

❖ Chapter 1 ❖

After the Last Trumpet Sounds

Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series on the Rapture holds a Major Segment of the Evangelical World in Riveted Fascination. What's Infinitely More Fascinating are those Many Prophesied Events that Follow the Seventh (Last) Trumpet.

Leaving aside for the moment the obvious timing problems¹ which the Rapture Doctrine creates with Biblical Eschatological Theology², a perception exists among many in the Christian community that the Rapture is for the most part one of the final significant events of this age. After it, the Saints are taken to Heaven, the Earth becomes devoid of life and all human history ends there. "So shall we ever be with the Lord", as it says in 1st Thess. 4:17.

Actually, nothing could be further from the Truth!

The Seventh (Last) Trumpet is not the final event in the Biblical narrative. The Rapture is not the last major thing to happen, nor is it but the first of a series of final events. Instead, when the Last "Trumpet will sound, and the Saints are raised incorruptible",³ we find ourselves at the pivotal point for the institution of a whole new world: One revealed in the Bible as the Millennial Kingdom,

¹ Associating the Rapture with the Last Trump, as presented in 1 Corinthians 15:52, places the event AFTER the Great Tribulation, rather than before it! Essential to the theory is its occurring before the 42 month (some say 7 year) tribulation period. The seventh (Last) Trump of Revelation 11:15-18 is the occasion of the First Resurrection. (Re.20:6) The Rapture is presented as being the occasion of the First Resurrection also. This anomaly places several (seven) Trumpets after the "Last" Trump, and another Resurrection occurring before the First Resurrection! The Saints are in it described as being taken to heaven for protection before the Tribulation, yet in 1st Thessalonians 4:15-16 we see the dead in Christ rising up from their graves to meet the returning Lord in the air at His Second Coming AFTER the Tribulation. Such things happen when a prophetic event is mis-placed in time. The Rapture Theory obviously has serious problems when reconsidered in the light of clear Scriptures!

² *Eschatology*: The study of end-time events, particularly those events having to do with the Second Coming of Christ.

³ 1 Corinthians 15:52

ruled by Christ Himself descended, with His Spirit-Born Saints. "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. ...they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years."... "And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the Earth."⁴ Most regard the return of Jesus Christ as being the end event in world history, overlooking one of the most well-documented themes, that of the One Thousand Year reign of Christ with His Saints on the Earth. This prophetic era has more written about it than any other. Few churchgoers know the incredible story of what is to be after Christ's return. Rather than being an end-time event, the return of Christ is the transition between **the present evil world and the world to come.**

Most ministers delving into matters relating to the Second Coming, tend to focus their messages on the events leading up to His return. Few ever go beyond to relate the events which are prophesied to follow. They often can't! Because to do so would be to expose the true importance of the Kingdom of God, which they would rather be left unmentioned, as it 'up-ends' significant portions of modern theology!

This 1st chapter will presume the reader is generally familiar with the prophetic events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ at the end of this era. This will instead focus on the massive amount that is written concerning what will happen just after the Seventh Trumpet sounds. In order to not be too lengthy, we'll consider just a representative number of scriptures on each topic area. There are actually many more than are to be presented here.

⁴ Revelation 20:6 & 5:10. The 'us' and 'we' in verses 9 & 10 are those redeemed from every people and nation of earth!

Opening the Scene

Revelation 1:1-19 sets the stage for the amazing events described in the book. *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place... (by) His servant John... ‘Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, ...’Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, ...’Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”*

This booklet presents an extraordinary scenario, not just of the return of Christ, but even more, of the world that will be after it. Christ’s return is clearly shown to occur **at** the Seventh Trumpet, seen in its chronological time setting in Chapter 11. It is held by many Bible students that Christ’s coming will occur on the annual Biblical Holyday known as the **Day of Trumpets**, which is the first day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. In fact, this chapter contains a perfect general outline of those events which will occur on this Day of Trumpets.

The Seventh Trumpet Sounds

At the Seventh (Last) Trump, announcing Christ’s **return**, there is a formal **declaration** of His taking possession of all the Earth’s kingdoms forever. The response to that is the nations being **angry**, (v.15-18) followed by the application of God’s **wrath**. It wouldn’t be as appropriate for Him to pour out His wrath except that the earth’s peoples first reacted hatefully. This is also the time of the first **resurrection** of God’s true servants. (It has to be the 1st Resurrection, involving only the Saints, as Chapter 20:5 shows that there will be no other until the 1000 years are passed.) God then **destroys** those who destroy the earth. (v.18) Again an appropriate action. Finally in this chapter, we see the Temple of God in Heaven **opened**, with the Ark of His Covenant exposed to view. We should consider which Ark this is? Is there an Ark of the New Covenant? Moses’ Ark disappeared after the time that Solomon’s Temple was looted and destroyed. There was **no** Ark in the Second Temple, the one built after Judah’s return from captivity in Babylon. There was no Ark in Herod’s Temple, when its veil was rent at Christ’s Death.

The World Will Be Different

The Temple being opened refers to it being “open for business”. The Ark seen in it is the real Ark, the one after which Moses patterned his replica. The business of the Heavenly Temple is its intercessory and redemptive activities. We see here the Temple being the focus of Spiritual Life in the New Kingdom of God from this time forward. The Ark and its contents are relevant to that.⁵

Dealing With the Beast Power

Certainly, a vital activity in His taking Power and beginning His Earthly Reign is to defeat the forces of the evil powers then in control of the Earth, both civil and religious. We see described rather graphically the defeat of these **armies** in the Middle East, in Revelation 19:19-21 and Zech. 14:12-15.

That accomplished, He then turns to deal with that “Beast Power’s” **home base**, as it’s described in Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. That Beast Power is shown being endorsed and empowered by a collaboration of ‘ten kings’ who surrender their sovereignty into the Super State. They later come to hate that State which they created, and are instrumental in its destruction, as God wills they do. We’re given an interesting glimpse into this in Revelation 17:16-17 and Daniel 7:12. After destroying the Beast, these kings remain, for ‘a season and a time’, but with their power taken away, which may indicate it being for a year and a quarter that they remain to facilitate the transitional stage while God’s new government gains full implementation.

Next He deals with another Beast, the **religious beast**, “the great whore”, the bastion of deception and spiritual pollution, called “Babylon”. We see the fall of this Great Harlot described in Revelation 18: verses 21 on thru 19:4

These accomplished, Christ will hold spectacular **public events**. He will capture the prominent personalities, the Beast and the False Prophet, and cast them into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20). He’ll also hold a public execution of His enemies. In His own words,... *“But bring here those enemies of*

⁵ We are told that it contains Manna, Aaron’s staff, and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. See Hebrews 9:4

mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.” (Luke 19:27)

Finally, Satan himself is banned from contact with society, but just for 1000 years! (Rev. 20:1-3) Does religion understand the reason for this? Under what justification is he again re-exposed to humanity?

The New Millennial Kingdom

With all the forces of evil dealt with, God is now able to formally establish His Millennial Kingdom with a reorganized society. Multiple-millions will have physically survived the Great Tribulation period, living over into this new millennium. This is a period of time few denominations can theolog-ically or even logically explain. Ezekiel 5:12-13 offers a clue to the survival rate. One third of the earth’s population, is prophesied to survive. One third of the earth’s population could exceed two billion. If this possibly refers to just the dispersed northern kingdom of Israel ⁶, it would be a number even larger, presuming the world’s population isn’t decimated as heavily as is Israel’s alone.

(At the end of the thousand years, a massive number of people will be resurrected physically, but this is getting ahead of the story.⁷)

In Zechariah 14:20-21, a continuing narrative after the destruction of the Beast’s armies, as seen in the first part of the chapter, we are shown massive celebrations, with delegates from all of the earth’s families being called and represented at the new World Capitol: Jerusalem.

The Marriage Supper of Christ and His Bride (the Resurrected Saints) is described in Revelation 19: verses 7-9

The two houses of Israel are to be re-unified into a single nation once again for the first time since just after the reign of King Solomon. Ezekiel 37:15-24

⁶ These peoples include nations in addition to the Jewish race. See Steven Collins’ books on *The Lost Ten Tribes*, and the *US and Britain in Prophecy* publication as offered by the United Church of God and others.

⁷ See my articles on *The Resurrections from the Dead* and *The Rejected Resurrection* for further explanation of this fascinating fundamental Biblical topic.

King David is to be resurrected as King of the re-unified Israel. (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24)

The Twelve Apostles are to rule each of the twelve tribes of Israel, under King David. This in Christ’s own words: Luke 22:30 and Matthew 19:28. The Spirit-Born resurrected Immortal Saints are to rule Earth with Christ. Revelation 20:4-6 & 2:26.

At this juncture, it might be particularly interesting and apropos to consider the identity of the 144,000 and the Innumerable Multitudes, mentioned in Revelation 7 and 14. ⁸ This matter is presented in its own separate chapter.

The New Religious Order

At the onset of the Kingdom of God, a world **proclamation** is made. Three Angels will make progressive announcements. First, the Everlasting Gospel is proclaimed, commanding worship of the Creator only, then the fall of Modern Babylon is announced, followed by a Third Angel, uttering an absolute prohibition against the former religious system and its practices. Revelation 14:6-11

God’s Sabbaths and Holydays are described in Colossians 2:17 as a ‘shadow of things to come’. With many, this wording is seen as justifying their disregard. In fact, if we understand the intent of the statement, that these are ‘outlines of future events’, (to use more modern language), we gain a better perspective: One that the new world will be introduced to. Foremost is the Holyday Event known as the Feast of Tabernacles. All nations will be compelled to be represented in Jerusalem annually to keep this Holy Occasion. Those who today understand the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles realize that this is in fact the very time in world history that these Fall Holy Days represent. (Zech. 14: 16-19). “*And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*” These who ‘came against Jerusalem’ are obviously unconverted and are here still physical. God requires attendance!

⁸ These two groups identities have confounded theologians for centuries. A harmonization of the two chapters that refer to them is revealing. Request the article on the subject.

The world will become oriented to a new calendar, one which identifies God's Holydays. The Spring Season, which represent the process of personal salvation, and the Fall Days, which illustrate how God will then be projecting the opportunity for salvation to all who live and who have ever lived!

Century Old Children?

The survivors of the Tribulation and their descendants live and repopulate the earth during the 1000 years. These physical people will be co-ruled over by God's Immortal Saints. Isaiah 65:21-23. These people are described as living the better part of a century in verse 20. (Whether that's an upper limit or an average remains speculation.) The 'child' (of God) and the 'sinner' both die a physical death at full age. The contextual placement in Revelation 14:13 illustrates the same thing. This passage refers to that point in time AFTER God's Kingdom is set-up: after the Three Angels utter their pronouncements, and the new religious order is established. The situation is addressed as to what happens to the people living in that era. It says, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, ...that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.*" The 'from now on' statement refers to that point in time of this narrative and onward! The Book of Life is 'opened' again for the purpose of adding new names! (Rev. 20:12) This begins at the onset of the Millennium, it ends possibly up to eleven hundred years later.

(After the 1000 years there is another resurrection. (Rev.20:5) These pre-millennial dead will be raised up to stand in the Great White Throne Judgment, and be afforded opportunity for inclusion into God's Family. The Great White Throne extends the opportunity era on beyond the millennium, but to those pre-millennial dead only who were never called (Rev.20:11-12). (The seventh and last annual Holyday foreshadows this very era.) This is not a date, but rather an era in which 'the Books are opened' to those who died, never having had an opportunity for salvation. The Bible is to be opened to their understanding after they are raised physical, during that century, plus or minus, that follows it, as Isa. 65:20 mentions. The Book of Life remains open beyond the millennial age for the addition of their names as well.)

After the millennium, but before the Last Great Day, Satan will be released from restraint briefly. Who in traditional religion is able to rationally explain this occurrence? His rampage is allowed to continue for just a 'short time', and then he is cast into the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:3, 10 & 7:9)

The Second Harvest of Souls

After the end of the millennial age with its extended grace period run out, an all-inclusive resurrection will occur, raising-up **all** who ever lived, (excepting only those raised in the 1st Resurrection just before the 1000 years) together for final sentencing. In His own words, Christ said, "*When the Son of Man comes in His Glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the Throne of His Glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides sheep from goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*" (Mt.25:31-34)

These are then judged (sentenced)⁹ based on how they do with the opportunity they are then afforded. People of all nations, all who have ever lived, the good and bad together (unlike the 1st Resurrection which involved Saints only) will be separated and consigned to their response-appropriate rewards.

The Lake of Fire

A disturbing narrative is found in 2nd Peter 3:12-13. It relates that this present world will be consumed by Fire! This phenomenon is further enhanced by references in the Book of Revelation. The Beast and False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire at the beginning of the millennial age.¹⁰ Satan is cast there after his recapture, following his post-millennial escapade.¹¹ But, most curious is that both Death and the Grave are cast into the Lake of Fire!

⁹ It is important to realize that the Biblical word "Judged" has an evaluative application and a sentencing application. One involves the accumulation of evidence, the other pronounces sentence based on one's guilt or innocence. Consider 1Peter 4:17 as an example of its evaluative application.

