⁶²⁵ which would include being free from *any* of the religious rules that some Christians insist we follow as well (the reason we don’t follow the Mosaic law isn’t because there’s anything wrong with the specific rules in the law themselves;⁶²⁶ the commandment against murder is not a bad rule, which means that it isn’t simply the specific rules in the Mosaic law we aren’t supposed to follow, but rather it’s religious rules *in general* that we aren’t supposed to follow, because trying to follow religious rules like the Mosaic law

⁶²³ 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

⁶²⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. — Romans 6:14

⁶²⁵ 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. — Romans 8:1-4

⁶²⁶ But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; — 1 Timothy 1:8

simply leads to more sin and death,⁶²⁷ and yes, this definitely includes the 10 Commandments, as Paul made clear by referencing the 10th commandment⁶²⁸ when he wrote Romans 7:7⁶²⁹ as a part of his teaching that we shouldn't allow ourselves to be placed under any parts of the law at all) — rather than simply trusting that Christ will live the life He wants us to live through us,⁶³⁰ doing the things God wants us to do and avoiding the things God wants us to avoid Himself through us (Sin — anthropomorphically-speaking — is just as happy when we purposely try not to sin as when we purposely do sin, because it likes any focus we can give it, since it takes our focus and trust away from Christ). Of course, he also contrasts this figurative “death” with the freedom of “eternal life” that one can experience instead, and this “eternal life” is just as figurative as the “death” in this verse is, as should also be obvious by now.

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 the salvation of all humanity be true if 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

⁶²⁷ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

⁶²⁸ 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

⁶²⁹ 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

⁶³⁰ 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

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 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 earlier, 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 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 they arrived at his house,⁶³¹ 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

⁶³¹ And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 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. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. — Acts 16:12-34

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 tried⁶³² (Paul said in that passage in Romans that, if you're called for membership in the body of Christ, you *will* be justified), so the inheritance here was simply about reigning with Christ.⁶³³ 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,⁶³⁴ 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

⁶³² 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

⁶³³ If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: — 2 Timothy 2:12

⁶³⁴ If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. — 2 Timothy 2:13

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. So even if a member of the body of Christ doesn't "inherit the kingdom of God," they'll still experience their quickening at the same time the rest of the body does. (Everything I wrote about Romans 6:23 also applies to these passages too, I should add, and reading the surrounding verses helps explain the context of these passages, but I'll leave it at that since this is a much bigger discussion than we have the space to get into here.)

*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 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 study.

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 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 soteriology.

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 doctrine of salvation either, because this passage tells us they only lock up the fallen angels *until* (“unto”) their judgement. 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” anyway⁶³⁵ (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 literally either), and I’m assuming I don’t have to point out that they aren’t 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 to support any particular soteriology 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–

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⁶³⁵ 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

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 (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.⁶³⁶ This is similar to the way that when the great whore of Babylon is judged⁶³⁷ — which I don't believe any Christian interprets as referring to an actual person being burned in fire, but rather as a satanic religious, political, and/or economic system being utterly destroyed — and when “her” smoke rises up “for ever and ever,” we know there isn't going to be any literal smoke rising because there's nothing literally being burned, so the concept of smoke rising for ever and ever 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 sentient beings for that particular “duration” in the KJV was referring to the

⁶³⁶ 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

⁶³⁷ 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

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 nations we looked at in Isaiah 34:8-10⁶³⁸ will last in the future; 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), 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 commonly held doctrine (although please correct me if I'm wrong and missed one, but please also first consider whether anything I wrote in this study 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 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 would have ever had any scriptural reason to

⁶³⁸ 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

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 carcasses — 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 it would make no sense to think it 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 at 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, 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 — Jesus’ Second Coming 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 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 destroys death).

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 glorious⁶³⁹ than the immortal bodies of those in the Israel of God). These people, of course, are the members of the body of Christ.

⁶³⁹ 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

This is an extremely small group of people, though, and technically only those relatively few people who have been ordained to “eternal life,”⁶⁴⁰ 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, because faith in what Christ accomplished is a gift from God⁶⁴¹ (it isn’t only, or even primarily, the salvation and grace that are referred to as being a gift in that verse, but the faith clearly is as well,⁶⁴² especially since there’s no way anyone could think the salvation or grace could possibly be “of yourselves,” considering the definition of grace and the fact that nobody can save themselves, not to mention the fact that receiving salvation — be it the special “eternal life” form of salvation Paul was writing about here in Ephesians 2:8-9, or even the general salvation he wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15:22 and elsewhere — would be a transaction rather than a gift if we had to produce faith on our own in order to receive said salvation anyway, so the reference to the gift *has* to include the faith; besides, if it didn’t, we could then glory in producing our own faith⁶⁴³ rather than simply being thankful for having received it from God as a gift), and even having to choose to believe all this in order to be saved would be a work we had to accomplish on our own, and would then make us our own (at least partial) saviours since, if we aren’t guaranteed salvation because of what Christ accomplished *prior* to having faith, it would mean Christ accomplished

⁶⁴⁰ 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

⁶⁴¹ 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

⁶⁴² 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

⁶⁴³ 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

absolutely nothing that benefited anyone until they performed the final step of their salvation themselves, through their intelligent or wise or righteous or humble choice to believe the right thing, whichever option or options it is that you think is the source of peoples' will to choose to believe the specific thing(s) that causes them to finally get saved (instead of their will to believe the good news of their already guaranteed salvation because of what Christ accomplished coming from the Source that Scripture says it *actually* comes from⁶⁴⁴). 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 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 works⁶⁴⁵ of non-believers will still be judged at the Great

⁶⁴⁴ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Philippians 2:13

⁶⁴⁵ 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

White Throne,⁶⁴⁶ 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 He literally ceased to exist as a conscious being when He died (just as He did for a few hours every time He went to sleep at night), and He Himself was placed in the tomb (and not just His body while He Himself went somewhere else). And 3) that "*He rose again the third day*" means, after spending three days truly dead, God resurrected Him into a physical (albeit "spiritual") body, not that He 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, 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 study, at least, literally every single person who has read the whole thing and 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

⁶⁴⁶ 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

you answered all the questions throughout the study 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 study know your answers). But, just like everyone else, even you will 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 study 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 here. You can't just expect those of us who have come to believe the doctrines I've covered in this study 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 study 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 study (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 Proverbs 25:2, in which we are 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,⁶⁴⁷ and only God can 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 I’ve written above 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.

⁶⁴⁷ 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