¹⁰ Revelation 19:20

¹¹ Revelation 20:10

“Then Death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second Death.” (Rev. 20:14) But how can there be no more Death? It HAS TO BE that there are no more physical human beings left alive from this point onward that have not been either converted to Spirit existence or consumed utterly by fire. Death and the grave, needed to hold those dead, will no longer be necessary. There will not be anyone left capable of dying. THIS is the true and final end of the age of man!

Ain't Over When It's Over!

Beyond this point in history, there is to be yet another Glorious Age. Revelation chapter 21 and onward describes a whole new world, cleansed totally of any sin-capable human vestige. We see a totally New Earth re-created. With this previous material under-stood, we can now comprehend that there is to be something out beyond the human redemptive eras. *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”* (Re.21:1-4) This is obviously an era later than the millennial age, as that one exists prior to death being abolished.

There is to be another Glorious Universe Headquarters, one in which even God the Father **leaves Heaven** to dwell with His and Christ's Immortal Saints. In several places we see evidence of a most extraordinary event. After Christ has completed His rule, and conquered every ‘enemy factor’, His last conquest being the institution of Death¹², He will surrender-up the Kingdom to The Father.

King David's ancient prophecy says, **“The LORD (YHVH) says unto my Lord (Adonai), ‘Sit at my**

*right hand, Till I make your enemies your footstool’*¹³.” It also says in 1st Corinthians 15:24-25, *“Then comes the end, when He delivers the Kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.”*

THE Ultimate Future

There IS a world even beyond the millennial age! We are given a veiled glimpse in the statement of Isaiah 9, verse 7, *“Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His Kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.”* God's Kingdom and Spiritual Family are Eternal Institutions.

We tend to regard the prophecy made to Abram on the first of those two nights in Genesis 15, which ultimately became known as Passover night,¹⁴ as referring to the stars as just a numerical quantity. Passages such as Daniel 12:3 leave us to speculate that it might be more literal than originally thought. *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever.”*

Are there galaxies to be populated? Are we to be sprinkled out into the universe, with Earth being the Universe Headquarters? Are we going to go where man could never go? God the Father **will** descend here, after all, as Paul plainly states!

We can be certain at least, of God the Father (YHVH) coming down to earth, joining His Son, receiving the Kingdom from Him and living and ruling over His Family in its fullness. This fact, as well as much of the above material, though abundantly Biblical, is conspicuously absent from most traditional ‘Christian Theologies’ Why?

God has given us an incomparable glimpse out into the future. Our being ‘caught-up together to meet Him in the air’ will prove the lesser thrill! 

¹³ Christ often pressed this issue with the Jews, who reacted badly, even murderously! Psalm 110:1 & Mk 14:62, Ac.7:56 Request my article **Who Is the Ancient of Days?** and **The 134 Emendations** for further comments on this passage.

¹⁴ The article **The Abrahamic Covenant** reveals startling things regarding this important event. (Galatians 3:29)

¹² 1st Corinthians 15:25-26

The Great White Throne Judgment

A Great Conundrum to religions of all persuasions is the Enigma of DEATH without any Opportunity for Salvation. Having overlooked Biblical Evidence, Religiosity has entangled itself in Confounding and Contradicting Explanations. In fact, Scripture offers answers that Religion can't provide!

A well-known, oft-quoted scripture makes the claim that, “*God is not willing that any should perish...*” Yet, we are forced to acknowledge that by far the vast majority of all who have ever lived are obviously perished and perishing! We might say, it was their choice, but then, what of those who never heard? And, what of those who die very young? The unconverted constitute the greater majority, and a large percentage of them, fairly said, not due to any real fault of their own.

Leaving aside the persuasion that teaches that one's final sentencing comes effectively at the time of death, within our own genre of believers, there is a surprising diversity of opinion as to how the ‘final judgment’ of all humanity will play out. We have those who base their explanations on there being only two resurrections, which to great degree contorts the explanations of there being any future period of opportunity for those who died without ever having had an opportunity for salvation.

More Than ONE Resurrection

A clear prophecy explains that the rest of the dead (those not raised in the ‘first resurrection’) will not live again until the 1000 years are finished. That's in Revelation 20, verse 5. From this, we know that the rest of the dead WILL live again, and that the timeframe for their restoration to life will be after the millennium. But, it's the purpose for this ‘second’ resurrection that is the basis of widely varying explanations. Will their resurrections be merely for the purpose of a ‘final sentencing’ to death and the Lake of Fire, or will it at last provide them the opportunity they never had?

If it is for final sentencing only, then why wait out

the 1000 years for just that? Such an assignment could have been imposed right at Christ's Second Coming, could it not? Just the fact of a lengthy wait suggests something worthy of our serious consideration. Could it be that there is no just assignment for these at this point in time? In other words, that their spiritual situation is not yet determined, in that they were never provided any real chance to make an informed decision? Though unconverted, these reserved until after the 1000 years are ended, are not worthy of eternal death just yet. This is the important underlying message of the long-term delay in raising them to life again.

A Judgment Period?

Within the same chapter that acquaints us with the fact of there being a second resurrection, we are introduced to an event called “the Great White Throne” judgment. Revelation 20:11-12 explain a scene where “*the books are opened*” to them along with another book, the Book of Life, being opened also. This scene is presented just after the defeat and removal from society of the briefly-released Satan, his demons and the defeat of his vast human army. This societal upheaval, after the 1000 years but before the Great White Throne, poses further profound consideration. IF that ‘judgment’ is merely a sentencing event, what possible purpose would Satan's release (after 1000 years of imprisonment) serve? Wouldn't he and all his wicked followers stand together and be consigned together to everlasting punishment? The fact of Satan being kept from influencing millennial society, and being consigned to a fate separate of the ‘rest of the dead’ who will come up after his final removal, suggests a very different ‘judgment environment’ for them.

When we, as students of the bible, recognize the distinction between verses 12 and 13 of Revelation 20, it then becomes clearer as to why these events are to happen as stated. Further indication of these multiple resurrections can be discerned from the very comparable passage found in the Gospel of John chapter 5. In that earlier narrative, Christ punctuates each of the various resurrections with a “most assuredly” (“verily, verily” (in the KJV)) and “marvel not”! Such assertive prefaces tell us that these are to be actual events, not at all theoretical!

Revelation 20:12 shows a time when ‘the books are to be opened’, but only “those who hear” will arise, (suggesting that in this resurrection not all will hear this call) while verse 13 provides no such qualification, and with that final call, ALL will hear, as John 5 indicates.¹⁵ In other words, the second resurrection calls up a select echelon of dead, opening ‘the books’ (the Bible) to their understanding, and the Book of Life for possibly entering their names. The final call raises ALL of the dead, excluding none, to the final sentencing event. At this ‘sentencing phase’, the book of Life will be used to see if their names are IN it, not to at that point enter them.

This involvement of the Book of Life further indicates that the purpose for the (post-millennial) resurrection is for the purpose of providing opportunity for names to be added. If no further names are to be added, beyond the time of the Second Coming, then what would be the purpose of referring to the Book of Life? We would already know that ALL of those names that had been in it would be of people who were born into an immortal spirit existence back before the millennium!

Do we not have sufficient cause at this point to see that there is much to be discerned from the unique information we are provided in these Scriptures? Not only is God not willing that any should perish, but that He has a Plan by which to allow the greatest number possible the opportunity to avail themselves of salvations full benefit.

HOW does He plan to do that?

¹⁵ Refer to the harmonization of the Revelation 20 and John 5 accounts on the inside rear cover, which bring out the clarity of each of these two Christ-uttered accounts.

Will ALL Become “Saved”?

But, is this remotely suggesting some sort of ‘Universal Salvation’ situation? No, not at all. We have considerable evidence that free moral agency will yield a large contingent who will ultimately reject salvation and side with Satan. We have such people even in our modern generation. The response when Satan is released at the end of the 1000 years is quite telling. For the final generation of the millennial age to offer such a large following in such short order, it challenges credibility! (Rev. 20:8)

It isn’t a matter of all becoming saved, it **is** a matter of all being provided an opportunity for salvation. Not all of the dead at that time are to be raised, just those who died without ever having had any viable opportunity. This is the key point to understand. Those who never had ‘the books’ opened to their understanding, and certainly those who never even had access to these books, will be provided an opportunity. They are destined to be called at this latter time. Also, a great number of people never could fathom the Bible in their lifetimes. This is no accident.¹⁶ God has purposely blinded certain individuals, even whole ethnicities, in order to “have mercy” upon them! How does that work?

*“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and **the rest were blinded** (According as it is written, **God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;**) unto this day ...**For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.**”* (Rom. 11:7-8 & 32 quoting Isaiah 29:10) Now, if it is in fact God who decides to blind them until some future point in time, then how can we put the blame on them? And, how is their being blinded merciful? If God has set them in a blinded state, what does that say regarding their opportunity? Obviously, there’s something we need to understand about this situation. Not the least of which is the simple fact that they cannot complete their salvation process while still dead!

What Did the Early Church Know?

What did the Church know about this, and how did they know it? And, why does religiosity in general today not understand something so basic?

¹⁶ Examples: John 12:40; Romans 11:7 & 32; Isaiah 29:10; 2nd Corinthians 3:14 & 4:4.

This is where observing God's annual Holy Days is instructive. The early Church understood that there are to be TWO harvests of humanity. Most in our world represent there being just one! You see, they, by keeping the spring and fall Holydays, had a general sense of their purpose: To illustrate a lesser (firstfruits) **harvest** followed by a later, greater **harvest** (of ingathering) later in the year. What is in some circles referred to as "the early and the latter rains". James in his epistle spoke of this consideration, in chapter 5, verse 7. He speaks to the situation of a farmer waiting patiently for the harvests. His not needing to explain this to his readers suggests that they were familiar with what he was referring to, a concept also represented anciently in the book of Deuteronomy.

What Exactly IS Judgment?

When readers encounter the word 'judgment', what first registers typically is the idea of condemnation. That first presumption can limit ones' understanding. The word judgment has a broader application than that. It also can and, often as not, does refer to an evidentiary phase. Places such as 1st Peter 4:17 express one evaluative situation. "*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...*" This is understood also in the context of early and latter rains: this generation, called of God into His Church, is undergoing their **evaluation** phase now, while the rest of humanity waits. Their evaluation comes later. The Church is not in the process of undergoing condemnation. It's now being 'worked with', purified, and trained for millennial rulership, while the rest will undergo their evaluation period later, under 'better conditions', we might add. (In a society absent of any Satanic influence.)

This also touches upon the matter of 'predestination'. That too is a misunderstood phenomenon. Most see it as some being called, while the rest are barred from ever attaining salvation. No, rather, predestination is not irreversibly exclusive, it is a matter of the timing of ones' calling. It isn't that some are predestined to be called while others are not ever to be. ALL are destined to be called. It remains a matter of **when**, some earlier, at the Father's discretion, with the greater majority provided their opportunity later.

We can see the structure of that in two related verses in the Gospel of John. In verse 6:44, we are

made aware that one **cannot come** to Christ unless the Father specifically draws them. But later (in fact a Holyday season later) we see that there is to be a wide open '**whosoever wills**' opportunity period. That's in John 7:37-38. Chapter 6 of John was spoken in the context of a **spring** Holyday season, (see v.6:4) while chapter 7's statement was in the **fall** Holyday season. (v.7:2) (Compare John 7:37-38 with Revelation 22:17) These two contrasting statements are not contradictory. Again, understanding the Holydays of God provides us with an awareness of the two conditions: In this present era, calling is limited, but in the ages to come, it'll be **unlimited**. There are those predestined to be called now, but the rest will have opportunity later, in accordance with their own desire.

Understanding this is one benefit of understanding the Biblical Holydays. The Holydays are oriented around agricultural **harvests**, but *illustrate* the two-phase spiritual harvests of humanity. The spring Holydays present the essential aspects of **personal** salvation, but the fall set are oriented around **world** salvation. The early Church observed these days, though not in the manner that their Jewish counterparts did. In fact, they were criticized for HOW they were observing them, not for their NOT observing them. Read of that in Colossians 2:17, where Paul refers to holydays as "*a shadow of things to come.*" In other words, they present us with an outline of future events. First century Judaism didn't comprehend their fullest meanings!

On to the Greater Harvest

First, in preparation for this post-millennial resurrection involving such a great mass of humanity, advance preparation will be necessary.

The Saints of the Most High God, raised immortal as Spirit Beings at the first resurrection, will have attained by that time a thousand years of proficiency, ruling with and under the King of Kings. God's Saints will rule that society, consisting of the survivors of the Great Tribulation and their descendants who live and die as peoples do now, with the optimum lifespan being the century mark! (Isaiah 65) (But, as we see in Isaiah's account, there will be some who spurn their opportunity for conversion even in the millennial age! Some will die accursed! (v. 20)

The final generation of the millennial age will then be ‘cleansed’ of all its resentful types by Satan’s deception. (My chapter on “*Why Satan MUST be Released*” explains this in greater detail.) The ‘rest of the dead’ will then be raised into a world providing them with the best possible situation. Deception and opposition to God’s rule will be absent and their rulers will have gained 1000 years of experience in dealing with moral flaws: The best possible environment for a successful attainment of Eternal Life. This is the “mercy”¹⁷ God has in store for those who God chose to blind, or who were not afforded an opportunity in their natural lifetimes. God knows who has a high probability of success should He call them, and who has a low probability, either as a result of their environment or as a result of their natural human tendencies. In order to effect the greatest possible number for inclusion into His Eternal Family, He mercifully ‘delayed the calling’ of the majority. Even, and especially, His Chosen Peoples!

This is the Great White Throne judgment period that Revelation 20 presents us with. We could also refer to it as “the Last Great Day”, which is the Holy Day that pictures this era, or as ‘the post-millennial age’. The Last Great Day is that ‘eighth day’ referred to in Leviticus 23, which is observed after the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁸

Born Into the Family of God

That leaves us with the question: When do these enter the Spirit-Born state of being? For that matter, when are those who become converted during the millennial age made Spirit? We’ve already considered the life situations of the millennial generation, explained in Isaiah 65. They live and die just as people do now. Some die converted, some die un-converted. Also, just as now. But the second resurrection people, what of them? They live again, restored to physical life, and are given their opportunity for salvation. Considering that these who are resurrected include many who died in infancy, it must logically provide them a

¹⁷ Romans 11:32

¹⁸ Also referred to in John 7:37, a day in which He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to any who desire to receive it. Certainly the condition that will exist in the post-millennial age. Ezekiel 37 speaks to this situation as it involves the ‘whole house of Israel’. The similarity of language between John 7:38 and Revelation 21:6 is noteworthy. Revelation 21 speaks to this same post-Advent age.

lifetime into adulthood. If they are given the same longevity as are the millennial generation, then they too could live to see the century mark. However, this is Biblically unspecified. Also, considering that they are resurrected once, would it be logical for them to die briefly, only to be raised again for their final sentencing?

Facing the Ultimate END

But then, with the millennial age complete, and the post-millennial age nearing completion, (these eras are time-limited) we are faced with the ultimate question: What happens now? We have all those who died prior to the Second Coming, unconverted,¹⁹ still in their graves, and all those who lived and died in the millennial age, converted and unconverted, in their graves, and the great mass of humanity who are to live again in the Great White Throne era, converted and unconverted, alive, but still awaiting sentencing. All those dead come up, to join these previously resurrected, for final sentencing.

As this period draws to a close, a **third** resurrection brings all these up together: the contingent referred to in Revelation 20:13 and John 5:28-29. It is that event Christ specifically explained in Matthew 25:31-46. **This** is when those converted in the millennial and post-millennial ages are awarded their just rewards: Eternal Life. Those who didn’t avail themselves of their opportunity are then assigned to death in the Lake of Fire. This is the Final Sentencing event!

A similar scene is presented in the latter half of Revelation 14. The White Cloud harvest (again presenting this as the **harvest** of humanity – the second great harvest.) reaps all those worthy of being brought into the Spirit Level of existence, children of Christ and His Bride. This is when the earth’s harvest (of souls) is **fully ripened**, with there being no expectation of any further ripening, should time continue. (Rev.14:15 & 18)

So the Great White Throne is a period of evaluative judgment, between the second and third resurrections. It’s the third that’s the occasion for sentencing. The purpose of this Last Great Day is to provide opportunity to all who never had opportunity. 

¹⁹ Those who had opportunity for conversion prior to the first resurrection, but who failed to avail themselves of it or who ultimately rejected it, do not live again in the second resurrection era. They sleep on thru the Great White Throne era until the ‘final sentencing’ event at the end.

❖ Chapter 3 ❖

The Resurrections and God's Judgment

How the Resurrections are Essential to our Understanding of How All WILL have Opportunity for Salvation. God is not Willing that ANY should Perish. Is His Plan Commensurate with His Will?

The subject considered in this chapter is a very important Doctrine in God's Church. In fact Hebrews 6 lists this particular subject as one of the fundamental Doctrines of the Church. And it IS very much a fundamental Doctrine. **The subject of this is not only the resurrections from the dead, but how it is essential in the process of judgment.** And 'resurrections' is put in the plural for an appropriate reason. It isn't possible to fully understand God's Plan for mankind correctly without understanding the resurrections, because the two are tied together. They're one and the same as far as being inter-dependent upon one another. You can't proceed through the subject of God's Plan for mankind without incorporating the resurrections from the dead. They are essential to one another.

But, more than just the foundational Doctrine of the resurrections, there is the greater matter of Eternal Salvation. (The positive aspect of Judgment listed also in Hebrews 6.) We live in a world where the numbers of truly converted seem to be unexplainably small. Can anyone fully explain how so many could ultimately be hopelessly lost, and then attempt to support a claim God as a Being of Unfathomable Love?

But truth is as strange, and maybe even stranger, than fiction, and we'll see that as we proceed through this. Christ said, "Marvel not" at this. There was good reason to tell them that. Us too!

Resurrections Passages Harmonized

But it's the inside rear cover where we ought to first refer, because a lot of people are somewhat familiar with this subject but perhaps not as thoroughly as they **ought** to be. How many resurrections are there? We know for a fact that

there's at least two, just simply from a very clear scripture in Revelation 20:5 where it talks about the first resurrection implying that there's another, and then it says the "*rest of the dead live not again for a thousand years*". So we know that there's at least one other resurrection occurring a thousand years later. (This would also suggest there are none during that thousand year interlude!) Now ask your typical churchgoer, why does there need to be more than one and why are they separated by a thousand years? We will answer that.

A lot of people take exception to the idea of there being **three** because they don't find in the Bible anywhere where it talks about three resurrections. And I've heard people say – well if I can see that there are three in the Bible, I would certainly not have a problem with that. My point to you is that, in fact, there IS a place in the New Testament that talks about **three resurrections**, and it talks about all three together and in order! And it's not just in one place. It's in **two** places! When you take those two places and overlay them, harmonizing them together, you can realize what we're seeing, that one amplifies the other. Those two places are in John 5 and Revelation 20. Both of those places present all three resurrections. The passages are not lengthy. Though it's not that distinct if you read through each one separately. But if you consider them both and harmonize them as I have done for you on **the inside rear cover** – you see those paragraph marks: (¶) – it becomes much more obvious.

Now in the first of these two places, Jesus Christ is quoted in the first person as giving this message, and, you'll notice, He punctuates each of the three with an exclamation. He starts out by saying "*Most assuredly*". And you go down to the second

paragraph, He says again, “*Most assuredly*”. And in the beginning of the third paragraph He says, “*Do not marvel at this*”, expecting that they certainly would marvel at it, and some people do even today. Jesus Christ spoke of three separate situations that involve a resurrection. Now the same writer again being inspired, the Apostle John, in the book of Revelation, covers the same ground. And he does so in Revelation 20.

Let's review both of these and look at what they say. For a detailed ‘compararison’ of these passages, refer to the scriptural harmonization on the inside rear cover.

The First Resurrection

For example, the first: “*Most assuredly I say unto you...*” (The lighter type on the inside rear cover is John 5. The heavier type is Revelation 20.) These are harmonized together for you. “*Most assuredly I say unto you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life.*” And we can see already, these are a separate category of people. Now let’s read the same account in Revelation 20...“*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them and judgment was committed unto them and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*” And then that key passage - “*but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*”

This prior one that we just read about is called the **first resurrection**. “*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection over such the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him for a thousand years.*” This second death having no power is the same thing that Jesus Christ was speaking of in John 5 where He said “*...has passed from death into life*”. These people are they who are already assigned to the first resurrection – who have, in this life, in God's mind, already passed from death into a Life assignment. And they will receive that Life, that ever-living Spirit form, at the Last Trump, when Christ returns, in the event known as the first resurrection.

A Subsequent Resurrection

Noting Christ's punctuation where he goes on to

say again in John 5, “*Most assuredly I say unto you...*” And when you see something worded like that, you can know that this is not an allegory. This is not a metaphor. This is not a simile or any of those things that theologians like to throw out there when they don't want to believe something. “*Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God. And those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself so is he granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man.*” This resurrection is a resurrection in which judgment will take place. Our question is, what KIND of judgment?

Many times, we regard the word “judgment” in its **condemnative** sense. We need to also consider its **evaluative** aspect. When someone takes you to court, what do you do? You first present the evidence, and after the evidence is evaluated, then a just sentence can be rendered. Evaluation is every bit a part of judgment. So when seeing the word “judgment”, consider that it may mean, in this case I believe it does mean, that the people that come up in this resurrection will be judged, for the first time. Just as the Household of God is being evaluated presently. (1st Peter 4:17)

Continuing on in the Revelation 20 version of the same narrative, “*Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat on it from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened.*” What for? “*And another book was opened which is the book of life.*” “*And the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books.*” Why would you bring a group of people up, raise them from the dead, and then open the books to them? And also open the Book of Life? Whose names would be IN the Book of Life at this juncture? Wouldn't the people whose names are in the book all have been raised to Life in the first resurrection?

Why would you open the Book of Life in this particular phase? (Now, we know the White Throne Judgment is after the millennium, so this has to be referring to the second resurrection!) (Let

me suggest to you, it's opened to add more names. And what are the books that are opened? Because these are the books that provide the criteria for the evidence that's to be considered in these people's lives. The books are 'biblos'. The Bible is to be opened. These weren't opened to them before. They didn't understand them before. But in this era, they are allowed understanding which they were not provided earlier, and we'll consider that situation a little further on.

This second resurrection provides **opportunity** for those who never had a real chance. Their names could be added to the Book of Life depending on how they respond to the BOOKS being opened to their understanding. So this is a distinct and separate resurrection. It is **not to condemnation** at this point in time. However, their responsive actions will be evaluated to determine what their final situation will be. It will determine their salvation and their just reward, which is as yet undetermined at the moment of their being raised back to life.

All Rise for Sentencing

So then, moving down to that third paragraph. Again, Christ punctuates it with a *"Do not marvel at this"* expecting His audience certainly would have marveled. He says *"For the hour is coming in which **all** who are in the grave will hear His voice."* And there's something unique in this paragraph. It's that boldened word "**all**". (He doesn't say "all" in the previous paragraph. In the previous paragraph, He says *"The dead will hear his voice, and those who hear will live"* 'Those who hear', suggesting that *not all* will hear and *not all* will live at that time. Why? What's the difference? What's the distinction? There is a simple explanation: Those who did have an opportunity in their lifetimes and who go to their grave having spurned it, are bypassed in that second resurrection. They've had their chance.

That second resurrection is for those people who died not having had a chance. And that makes all the difference. Those who had a chance in their first life and who blew it, sleep on through and await the sentencing resurrection which is the one that we read of last in both narratives.)

"Do not marvel at this for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth". And notice, this group, and here again is something not said in the previous one, *"Those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation."* You have two groups of people being brought up together. That doesn't happen in the **first** resurrection. Those who come up in the first are exclusively God's righteous Saints who were converted, who have God's Spirit, and who remained converted to the end of their lives. With the second – it doesn't say that any are 'separated out' either. The **second** is for opportunity for those who never had opportunity.

The **third** resurrection brings up everyone: "ALL"! And God sets His sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left. He has to separate them out from among one another. But they come up together: An important thing to notice. Those who have done good to the resurrection of Life. They are then brought into the same Life that those in the first resurrection entered into...and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. And Revelation 20's version of the same thing, continuing on in the bold type, *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged..."* (and in this case 'judged' means sentenced), *"...each one according to his works"*. Affirming what we just read in John 5. *"This is the second death"*. You don't see the second death referenced in either of those first two resurrections, especially the second. We just don't see the second death mentioned there, but here in Revelation 20, verse 14 we do.

So we have the three resurrections, all together, in order, in the New Testament, given by Christ Himself, to the same author in both cases. Once, being quoted directly in the first person, and the second time being by His direct inspiration in John's revelatory vision. The **first** resurrection is to Life. The **second** is to afford judgment and justice (in other words evaluation) to those who died never having had opportunity. The **third** is the final sentencing of all either to Life or to condemnation. And that condemnation being the

second death from which there is to be no resurrection. The second death is experienced by no one without their first having passed through an evaluative judgment. For the Saints of God, for those who are called now, **that time is now**. For the rest of the dead, their opportunity will come after the end of the thousand years.

Kinds of Peoples in God's Plan

Part and parcel with understanding the resurrections, we should pause to consider the situations of those who live in the various ages of man's redemption. First are the Patriarchs and Prophets of God – a select group of people. These are the few individuals that God specifically called in the Old Testament times. A couple of references you can look at would be Luke 13:28 and Revelation 11:18. Though these are assigned to Life, they do not receive it before their New Testament counterparts. (Hebrews 11:40) *"They without us shall not be made perfect"*, referring to being raised and given their Spirit bodies.

Then we have another category of people, called the Church of God. These are the truly converted individuals whom God calls and justifies during the New Testament era. These are they who He will glorify in their respective resurrections whether the first or the third. And those destined to be in the **first** are a special category. These exhibit Christ's direct likeness spiritually in the present era, and are referred to with references such as: Revelation 14:4, Hebrews 2:10 & 12:23, 1st Timothy 3:15, Ephesians 2:18-22, to mention a few. You can look them up on your own. They're called the church of the firstborn, the firstborn of many brethren, fellow citizens with the Saints, the Church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, the remnant of whom the Lord shall call. It might also be appropriate to mention that these are they specially called of and by the Father. (John 6:44)

Then there's another category of people to consider. In Hebrews 10, it speaks of their condition. These are they who have truly received salvation. They **received** God's Spirit but for some reason, they either neglected or ended up rejecting it. *"And it's impossible of those, if they shall fall away, to renew them again"*. Hebrews 6:5 tells us

that. *"It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

This is a special time for those being called, and they're those who **were** called, those who responded, those who received God's Spirit, but who end up **rejecting** it. They have no hope of a second chance. (And we people shouldn't think that that's what this treatise is talking about. We're not talking about a second chance. We're talking about an opportunity for those who lived and died who never had an opportunity. And there's a lot of those kinds of people.) So we have people in Christian society even today that we could call "Lost" – people who have rejected God's call, who know and who dread what's coming. They've **rejected His Holy Spirit**. They've lost the Life of Christ that **had** been living IN themselves through God's Spirit. For them, there remains **no further hope** of salvation! (Hebrews 6:6) It's GONE!

And then there's another considerable category of people who haven't had a chance yet. For example, infants and young children who died prematurely – prior to what we would call the age of accountability. What chance do they have?

There are those who lived prior to the time of Christ. They couldn't have had God's Spirit except with maybe rare, rare exception. Those people who were never presented an opportunity to hear – living in Pagan lands and closed societies. How many millions, how many billions of people have never really had a chance when you think about it, throughout history?

And then we have those who Satan has specifically blinded. Sometimes even religious people. (2nd Corinthians 3:14). *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost and whom the God of this world has 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"*. Satan has blinded some. (God allows it!)

Then there are those that God has purposely blinded, He says, so that he might have Mercy upon all. Now that's a strange thing to say. If God is going to blind someone, what kind of mercy is that? But read what it says 2nd Corinthians 3:14.

“But their minds were blinded for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. which veil is taken away in Christ”. Imagine that! Ethnic Israel does not really understand their own Old Testament! We can understand the depths of the New Testament that they could not. *“But even unto this day when Moses is read the veil is upon their heart”.* And in Romans 11, *“For I would not brethren that you should be ignorant of this mystery less you should be wise in your own conceits that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the gentiles be come in”.* Blindness in part is happened to Israel. Blind to what? And then it goes on, *“And so all Israel shall be saved.”* What? After being blinded? How is that going to save somebody?

Well it works when you understand God's Plan and what He's doing. *“All Israel shall be saved, As it is written... And here's a promise in the Old Testament... “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins”.* He says, *“...I shall take away their sins”.* Now where does that leave them with respect to Condemnation? He's blinded them for a time! In verse 32 in that same passage, *“For God has concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.”* How **can** He have mercy on them? How **can** He take away their sins when they're already in their graves? **WHEN** will this occur?

So then, we have this group of innocently unconverted people. And these are found in virtually all of the ages of mankind, called ‘the rest of the dead’. You can read about them in places such as Revelation 20:5 where it says, *“the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years were finished.”* Being that this is **not** a sentencing event, we can know this is referring to what we recognize as being the second resurrection: the resurrection to opportunity, in which ‘those specifically given to hear will arise! (John 5:25)

And then there's a curious passage in Revelation 20 that I think we need to consider. It's in the middle of that second paragraph on the inside rear cover.

This is from Revelation 20:11. *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat on it from whose face and the earth and the heaven fled away.”* Picture this: Christ is going to sit on a throne, and when He is enthroned, the heaven and the earth are going to move back away, creating this vast space. But then He says, *“and there was found no place for them”.* Well you'd think there'd be a place for at least some of them, wouldn't there be? I mean look at the Earth. The Earth isn't that big, but it's big enough for everybody that's here. Is this saying God can't create a space big enough for them? Is it a question of space? (Or is it referring to a justifiable place of assignment?)

This gives us a clue to a fuller understanding and the full meaning of the second resurrection. *“There was found no place for them.”* Place for them for what? **No place where they can rightfully be assigned?!** He can't bring them into Life and he can't condemn them at this point in time because **they never had a chance to accept or reject salvation.** There's no justifiable place to which he could assign them at this ‘pre-judgment’ moment. That's why the period of opportunity that we understand the second resurrection to be, is where such a determination can be made. Do you follow that? It's an obscure little passage, but sometimes God throws zingers in there that tell us a lot. There was no place for them. God could not, in His righteous Justice, rightfully place them **anywhere** at this point in time. Some of these even being people who He had blinded Himself! We read that passage in Romans 11. **He** blinded them for a reason, that He might have **mercy on all** – that He might take away their sins. Strange, unless you realize what we're looking at. We're considering the **period of opportunity** when those people will have their opportunity for the first time.

So that's the situation with respect to the rest of the dead – those who never were called. Their minds were blinded and until this day remains the same veil. Blindness in part, and we can say in this case, in major part, looking around us, is happened to Israel. (And we know who Israel is. Not just Jews.) Satan also has blinded the minds of most. And it isn't their fault, necessarily, that they were born in a time or situation not affording to them a

real opportunity for salvation. The Father selects whom He will call in this era. The rest will be provided full opportunity in the post-millennial era, that period of time known as the Great White Throne judgment, or the second resurrection era.

Another group of people, who are to eventually be made alive again, who are included in the 'rest of the dead' will be raised after the second post-millennial resurrection. Those who were offered but who rejected salvation are excluded from the restoration to physical life with the aforementioned group because they'd already had their opportunity. That passage that we read in John 5 indicates that there will be those who do not hear this particular call where in the last call, all do hear it and come forth from their graves! All, bar none!

The purpose of this second resurrection is to, for their first time, provide them with the **opportunity for salvation which they never had**. Those who DID have, and who failed to achieve conversion will remain asleep on thru the Great White Throne judgment period!

A major category of people are the Saints of the Most High. These are the firstfruits, Spirit-Born Saints raised into Spirit Life in and by the first resurrection. "*Flesh and blood can not inherit the Kingdom of God*". That's a very important piece of information. (Though there will be people who physically survive thru the Great Tribulation, and live on into the Millennial Era, they are not 'heirs' of the Kingdom in the sense Paul referred to in 1st Corinthians 15:50.) "*These (the Spirit-born Saints) will be given the Kingdom, no others*". And you can read of that in Daniel 7:27. These will live and rule with Christ in His earthly Throne. They will exhibit the radiant appearance of Jesus Christ, in certain situations. (Philippians 3 & 1st John 3).

These will be manifest first at Christ's second coming and will have experienced the first resurrection. So we can see there are going to be some Saints who are called earlier than others. Some are **predestined** to be called early. Some are destined to be called later. It's God's call. Others will be added to the Family in time, but with a lesser stature than the firstfruits. The firstfruits are Christ's Bride. Those added into the family after

the firstfruits (first) resurrection are the children of Christ and his Bride. Christ and his Bride are going to produce a Family of peoples – of future Godlike beings. And their experience, those who live after Christ's second coming, will be to live a physical life just as people do now – to live, to be given the Truth, to be given the chance to respond to that Truth, and to **accept or reject it**. Then, when they have either rejected or accepted, and completed the conversion process, there will then BE a place for them: God can rightfully place them in their appropriate assignment. So these are the differing kinds of beings we need to consider in their respective timeframes.

Developing Phases in the Plan of God

We can identify four distinct and separate eras or ages, if we want to call them that, of God's dealing with mankind. The **first** is the Old Testament era. It lasted from 2600 B.C., the time of Abraham, to the time of Christ. Basically from the Covenant made with Abraham to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And you'll notice, each of these ages are bracketed by a resurrection. When you say what is the resurrection when the first age began? Well, we understand that baptism is a picture of a resurrection to a new life. (1st Corinthians 10:1-2) The earth was 'baptized' in the flood of Noah. Abraham was born about two years after Noah died, so this first age spans back a long way. But there was that **type** of resurrection (spiritual restoration) of the Earth at least, and human society that otherwise would not have existed had it not been for Noah, a man 'perfect in his generations'. The first age begins after the flood and it ends with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The **second** great age is the Christian era, and that's this time now. It's from the time of Christ's resurrection to the first resurrection when Christ returns to gather His Saints. It begins with a resurrection, and ends with one. Christ's and then what's called the first resurrection, which involves His Saints being raised immortal, incorruptible!

A **third** age creates a Whole New World: the Millennial age. These people who live in that new world, are those who survive the Great Tribulation and they who descend from them during the

ensuing thousand years. It exists between the first resurrection and the second, and it's the period of time that we read about in Revelation 20:5. Again, this age is also bracketed by resurrections, it begins with a resurrection, and it ends with one.

And then we have the **fourth** and final age during which God will be working to redeem humanity. The people who live in this truly hopeful age, a hope-filled living environment, will know a **hope and an opportunity** that they never had, to become truly converted. This period of time exists between the second resurrection and the third. We don't know how long the interval is going to be. We expect it's going to be at least the remainder of one full generation. Places like Revelation chapters 14, 20 and Isaiah 65 tend to suggest to us that it's going to be not more than a century.

In the **first age**, we have two different kinds of people living together. We have those people that we've identified as being the Patriarchs and the Prophets and along with them, a vast unconverted population, for the present, known as the rest of the dead. There weren't very many people called from that era. Those who were converted or those who had God's Spirit at that point in time were very, very few and far between. It wasn't a general calling. And that leaves us still with the questions, what about the rest? It isn't their fault that they were born in that era. Will they ever have an opportunity? They're in their graves. They're all long dead. What Hope could they possibly have?

Then moving into the **second age**, what changes? Well we still have more 'rest of the dead', because there are peoples who live in this age who also don't have an opportunity. And we have the Lost – those who have spurned their opportunity. We also have the first phase of the Saints. And it's only this generation who are considered to be "the first-fruits". We know who they are from observing the annual Holyday: the Feast of Pentecost.

When we move into the **third age**, the Millennium, we now have the Saints of God who have been changed from flesh to Spirit. This age also begins with a resurrection and ends with one. This is truly a whole new world order in that it's rulership (its Kings and Priests) will be immortal Spirit Beings,

serving under Christ and the resurrected Apostles. (Matthew 12:28) These will rule, exhibiting all of the righteous character perfected in their lifetimes. With them we have those people who **physically** survive the great tribulation and live on over into the Millennial Age and their progeny down through the next thousand years. Imagine a thousand years with no wars, no epidemics, no crime, no disasters. Imagine how vast the world population is going to become. Consider how much has it grown in the last thousand years **with** wars and all kinds of epidemics? It's going to be a massive number of people who live during the Millennial Age. And of those people who live in the Millennial Age physically, it means we're going to have physical people and Spirit beings living together. Can you imagine what that will be like?

The Millennial Age population will have a choice to become the second phase of the Family of God or they can remain unconverted. Those who choose to become converted (whosoever wills) will become the progeny of Christ and His Bride. (Imagine the power of that situation in convincing people of the Truth: being able to bring them to conversion, with them living with a ruling class that's actually been 'born again' in the fullest sense: made Immortal Spirit!)

But it's the final age that is most interesting and least regarded in the religious world. The era **after the thousand years** when the rest of the dead live again. The beings that rule in that generation also will be the same Saints: Spirit Beings, the Spirit Born Sons of God (who continue to rule in this next era), along with those made alive again, who formally were known as 'the rest of the dead'.

These when raised, also are raised yet physical (as we see in Ezekiel chapter 37). And they, like their Millennial predecessors, will have the same choice – to become converted and become members of the Church or to remain unconverted. This era also is bracketed by a resurrection. It begins with one and ends with one: that interval between the second and the third. And the one that it ends with marks humankind's final chapter. Mankind's final 'day'!

The end of this period will be the last day, after which there will not be any physical beings left alive on Earth. And God never made this occasion

a Holy Day. It isn't a day that pictures something particularly pleasing to Him. Not that there aren't multiple billions that were brought into His family in Spirit form at this point in time. There are!

It's here we arrive at that final resurrection of all time – the one involving separating the **sheep from the goats** – but because of that contingent that is going to have to be **cast into the lake of fire** – the second death, I believe is the reason that He never set this one aside as a Holy Day commemoration. This is the Day of Sentencing of the vast masses. This is the final stand, the final appearance of humanity, standing before God for sentencing, in their living physical state!

With this progression, we can see the full implementation of the Plan of God for mankind.

He says He is not willing that any should perish. But if we were to go by our determination, we would say the vast majority, who have ever lived, are indeed going to **perish**. Look around. How many people are truly converted even in our age, let alone those other ages? God is not willing that any should perish, but it looks like he's got a plan that isn't working, by our point of view. But when you understand His Plan, when you understand the resurrections, when you understand the various ages in which He has and is going to work with humanity, you can see that God has a Plan where **no one will perish** who doesn't specifically choose to for whatever unimaginable reason. So that's the benefit that we can get from understanding the resurrections from the dead.

This too provides us with the means to comprehend the application of God's Eternal Judgment!

I hope this has been informative to you. I tried to present it in such a way where it would make sense – where it would illustrate the realities of what God is doing. **There are three distinct and separate resurrections**, and there has to be. It doesn't work, it isn't explainable, if there isn't. This isn't just a Doctrinal argument. God's Plan for man cannot include the vast majority that He intends be included without these three resurrections.

Considering Historical Resurrections

Something I want to add to this, because I think it

would be important, we should look at the Bible accounts of documented physical resurrections. There are many. We can see in Job 14 – *“If a man die, shall he live again?”* and Job answers his own question: *“All the days of my appointed time will I wait 'til my change come”*. And he says in chapter 19 *“For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand in the latter days upon the earth. And tho' after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God”*. Job understood about a resurrection and not just a resurrection but one back to **physical** life. *“Whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold and not another. Tho' my reigns be consumed within me”*. Job anticipated being restored to a physical existence, and Job is one of the earliest Bible writers there are. He could have written even prior to Moses, scholars aren't exactly sure.

In 1st Kings 17, we see that Elijah raised the widow's son in Zarephath. In 2nd Kings 4, we see Elijah raises the Shunammite couple's son. These were raised back to **physical life**. They're not alive today. They first were physical, they died, they were raised back to physical life, and they died the first death once again.

Ezekiel 37 – a familiar passage of scripture. Our songwriters have had fun with this one. But Ezekiel 37 is the vision of the valley of dry bones. And in verse 4, *“He says unto me prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, oh you dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus said the Lord God unto these bones, behold I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live and I will lay sinews upon you and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live. And you shall know that I am the LORD.”* Suggesting that they didn't really know Him before. But we have an obvious description of a physical resurrection. You can't mistake it. Down to verse 10 - *“So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet and an exceeding great army. Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel:”* The first nation that God is going to work with in this particular way. (Not them only.) *“Behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we*

are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, **And shall put My spirit in you and you shall live**". His Spirit wasn't in them previously. They weren't converted. These are among 'the rest of the dead'. But they're raised back to life, physical life. God's Spirit is put within them. And the question from there is – then what do they do? Will they use God's Spirit and become converted or not? That's what this period of time is for. The second resurrection period (when this event will have happened) is for the purpose of making His Spirit available to people to whom it was not made available before. Israel for a special reason.

We have the account of Lazarus, in John 12. In Matthew 9, Mark 5 & Luke 8, you see there's another reference to the time when Jesus Christ raised the daughter of a certain ruler of the synagogue. In Acts 9:36-43 we read of when Dorcas was raised by Peter. These also were brought back to life, but still physical. They all have returned to the grave.

Sodom and Sidon Berate Chorazin and Capernaum

Christ Himself, talked about this second resurrection period. In fact, He had more to say about the second resurrection than any other. Matthew 10, for example, "*Assuredly I say unto you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city*". And how do we read the day of judgment? Is it the day of condemnation or is it the day of opportunity? Matthew 11 will reveal a little more about this particular statement. "*Then He began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done because they did not repent. Woe to you Chorazin. Woe to you Bethsaida. For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon*

in the day of judgment than for you. And you Capernaum, who are exalted to Heaven, will be brought down to Hades, for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you". Let me ask you a question. How would it be more tolerable if both of these groups are going to be condemned anyway? Is there a more tolerable condemnation and a less tolerable condemnation? To be more tolerable, obviously, one has to exceed the other in tolerability.

What we're seeing here is Christ describing two different societies, originally separated by hundreds of years, being brought up together, living together, getting to know each other, getting to know the opportunities that each of the others had available, and saying **you bunch of jerks!** We wish we'd had the opportunity that you had. We wouldn't have done what we did! And you had all that?! One society is going to rise up and condemn the other for the witness that they had that they disregarded. So it shows us that this resurrection, (which again, is going to be a physical resurrection), is going to bring people up together from all different ages. They're going to live together, they're going to come to know each other, and they're going to have the opportunity that they obviously never had. That's the intent of what he is talking about – these whole populations, who were never converted, are to be brought up, brought back to life.

This passage then inserts an interesting parenthetical in the very next verse, verse 25, by adding, "*At that time, Jesus answered and said I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes*". What things? The things that he was just talking about. What He's saying is that theologically trained people, and the intellectual, and the educated, **aren't going to understand this.** But the simpler people are! Those that He gives understanding to. They're going to understand that there is more than one resurrection, and what the purposes of each of those resurrections are. He had

just said at that time that there would be a day of judgment, and we can understand that to include an **evaluative** judgment period, in which people of different generations would be raised up together from their unrepentant (but repentance-possible) state, in the flesh. Jesus Christ had more to say about the second resurrection than any other.

It was important to Him!

Go to Luke 10:12. *“Woe to you Chorasin. Woe to you Bethsaida. For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented a great while ago. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.”* (Luke 11:29) *“And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, this is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to His generation. The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.”* Do we catch what he's telling us?

These people are going to be **brought back to life in physical form** and they are going to have the opportunity to learn to respond and to repent that they never had. This is that period of time. People of different generations, separated by centuries, are going to be living together. There's only one way that can happen. The men of His generation have been dead 2000 years already.

There **are** people – there have been people – who have been raised back to physical life. They're not still alive, any of them. All of those people who have been resurrected went back to the grave. Lazarus, a close friend of Jesus, was raised from the dead. (John 12:1,10 &17). Why did He raise Lazarus? I pose to you this reason – Lazarus died just before the day of Pentecost. Not having received God's Spirit because it wasn't yet poured out, Lazarus likely would not have been in the first

resurrection. But when Christ raised His close friend from the dead, and presumably he lived another couple of months at least until Pentecost, (actually, history suggests he lived for some time afterward) he could have received God's Spirit, and he could then be in the first resurrection.

And there's another group of people that's very curious in Matthew 27, and I've heard very few ever comment on this one. But let's look at it. Matthew 27:51-53 *“And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom and the earth did quake and the rocks rent.”* And you can read the accounts and you'll realize there were two different earthquakes: one at His death and another at His resurrection. But in verse 52, here's the key - *“And the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”* Many, it says. Here again, we have people called Saints, prior to the day of Pentecost. People who were effectively ‘in the Church’, I suppose we could say, during the time of Christ's ministry who happened to die prematurely or at least prior to the day of Pentecost. He raised them back up. And again, presumably, they lived for more than another month or two. They then would've received God's Spirit, and these who were converted directly under Christ's ministry, will also be in the first resurrection. See, these things are understandable once we understand the important part the resurrections from the dead play in God's Master Plan.

Sheep Separated from Among Goats

Just as a final comment, here. Let's look at Daniel 12:2 *“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”*. Just as a general picture, Daniel was inspired to write of this event where people are brought up **together** and they have to be separated into two different groups of people. Some to everlasting Life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. In Matthew 25, Christ talks about separating the sheep from the goats. Which resurrection is that? It certainly isn't the first because no goats come up in the first. How can it be the second when no sheep come up in the second? It has to be the third where two

separate groups are reaped together, and we can read of that in Revelation 14, which basically talks about the same event but very graphically.

The White Cloud Harvest

Jesus inspired John to describe two great reapings, and the people in it come up together. After the two groups are separated, the first contingent is harvested by Christ, Himself. These are brought in and added into the Spirit-Born kind, children of Christ and His Bride.

And the second contingent, who are to be thrown into the winepress of the fierce Wrath of God, are reaped by angels. It's a very clear picture of a judgment, but this time of a **final sentencing**. (See Chapter 11 which expounds on Revelation 14).

And after this point in time, there won't be any physical beings left. Those who are harvested into Life will then be awarded Spirit bodies. No longer physical. And those who are reaped for God's wrath will be cast into the **Lake of Fire**. And after that, the Lake of Fire and the institution of Death itself will be folded into itself and burned up. (Rev. 20:14) There won't even be any more need for graves or death or the Lake of Fire, because there are no people left who are capable of death. All left, at that point in time, will be Spirit Beings living with Christ in God's Eternal Family.

God the Father to Live on Earth!

And I suppose we shouldn't leave this story hanging. I want to add one more thing. I think now would be a very good time to go there. 1st Corinthians 15: An insightful passage of scripture. A very potent and informative few verses because it talks about this very final moment in time. Start in verse 53. *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption".* That's the change from physical to Spirit. *"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? The sting of death is sin and the*

strength of sin is the law but thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let's especially look at 1st Corinthians 15:22-28. *"For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive but every man in his own order. Christ, the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming,"* Those are the two resurrections that bracket the New Testament era.

The ULTIMATE "End"!

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He that has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is obvious that He is excepted which did put all things under Him." In other words, Christ was over everyone except His own Father. *"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall also the Son be subject unto Him that put all things under Him that God may be all in all."*

What we see is, Christ is going to surrender up the Kingdom to The Father. Once the Earth is purified of sinful human beings, **God the Father can come down to Earth** and live with the fully perfected Spiritual Body. The Father, then, will take over the whole world! So there's another life chapter, yet one more great age, beyond these that are in this particular booklet.

Something for us to think about. That will be a subject of another chapter. 

Note: Judgment involves an evidentiary period first before proceeding to the sentencing phase. Keep this in mind when that word is used, such as in John 5:27 and 1st Peter 4:17.

❖ Refer to the Glossary of Terms on the last pages of this booklet. ❖

The HOPE of the Last Great Day

A MAJOR Component in the Plan of God is illustrated in a Separate Holyday, the Seventh, Yet One which Remains ‘Well Off the Radar Screen’ when it comes to being Understood by the ‘Accepted’ Religious Community!

Much is related about that prophetic period known as the “Last Days” in Bible Prophecy. But that period in human history known as the “Last Great Day” is another matter altogether. It has, in fact, nothing to do with that specific area of pre-millennial prophecy dealing with these Last Days, which generally include historical events having to do with and leading up to the impending return of Jesus Christ to Earth in Great Power and Glory.

Few places in the Bible talk about this major era, and few people have any awareness of its existence or the vital place it plays in revealing to us the **ultimate hope** for that less fortunate segment of humanity who were never afforded opportunity to become ‘saved’ in their all too brief lifetimes. We can all identify peoples and times who we know never had an adequate opportunity to repent and become ‘converted’. Those who die in infancy, for example, or the millions who lived in remote lands without ever having been evangelized, or who lived back in that era before Christ’s ministry and sacrifice for sin. When did these ever have an opportunity to know, let alone to respond, in their lifetimes? It’s interesting to notice that two major religious organizations sought an answer to this question. The Mormons with their genealogical interests and the Catholics with their Limbo²⁰ and Purgatory Doctrines, each pose an answer in their own distinct way to this enigmatic question. To their credit, at least they considered the question.

The Last Days involve a series of troubling events, but the Last Great Day, on the other hand, occupies the opposite extreme, illustrating a time of great

hope for the greater majority who ever drew breath on the Earth. It **should** occupy a prominent place in Christian theology, yet few in this age have any awareness of this Day or what it reveals. Be it ever so humble, there just is no place in our typical theological process for this final era and what it offers to the vast sea of ‘discarded’ humanity.

What’s It All About?

In Leviticus Chapter 23, we are introduced to a list of Seven Annual Holydays, which God revealed to Israel through Moses. These Annual Holy Days are at best minimized in religion, being explained as having to do with Israel’s history or perhaps their primitive harvest rituals. Any sense of their true meaning is lost to most by this means, as it obscures their prophetic relevance. Of all of the revealed Holydays, it was this seventh one that proved most veiled in its earliest presentation.

In Leviticus 23, we are given only the most cursory mention, not even allowing us a name. In fact, if we didn’t count, we might not even have noticed it. We are given the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, but then we see that there’s an ‘**eighth day**’ after it in Leviticus 23:36. No name, not one of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, just this “eighth day”! All we know from this is that there’s one last Holyday, set immediately after the end of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles.

In the reiteration of the Holydays in Deuteronomy, (a name which means the second giving of the law) chapter 16, this un-named day isn’t even directly mentioned. The only clue, and one admittedly obscure, is a specific reference to judgment and justice, placed at that point in the narrative where we’d expect to find this ‘eighth day’ discussed.

²⁰ Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary: on: **Limbo**: “In Catholic Theology, a place for those who have not received the grace of Christ while living, and yet have not deserved the punishments of willful and impenitent sinners.”

Thank God for John!

If it weren't for the Apostle John, we might not even have a biblical name for this obscure day!

In chapter 7, referring to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, he writes in verse 37: *“On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.’”* This refers to being allowed open access to God's Spirit, which was to come. So, not only are we given a name for this day, but also an early glimpse into its ultimate meaning. From this, we now know this eighth day as the **Last Great Day**. We see also that it will involve unrestricted access to God's Spirit.

It continues: *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ²¹ out of his heart ²² will flow rivers of living water.” ²³* The narrative continues with Jesus later on, within the same day, pointedly discussing the matter of **judgment** and **justice**. We are again, in the gospel of John, brought to the same general subject reference as in Deuteronomy 16. What does this Last Great Day have to do with justice and judgment?

So, immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles, there is an eighth day. This day, if we understand Jesus' proclamation correctly, offers open access to God's Holy Spirit, and has much to do with the matter of just judgment.

Revelation Completes the Scene!

We understand the millennial reign of Christ and His Saints on Earth as being the true prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. Its seven days illustrating the seventh millennium, the Kingdom of God, established after six thousand years of man's mis-rule on Earth.²⁴ Here, God's Spirit-Born Saints rule Earth with Christ for a thousand years, where those who survived through the times of 'extreme trouble' become the progenitors of a

²¹ Proverbs 18:4 ...wisdom is a flowing brook...

²² It says 'belly' in the KJV. (Anciently, the seat of emotion.)

²³ Revelation 22:1 Personally reflecting God's Throne.

²⁴ The weekly Sabbath alludes to the seventh millennium. It's interesting that many opt to worship on the 'eighth day' the day after the Sabbath. Could it identify their true opportunity as also being within this extended time-frame?

new generation, living in peace and prosperity, like mankind has only dreamt of. Where the 'rest of the dead' continue to await their resurrection, as it's stated so clearly in Revelation 20:5. These 'rest of the dead' have no hope in the millennial age. It's over before they are raised-up. They are raised-up into a time called, "the Great White Throne Judgment"! Do our eminent scholars have any concept as to what this day involves? This is after the thousand years. What happens then, and how long a time period does it encompass?

For lack of better definition, most assume this Last Great Day, this Last Day of 'Judgment', involves their resurrection only to a **sentencing**. Because the Christian world hasn't been correctly oriented to the fact of, and the purpose of, the various resurrections from the dead, as Scripture reveals them, this 'Day', this Era, is outside of their theological envelope. How many religious leaders can explain exactly why there is one thousand years between the '**first** resurrection' and the **next**? To most, a 'second resurrection' would have no place and no real purpose. Some theologies even render any and all resurrections from the dead as irrelevant. But to the Plan of God, both the first and the second have a most profound purpose, because you see, God has a Plan to – in all fairness – provide opportunity for 'judgment and justice' to those who died, never having had **any** opportunity. How could someone, who died as a child, ever have been afforded a fair judgment? How could they ever be regarded as having received justice? Yet, they, and others with them, will! This area of understanding is relatively rare and unique in the world of religion.

It Isn't Their Fault!

Think about it. There are millions who died, who, by no fault of their own, were not afforded reasonable opportunity to meet even the minimum criteria for 'salvation'. Just considering those who died in infancy, it'd be millions. It wasn't their fault. They had no conscious decision to make in their brief existences. Yet, many religious creeds regard all these to be hopelessly **lost** forever. The entire segment of humanity, who lived and died on earth prior to Christ's Sacrifice, lived and died completely ignorant of the fact that such opportunity was ever to be available. It wasn't their fault that they were born when they were born. Again, what hope did they have?

Mormons at least recognize the question, and pose a solution. Thus their interest in genealogies. They pose an answer to this ‘problem’, taking actions on behalf of the dead. Catholics as well, in recognition of the need, offer a belief structure that provides an ‘answer’ to this very unsettling dilemma, as they conceive it: Thus their ‘limbo infantium’, for example, where, like with the Mormons, loved ones on this side of the grave can intervene positively on their behalf. So, the problem is recognized. What is lacking in many theologies, (with some not having even put any effort at all toward providing an answer), is solid Biblical evidence of the true status of those who died without any awareness or any real opportunity to have become converted and to pursue life in the eternal family of God. The bleakest of all theologies are those who pre-consign all of these to an ever-burning hell. Calvinistic type teachings come to mind. But if you investigate, even the most magnanimous evangelical persuasions, if you probe, you’ll find that they too can offer no explanation, nor offer any possibility that these ‘unfortunates’ ever have any further hope once they die!

Such is the state among those who embrace the unsubstantial theological position of each receiving his eternal reward immediately upon death, who reject the substantial Biblical doctrine of the resurrections from the dead. They don’t understand the resurrections, and thus, can’t understand what they need to understand, in order to be able to answer this enormously important question. **What about the rest of the dead?** And, if they have already received their eternal reward, why would the dead even **need** to live again? As this area of thought kicks the legs out from under much of the theological establishment of our time, it just isn’t seriously pursued.

It is central to God’s Redemptive Plan that every one in the grave, will at some point in time, **“hear His voice, and come forth...”** Christ affirmed as much Himself.²⁵ Yet, this is not central to every denomination of the Christian faith!

Martha understood that “the Last Day” involved a resurrection. (John 11:24) To her, this expressed a hope. Few today hold expectation of the Last Day as involving a hope, only a dread of impending

²⁵ John 5:28-29, Matthew 25:31-32

sentence. Notice, Christ didn’t correct her in this regard. Though it is unlikely she understood the ‘first resurrection’ as it later became revealed. She reflected what was commonly understood,²⁶ that there was to be a resurrection in which all would be raised, and separated. The same general situation that Christ elaborated on in his ‘*sheep from the goats*’ narrative, found in Matthew 25:31 – 46. It was only later in Church history that believers began to be specifically aware of there being more than one distinct resurrection. Christ alluded to multiple resurrections in John 5: 24 – 30, but at that time, it wasn’t clear. The comparable passage in Revelation 20:5-6 & 11-15, when overlaid with John 5: makes clear and unmistakable distinction.

The “First Resurrection”²⁷ involving God’s True Saints **only**, occurs just prior to the 1000 years. There is no other resurrection until after the 1000 years are finished! That clearly places any and all remaining resurrections into this period of time we know as “The Last Great Day”: that period immediately following the Millennial Age. So, we know from this, that any and all remaining resurrections fall within this last period of human existence. After seeing that even death and the grave, as institutions, are abolished from existence at the conclusion of the “Great White Throne Judgment”, (Re.20:14) no further resurrection could be possible.

This leads us to an inescapable conclusion: That all major resurrections from the dead occur **within** it, except only that limited one which occurs at Christ’s Return, at the “Last Trump”. (1st Cor. 15:52)

What’s Great About It?

If this Great White Throne Judgment involves only a ‘final sentencing’, we’d have to ask, what’s so great about it? Here, as many understand it, God is going to consign the overwhelming majority of humanity who have ever lived to the “Lake of Fire”, so, if that’s all that this ‘Day’ involves, then God would be asking us to celebrate His overwhelming failure!! That being, His failure to gather (save) from among His Creation more than

²⁶ Though those of the Sadduceean persuasion would have disagreed! Matt. 22:23

²⁷ Rev. 20:5 “*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the First Resurrection*”

just the most infinitesimal percentage of those who ever lived. Do the math! It's fewer than one in a hundred thousand of all who ever lived! Maybe not even that good! His Ultimate Plan, that "none should perish" would have to be regarded an abject failure! Why would He have us celebrate as a "Great Day" an apparent failure? The point here being, that, NO, there is something in this Day, and what it means IS, in fact, extraordinary. Using this logical approach, we can begin to see that we ought to investigate further.

Did God Mis-Calculate?

Did God make a mistake? Was He mistaken as to how many would ultimately respond to His Plan of Salvation? Was He intending there be more? Did He have any idea 40 centuries ago, how few would repent and become converted? After all, the total numbers are under-whelming when compared to the uncountable billions who have lived and died throughout history.

Actually, the answer is contained within the Day itself. God is not disappointed or embarrassed by the few who have responded. The very fact of the Day's existence, and its time-placement, suggests that there is a final phase, not apparent in typical religions. No, God didn't mis-anticipate. He chose to emphasize through this final day a fact revealed from the earliest times! A fact that there is a later day of salvation, greater than the first one. That there are **two** harvests of souls, an "early rain and a latter rain"! ²⁸ This is the general picture we see in Creation, and given in ancient times, upon which the Holyday Seasons, as later revealed, were built. "A shadow of things to come", ²⁹ as they're called, or 'an outline of future events'.

God's Plan involved choosing a specific few in the first calling, thus the earlier harvest: Pentecost / Trumpets, and a greater harvest to follow: Tabernacles / Last Great Day. The purpose of the Last Great Day was revealed gradually: veiled at first, only becoming understood in the contexts of the Book of Revelation in the late first century!

From this, we can understand that God isn't through with His Creation. It wasn't His intent that

the overwhelming majority respond right at first. He is building His Eternal Family deliberately and thoughtfully. The 'firstfruits' first, of which Christ is the first firstfruit. The firstfruits will be harvested at His Second Coming. Those called in the first harvest period are specifically limited to those who are called. "***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 KJV) Who can respond is limited! This is an area the religious world can't understand, largely because it doesn't understand God's overall Plan. It doesn't understand God's Plan because it doesn't understand the resurrections, nor does it understand their setting and purpose as revealed in the Holydays. Rejection of Biblical teachings and illustrations has its price!

But, if this were true, then wouldn't that leave the majority without choice or opportunity? Come to think of it, didn't we come to the conclusion earlier that the majority haven't responded? Is it because they were never really called? (see also John 5:21)

Again, a clue is contained in the phraseology. For there to be a '**firstfruits**' harvest, there must be a subsequent harvest. If in the first harvest there is limited opportunity, wouldn't it be logical that in a subsequent harvest there would be an open call? In other words, is there a time when the individual can decide to respond or not at his own discretion? But, most people would have already died by the time this would be possible.

If we go back again to the Feast-time narrative in John 7: and understanding that what was said was said in the context of the Last Great Day, we can see something else in the message. Verse 37 says, "***In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.***" This refers to that period of time, and that circumstance, where responding is up to the individual. The Temple is open.³⁰ The setting of the passage in Revelation 22: is reminiscent of the John 7: statement: "***And the Spirit and the bride say Come, And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst***

²⁸ Deut.11:14 & 32:2, Hos.6:3, Joel 2:23, James 5:7, etc.

²⁹ Colossians 2:16-17

³⁰ A key development seen in Rev. 11:19, where the Temple is opened (for business (redemption)) and the Ark of God's Covenant seen. This is in that time-setting just after the Saints are raised, and Christ takes full Power over the nations.

come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” The very same theme as the Last Great Day message of John 7. The opportunity to receive of God’s Holy Spirit is to be then opened to any and all who choose to avail themselves. There is a day in which the opportunity for at-will salvation will be fully open to all. (And without Satan’s influence.) This, of course begins in the Millennial Era, but that doesn’t allow for those long deceased who remain dead until after the thousand years are finished. It’s the massive numbers in their graves, who died prior to any period of real opportunity for them that we need to focus on. This has been an enigma thru all time. The answer is revealed in this Day. The second greater harvest provides for including them too!

Re-opening the Book of Life

When the Last Trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ are raised, all those whose names are in it will be raised immortal. From that moment, the Book of Life will have no names in it of those awaiting Life! Yet in Revelation 20:15, clearly referring to the concluding events of this Great White Throne Judgment, we see the Book of Life **opened** to see whose names are written in it. We need to consider whose names would be in it. If the book was ‘emptied’ of names, back at the first resurrection, and if no others were to ever be added, what would be the point of referring to the Book of Life again here to see whose names are in it? The obvious conclusion is, that many additional names were added AFTER the first resurrection!

At the final resurrection, we see the ‘sheep being separated from the goats’. (Matt.25) The question is, where do these ‘sheep’ come from? Were there by-passed Saints left out of the first resurrection, or were more added to the Book of Life AFTER it?

Here again, we are presented with a situation that attests to the fact of yet another day of salvation, in which new names are added to the Book of Life.

It begins with those who survive through the Great Tribulation, and their descendants in the thousand years. But that doesn’t provide for those who died throughout history. There is no resurrection for them prior to the end of the thousand years. They remain in their graves through the Millennial Age.

The Second Resurrection

After the thousand years are finished, the rest of the dead are to be raised. (Rev.20:5) What we need to establish is, What for?

Now, this is the area where many people have problems. There’s a segment of Christianity that has no real use for any resurrection to life. Their conviction is that each person’s eternal reward is assigned immediately at death. Those more knowledgeable understand that there **is** to be a resurrection, but are at a loss to explain exactly why. Fewer still understand that there are multiple resurrections. Christ Himself pointedly addressed this matter. In one, He was personally quoted. In the other, He gave the most explicit narrative on the subject to the last living Apostle, John, with the latter narrative adding clarity to the earlier one.

Those two passages are found in John 5 and Revelation 20. These are the real ‘resurrection chapters’. When we ‘harmonize’ both, together, we can distinguish a startling clarity on this fundamental Christian Doctrine (verified as such in Hebrews 6:1 & 2) not as apparent independently. Very likely, the Gospel writer didn’t fully understand this early. Below, the two relevant passages:

John 5:21- etc. *“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, (v.24)*

¶ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ¶ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. ¶ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”* (Notice, He prefaces each phase with a ‘most assuredly’ then finally a ‘do not marvel’, as they were no doubt incredulous at what they were hearing!

This was no ‘metaphor’! It was newly revealed Truth!

Revelation 20:4 etc. *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him for a thousand years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth... (v.11) ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¶ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works...This is the second death.”* (from the NKJ)

For clarity, I have inserted the ¶ symbol where the narrative shifts to a subsequent resurrection.

Here, we see **three** distinct ‘judgment’ categories.

1. Those who bypass appearing before the throne, having been pre-assigned directly into **Life** and the first resurrection by Christ Himself, *then*,
2. Those who are raised physical (notice it says ‘*there is no place for them*’) have the books opened to their understanding, and for them to live by, with **opportunity** for their names to become added into the Book of Life, if deemed worthy, *then*,
3. The final sentencing phase, where all who ever lived are raised up for **final sentencing**: those who rejected their opportunity for salvation prior to the Last Trump, those who lived and died during the millennial age, those who were finally given opportunity to respond to God’s grace in the Great White Throne Judgment era, having completed their physical life-times.

With these subject blocks in mind, when we read the two narratives, we can see that Christ revealed His Plan with respect to the various resurrections, and what vital role they play. Below, again, is a ‘harmonization’ of these two, enhancing what they add to each other. Both are from Christ’s personal revelation, both thru the Apostle John. The *light italic* and the **bold italic** are retained to identify which passage is quoted.

Christ’s Own Revelation!

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” ***“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him for a thousand years.”*** These are they in the first resurrection, occurring at Christ’s Second Coming, prior to the Great White Throne Judgment, in which they will also co-officiate! (1st Cor. 6:2 & Malachi 3:18)

¶ *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”* ***“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*** (to be assigned?) ***And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened.***³¹ ***And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”*** This resurrection provides opportunity for those who never had a chance to respond to God’s call and live ‘by the things written in the books’: their names then being

³¹ Books (Greek: Biblion) The books we are to live by!

added into the Book of Life. No such opportunity is referred to in the next and final resurrection. The only book referred to there is the Book of Life, and that, only for the purpose of seeing whose names are written in it!! And, notice, that final resurrection is all-inclusive! This previous one wasn't all inclusive, nor did it impose the 'second death'!

¶ *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” “And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works...This is the second death.”* This final 'consignment' resurrection involves all who ever lived (excepting only those first resurrected) and is that 'sheep from goats' sentencing Christ explicitly referred to in Matthew 25: vs 31 – 46.

The **first** resurrection is direct into **Life**. Then the **second** is to afford 'judgment and justice' to those who died never having had opportunity. The **third** is for **final sentencing** of all either to life or to condemnation: the second death! The second death is experienced by no-one, without their first having passed through an evaluative judgment. For the Saints of God, that evaluation period is now! ³² For the rest, the dead who were never called at least, that period is after the thousand years are finished.

Now that we can understand, from the above passages, the essential doctrine of the **resurrections** from the dead, and as a result, another one listed there in Hebrews 6: that of **eternal judgment**, how judgment and justice will come to all in their appointed time, we are ready to understand the vital purpose for the Last Great Day. God has a PLAN that 'not any should perish' (needlessly). That plan also happens to be His WILL! **This is the Day for 'them too'!** After the Millennial Age, and after Satan's brief release, those dead who never had an opportunity to know the Truth, and to respond to it, by having received God's Spirit, which is essential to True Salvation, will be raised again, still physic-

cal, to be offered that opportunity. They will live in an age absent of Satan's influence, as did their physical predecessors in the Millennial Kingdom.

How Long is this Age?

We can now see that the Great White Throne era begins with the second resurrection and ends with the third! Is there any Biblical indication just how long this interval is?

We don't have solid indication, and perhaps God isn't that concerned that we know just now. But, the millennial setting in Isaiah 65: gives us a clue. (v.17) *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former (Terrorist-plagued Jerusalem) shall not be remembered or come to mind... For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing... No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child will die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.”* From this, we can only deduce that the millennial Jerusalem, will allow these to live out their lives to the end. We see the 'infant dying a hundred years old', in contrast to the 'sinner the same age dying also'. This 'child', if understood as being the 'child of God' *as opposed to* the 'sinner' of similar age, we can understand that all raised in the second resurrection as having the better part of a generation to complete their opportunity. Not a small concession for the extra thousand years they had to wait for their resurrection. As that resurrected generation approaches the end of their opportunity period, all the righteous and wicked dead will rise to join them for sentencing, the good to Life and the wicked to the Lake of Fire.

God is good! His Plan is infinitely good! Wish to God more people would read and believe what He has revealed to us.

We can identify strongly with the sentiment expressed in the concluding words of the Book of Daniel (12:9) *“And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed til the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white and refined,... but the wise shall understand’.”* (then v.4) *“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end;”* Isn't this that time? 

³² 1st Peter 4:17...judgment must begin at the house of God...

The Harvests of the WORLD

Identifying “the 144,000 and the Great Multitude”

One of the More Puzzling Prophecies in the New Testament is Found in Revelation, Chapters 7 and 14. Many have attempted to Explain WHO these TWO Separate Groups are. Can We KNOW with Certainty? Why are We given this? And, What Awareness can we Gain from knowing their Identities?

In attempting to understand a very explicit passage of Scripture, many have sought to explain in a plausible manner who these two separate groups of peoples are that we see described, first in the book of Revelation Chapter 7, and then again in Chapter 14. Those presenting an explanation usually see themselves in the former group, and everyone else in other churches in the latter. (Not that being in the latter is a totally bad thing.) This, at least, is one area where there is some consistency. After that, their paths toward understanding seem to meander rather wonderfully!

We need to first ask ourselves if the identities of these groups have any real relevance to us. Is there anything in this that we really **need** to know? After all, so few throughout history have known or even could have known who they truly are. Of those offering possible explanations, few have had much more than speculation to go on. Is there anything more substantial than that?

An End Time Epiphany

In the concluding verses of the Book of Daniel, the prophet is told to, “*Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed til the time of the end...*” We can see from this that some things were never intended to be understood until a set time at the end. But, it does indicate that these prophecies were given for a purpose, and that purpose was that, “*the wise shall understand.*”³³ The wise being defined in the first part of verse 10, as those who are or are to be “*purified and made white, and refined...*” If these purified individuals were among either of these groups, wouldn’t it be logical that

they would be the first to understand their own identities? Quite possibly, from the language, they could be the **only** ones to come to understand in advance.

Who are the 144,000, and how vast a number is the Great Multitude? Considering that the army of 200 million, mentioned under the Sixth Trumpet, in Revelation 9:16 is a **numerable** multitude, then the Great Multitude must be a number vastly greater than that. It must be in the multiple billions!

It’s interesting that the inserted chapter heading in one King James version (Oxford Press) above the passage in Chapter 14, reads, “*The Harvest of the World*”. This is more than an interesting observation on their part. They recognize this as the underlying subject of Revelation chapter 14. Realizing that the presentation of these two groups addresses the formal ‘harvests’ of individuals into a full inheritance, a ‘reaping’, (Rev. 14:15) we can begin to conceive what this picture is intended to give us. Revelation 14 presents the conclusion of the harvests, but also the process. Chapter 7, on the other hand, deals more with the identities question. A correlation between these two chapters is useful in coming to understand who these two groups of peoples are.

A reason for the identities of these two distinct and different groups being so enigmatic is the common misconception that there is only **one** day of salvation, ever! Having severed the Biblical Holydays from formal practice and having excluded them from our consciousness, the overview of prophecy that these seven annual Holydays give us and the answers to important salvational questions they

³³ Daniel 12:9 & 10

provide, leaves most religionists in darkness on certain things.³⁴ There are important questions not fully explainable under traditional exegeses.

Profound Inopportunity

For example, we have vast numbers of people who lived and died long before salvation was available. They never had any chance. Thousands died in infancy throughout history, never having attained even the slightest awareness of salvational issues, let alone those who have lived before and after the time when salvation was available, or in areas of the world that were never effectively evangelized. Other than, in their minds, to consign all these to ever-burning hell, traditional religion is unable to explain when that ‘opportunity’ was offered them, which logic would see as being essential to justify their being consigned to an eternal destiny.

Beside these, we have a major segment of ‘Israel’ concluded in blindness by God. In other words, the non-response to salvation on the part of their majority is not entirely their fault. We see also of these, clear indication that they **will** be offered salvation at some future occasion.³⁵ How **can** they be ‘saved’ when those who lived throughout history have already died still in their God-induced condition of blindness?

The One-Hundred-Forty-Four Thousand

Understanding who the 144,000 are, from Biblical evidence, requires we consider what is said about them in both passages: Chapters 7 and 14. Chapter 7 is inserted in the sequential narrative just prior to Christ’s return, but the setting of our view of them from Chapter 14, is just after it. During a pause in the prophetic story flow, Chapter 7 first presents the 144,000 as an aggregate group of 12,000 accounted to or from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (with

³⁴ The Spring Holydays reveal essential components in the process of personal salvation. The fall Holydays lay out a prophetic outline, explaining how the Plan of God for world salvation will be extended to all who have ever lived. Essential to both is the fundamental doctrine of the resurrections from the dead.

³⁵ Romans 9:1 thru 11:33 “For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.” “...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. “And so all Israel shall be saved.” See my article on that titled: “All Israel Shall be Saved”

Joseph being inserted along with his own son Manasseh to again make twelve tribes, in that the tribe of Dan is noticeably excluded here.)

In Revelation 7, we read: “*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. 2: 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, 3: Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have **sealed** the servants of our God in their foreheads. 4: 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. And then it names each tribe of which twelve thousand is sealed: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Nephtalim, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon, **Joseph**, and Benjamin.*

Here, we’re given a precise time marker and other than their tribal count and assignment and Earthly locale, little else.

Then in chapter 14, much more is added into the picture: “*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him **an hundred forty and four thousand**, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2: And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3: And they sung as it were a **new song before the throne**, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the **hundred and forty and four thousand**, which were redeemed from the earth. 4: These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being **the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb**. 5: And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”*

Again, a time marker, but clearly different than the one set forth in chapter 7, and here, a number of specific details are added.

As to the time setting, we've now moved forward to the time of Christ's descent onto the Mount of Olives, as referred to in Zechariah 14:4-5. Where our first introduction to the 144,000 is just before that phase of the Day of the Lord, when His wrath is to be poured out, as explained in the seven last trumpet plagues of chapter 8 thru 11, (which are contained within the seventh seal) the time setting of the continuing discussion of these same 144,000 in chapter 14 is now at and after Christ's return, which comes with the seventh (last) Trump that we read of in Revelation 11:15. (And 1st Cor. 15:52)

In chapter 9:4 a reference is made again to 'those which have the **seal of God** in their foreheads', which 14:1 reveals includes *the Father's Name!* Does this sealing refer to a completion involving those still living, or does the 144,000 involve Saints which may have died prior to this time?

In the reference to this scene, Zechariah 14:5 indicates the He will come to the Mount of Olives with 'all the Saints' with Him! This raises the question of the 144,000. Are they all of the Saints at this point in time, or are the 144,000 only among them? We do have a partial clue by their being identified as '*the firstfruits*' in Revelation 14:4. But again, are these all of the firstfruits, or just part of them? The conclusion that they **are all** of them is a rather unsettling prospect, causing those who've considered this possible answer to lay it aside!

But, another ancient passage adds evidence. It's by Jude quoting Enoch, who lived before the flood. Verses 14 & 15 say this: "*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with **ten thousands** of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*" If Enoch was correct, his assessment of how many Saints there would be with Christ at His return would number in the ten-thousands. 144,000 is 14.4 ten-thousands! Over a hundred thousand, but not a great enough number to require using a plural 'hundreds' of thousands! Was Enoch accurate?

Now, this event is just after Christ's return, after the 'Last Trump' in which all those whose names are in

the 'Book of Life' are resurrected. As no others are to be resurrected until a thousand years pass, ALL the Saints there are at this point in time will have been made alive as immortal Spirits.

An Innumerable Multitude

Equally enigmatic to the religious community is the specific identity of the great multitude. I say 'specific' identity, because we at least know they are converted peoples, from verses 9, 14 & 17.

Rev. 7:9 "***After this** I beheld, and, lo, a **great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;** 10: And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11: And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12: Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. 13: And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14: And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15: Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16: They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17: For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall **feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:** and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

In Revelation 7 we're presented with the two groups as **distinct**. It begins by saying 'after this', which shows the two groups **separated** in time. Further, verse 14 places the great multitude living and perfecting themselves after the end of the tribulation, whereas the 144,000 were already converted and made spirit before them at Christ's return! Verse 17 is as close to a description of the conversion process as anything we could find.

Where Revelation 7 presents the two groups in contrast to one another, chapter 14 is different. It provides a fairly clear identity of the 144,000, but then goes on to describe what many bibles, in their added chapter sub-titles, call ‘*the harvest of the world*’. If we are to consider the subject in the latter two-thirds of chapter 14 as being unrelated to the identities of the great multitude, we risk not being as able to answer the identity question fully.

In chapter 7 we see that these undergo the conversion process. What chapter 14 does is address itself to the events and process which results in the ‘harvest’ of the rest of humanity, a process beginning **after** Christ’s return!

THE Call to Repentance

In 14:5 we see the 144,000 before the Throne of God. This is more than just a presence there. In 3:21, 5:10 and 20:4, we see these Saints living and **reigning** with Him for 1000 years. Now we know from what we reviewed earlier that they are the Saints or at least are prominent among the Saints. What kind of *service* do they provide?

The next verse breaks from a focus on them to the general population alive at that time. Though it doesn’t specifically make reference here to them as the innumerable multitude, what else would be the logical result of a universal angelic ‘invitation’? ³⁶

14:6 “*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel** to preach unto **them that dwell on the earth**, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7: Saying with a loud voice, **Fear God**, and give glory to him; for **the hour of his judgment is come**: and **worship him that made** heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. 8: And there followed another angel, saying, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.* 9: 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, 10: The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture**

³⁶ Articles “*The Early and Latter Rains*” and “*There Was NO Place for Them*” explains more fully this period of time that Revelation 14:6-13 refers to.

*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: 11: 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. 12: Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.** 13: And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, *Write, Blessed are the dead which **die in the Lord from henceforth**: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.**

This passage brings out a lot of important things.

Worship the Creator

After Christ’s return, the opportunity for Salvation is opened to **all**. The Temple in Heaven is opened (for business) (Rev. 11:19). An angel preaches to every living person, instructing them to worship God, announcing the beginning of the general ‘judgment’ upon all humanity, and to worship the Creator. The Creator of ‘heaven and Earth’ (the physical creation), and ‘the sea and fountains’ (see 7:17) (Creator of the masses of humanity and their spiritual re-redemption plan thru access to living fountains, (representing access to God’s Spirit)).

The next angel announces the *second* fall of modern Babylon (that religious kingdom developing since before the time of Christ, still extant at the end).

Then a third angel issues a permanent prohibition against any vestige of practice of the former false religions, as promoted by Babylon and its supporting Beast Power, whose vile doctrines and practices are still fresh on their minds, pronouncing a severe punishment: *eternal death*, upon anyone doing so.

Verse 13 is insightful. If we allow the time setting introduced in verse 6 to hold, the pronouncement here provides an answer to what happens to those who live on physically into the millennial age and their ‘offspring’ as also referred to in Isaiah 65:23. “*Blessed are the dead which **die in the Lord from henceforth**:” indicates that these who become converted during the millennial age, subsequent to the angelic ‘call’, will die and await sentencing at the end, not unlike the situation in this pre-advent*

era. Isaiah 65:20 seems to confirm the same! Converted people die and go to their graves and await the resurrection in order to receive their eternal reward.³⁷

In verse 14, we are ‘flashed forward’ to that sentencing period at the end of this ‘call to worship’. This is the actual ‘harvest’ referred to earlier, imposing sentences now justifiable since people were allowed legitimate opportunity for salvation!

Keep in mind that all Saints, whose names are written in the ‘Book of Life’, living or dead at the time of Christ’s second coming, are raised **immortal**. That would leave **no** converted remaining dead at that point in time. In order for the scene described in Revelation 14:14-19 to be possible, other converted ‘saints’ would have to have been generated!

A Two-Part Second Harvest!

14: *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto **the Son of man**, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.* 15: *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to **reap**; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.* 16: *And **he that sat on the cloud** thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was **reaped**.*³⁸ 17: *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.* 18: *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over **fire**; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and **gather** the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.* 19: *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and **gathered** the vine of the earth, and cast it into the **great winepress of the wrath of God**.” (see also Mat. 25:31-46 and 13:36-43)*

Once we realize that Revelation 14, from verse 6 onward, describes the era from which the great innumerable multitude arises, we can realize that their identity is not so concealed. These are they who become converted under the administration of

³⁷ 1st Corinthians 15:14 attests to the absolute necessity of the resurrection from the dead.

³⁸ Notice, the first group is reaped, the second gathered. Compare that with Christ’s comment in Matt. 13:39-40

the Throne of Christ and His Saints, with His Temple wide open, and with the Ark of His Covenant visible in it! (Revelation 11:19) Which Ark?

As Revelation 14:1-5 expounds upon Revelation 7:1-8, so also Revelation 14:6-12 expounds upon chapter 7:9-17. Understanding the full message of **both** chapters in their co-relationships, provides better and more definitive answers than are attainable thru theological speculations.

This brings a tacit realization: That the 144,000 represents the first harvest of Saints, and the innumerable multitude of the millennial age and ‘white throne judgment’ represents the second!

How great might the ‘innumerable multitude be? Well, we see in Revelation 9:16 that an army of 200 million is an easily numerable quantity. It must be vastly greater than that! Multiple billions!

A Consistent Pattern

This conclusion is consistent with the two harvests pictured in the ‘early and latter rains’ of James 5:7. It’s also consistent with the picture of the future ages of world salvation pictured in the Biblical Holydays: a relatively ‘**small** harvest’ represented in the spring Holydays, culminating with the Day of Pentecost, (the Feast of Firstfruits) and a ‘**vast** harvest’ as pictured in the fall Holydays.

God is now preparing His Bride, they who renew the ‘covenant of commitment’ each year at Passover (the occasion when Christ formally proposed marriage to His prospective Bride – request the article, “*Passover and the Bride*”), who in the millennial age, will ‘parent’ the coming generation, of unknowable numbers, vast, beyond count! 

Related Topics: (available from this author)

- “*The Resurrections from the Dead*”
 - “*The Rejected Resurrection*”
 - “*Understanding the THREE Resurrections*”
 - “*And So, All Israel Shall be Saved*”
 - “*And No Place was Found for Them*”
 - “*Understanding the Second Death*”
 - “*A Shadow of Things to Come*”
 - “*The Early and Latter Rains*”
 - “*The Everlasting Covenant*”
-

The Harvest of Firstfruits

James' Epistle refers to important aspects regarding the redemption experience, that we are ultimately to become "...a kind of firstfruits of His creatures". What does this mean as it involves Believers in this New Testament Era?

In James chapter 5, verse 7, we are reminded of the phenomenon of "*the early and latter rain*". What he was alluding to there is something generally known among God's true worshippers from ancient times, that phenomenon of there being a figurative early and a late harvest. Two harvest periods – a lesser one in early summer and a much greater harvest at the end of summer. Their awareness was further illustrated in the harvest festivals God gave them to observe after coming out of their long and hard Egyptian bondage.

Those two harvests were known by two different names. The Holydays God gave to Israel reflected the annual grain harvests, and were known by the names: The Feast of Firstfruits (Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:10 & 17) and the later Feast of Ingathering. (Ex. 34:22 & 23:16)

Mere Harvest Feasts?

But, were these only agricultural festivals, meant to celebrate the physical abundance they were given, or did the agricultural harvests correlate to what God is doing with respect to the redemption of mankind, harvests of another type? This question lifts these observances from having only temporal application to having spiritual relevance. It is when we understand the meanings God placed in His physical Creation that we can better understand His Plan as it involves His spiritual creation.

This chapter will focus on what we call the **spring** Holydays and the phenomenon of the Harvest of Firstfruits.

Where it All Began

The origins of the idea of ritualizing the physical grain harvests have even more ancient roots than

we might realize. In fact, it extends back to the times Israel was in bondage in Egypt. In Exodus chapter 12 verse 2, God tells Moses something quite unexpected and highly unusual in the overall affairs of men. He told Moses to **change their calendar** by which they had long marked annual seasons. For the previous 2500 years, from the time of Adam, humanity had considered the late summer to be the start of the new year, in that Creation had been in the fall.³⁹ From that point forward, the calendar they were to use for religious purposes was to begin in the spring (though the Old Testament doesn't use those terms for the seasons as we do).⁴⁰ What HAD BEEN the first month was thereafter to be regarded as the seventh. The benchmark they were to use for determining the first month of each year was to be the pending ripeness of the barley, (the Abib) the Wave Sheaf Offering, which was to be offered as the first of their firstfruits. This offering was to mark the ceremonial beginning of their first annual harvest.

The Fruit of Your Labors

What is particularly notable about the firstfruits harvest is that it had to be the yield of their own labors in the field. (Ex. 23:16) Grains obtained some other way (through trade or conquest) had no ceremonial acceptability. It was not business, it was intended to be personal.

³⁹ The dates listed in Genesis 7 and 8 reflect this.

⁴⁰ It's interesting to note that other ancient societies also employed **spring** as the start of the new year. For example, Rome's earlier calendar did so, as their seventh thru tenth months (septem; octo; novem; decem, the Roman numbers) revealed a year that had begun in March! The idea of beginning the year after the 'midnight' of the solar year (January) and starting a day at midnight, came into use later. More anciently, that was not the case. The ancient Roman calendar was also lunar.

The first lesson about the first-fruits is that this harvest is emphatically personal! The second lesson in this harvest is that the first-fruits of their labors were to be ‘of seed which they had planted’, and needed to be to be ‘untouched’. No previous harvesting was to be done until such time as they’d presented a sheaf of their personal yield (the first-ripe barley) to the Priest to be waved, to be accepted for them. (Lev. 23:10-11) Acceptability was important. (As we see with regard to Cain’s ancient offering, (Gen. 4:3) our personal attitude factors in also. That’s why we must examine ourselves in this season of the year.)

But the waving of the first-ripe grains of their own personal harvest wasn’t the only component of the harvest, the Feast of Firstfruits. In fact, there was another related ceremony. The waving of the first-ripe grains marked only the beginning of the harvest, but there was another occasion that marked the conclusion of this ‘early’ harvest. That other ceremony was derived from the former.

The wave sheaf offering was to be presented on a specific day, the morrow after the weekly Sabbath that occurred within another key Holyday season. One we haven’t discussed to this point. (As each 12 lunar month ‘year’ was some 11 days short of a full solar year, it was necessary to include a 13th month about a third of the time. The pending ripeness of the barley determined when to add that 13th month). The weekly Sabbath within the seven days of Unleavened Bread provided the initial time for the Wave Sheaf offering. These two observances were symbiotic. It was important that the grain attain sufficient ripeness. Where the wave sheaf typically determined which new moon marked the start of the first month, the first month thus determined provided calendar dates for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Passover’s ‘Shadow’

The Feasts of Firstfruits were not given through Moses by themselves. In the recitations which he wrote down, God first acquainted the children of Israel in Egypt with the announcement of pending tragedy, one that would involve the death of all the firstborn. This plague would take the lives of the firstborn of man and beast throughout the land, with the only exceptions being those who were

‘covered by the blood of a lamb’, which they were to select on a specific day and offer at a specific time, with the blood applied in a specific place in a specific way, (Exodus 12). By this action, Israel was introduced to a most important future spiritual event, which they were to observe each year throughout their generations.

Personal, but Spiritual!

In this meaningful season, it’s easy to understand how one event could overshadow the other. But, while the first event is profoundly solemn, the related harvest event provides a hope, that of the resurrections. We can also discern from the symbiotic nature of these occasions that there’s a connection between each of these springtime festivals. But, to consider what these connections are, we must broaden the focus of this discussion.

Passover, the fourteenth day of the first month, offers a great historical relevance as it involved the release of the millions of Israelites from their bitter Egyptian bondage. That release created a nation out of what had been a large family held under servitude. But, freedom was not free. It never is. It required a heavy price to be paid. Their release was effectively ‘bought with blood’, the blood of an innocent lamb. While out ‘spoiling’ the Egyptians, Israel was ‘urged’ to leave as the first day of the Exodus approached, (Ex. 12:33) but they were militarily ‘driven’ out as the last day dawned. (Ex. 14:23) Their departure from Egypt was not optional if they were ever to inherit the Promises made 430 years before. (Gen. 15:18 & Ex. 12:41)

It Took TIME to Leave Egypt

Their seven day trek out of Egyptian Territory, crossing the Sinai Peninsula, and the necessary eating of ‘unleavened bread’ while doing so (Ex. 12:39) established what later became memorialized as the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. These seven days are directly related to the Passover, and while commemorating a historical event, they also have a personal relevance. These days, in their spiritual application, correspond to our personal commitment to leave the spiritual Egypt that is our sin-bondage in society. But as this is well covered in other study papers, further explanation of that will not be offered here. It is the intent here to

establish the relationship that exists between all of the spring Holydays. Each is related to the others. So, within these seven Days of Unleavened Bread, there is a weekly Sabbath day. That Sabbath day provides the key day from which another distant observance is determined. The ‘morrow’ after this Sabbath provides day one of a fifty day count to the Feast of Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost is also known as the “Feast of Firstfruits”, as it commemorates the end of the early harvest. It is also known by the term, the Feast of Weeks, as seven full weeks pass between the first day and the fiftieth. Pentecost then is also the morrow after the seventh Sabbath (something not achieved using traditional Jewish count methods). So we’re drawn to see the entire early harvest season as the harvest of firstfruits: The wave sheaf offering marking its beginning, with Pentecost marking its conclusion. This interval too has relevance to the spiritual lessons contained within these annual observances.

But, the firstfruits harvest would be indeterminable (and spiritually meaningless) without Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. There are no firstfruits without these essential fundamental elements being established first. There are no Days of Unleavened Bread without Passover, and there is no Wave Sheaf Offering without the Days of Unleavened Bread, and there is no Pentecost without there first being a Wave Sheaf Offering! These seasonal observances are all part of a greater whole, which illustrates the plan of salvation as it relates personally to the individual.

Not Just “Jewish” History

While these events, the plagues – particularly the 9th and 10th plague – and the release from bondage, illustrate significant events in the establishment of the children of Israel as a viable nation in a corrupt world, it’s not their historical significance that are so important to the Christian, except as we draw from them lessons appropriate to the experience of personal conversion and ultimate salvation. Even those who disdain the practical observance of these days accept that they illustrate the elements of personal Salvation. Egypt represents sin, from which the Lamb of God is our only release. The death of God’s ‘firstborn’ stood as a substitute for their own, its blood being shed to exempt them

(and in type, us) from death and bondage of sin. This is elementary and quite well understood.

But it’s the revealing lessons contained within the spring harvest season, and the events leading up to the Day of Pentecost that is not so well understood.

Religion for the most part is only partly aware of how God’s plan of redemption is being implemented. If they understood the full implications of the firstfruits harvest, they would have a much greater awareness of what has to transpire in our personal lives. Without that understanding, a person’s quest for Eternal Life can be seriously impeded. It’s that important!

The FIRST Harvest

Not only that, but the Christian world would have a better understanding of the situation as it regards those not called to conversion in this lifetime. You see, there are **two** ‘days’ of Salvation, but that’s the focus of another study paper, “*The Days of Salvation*”. We will limit the discussion here to just this season and what it represents. But, understanding that the spring and early summer represents a first harvest season, we are introduced to the prospect of there being another! That other harvest is covered under the next chapter, titled, “*The Harvest of Ingathering*”.

But the harvest of firstfruits is special, and offers a hope for not just those **in** it but also those who will be provided opportunity to be in the later harvest. This harvest is the key to the other!

Milestones of Personal Salvation

Illustrated within the historical events surrounding the release of Israel from bondage, we see the basic steps that lead us through the process of Salvation. Some may object to the word ‘process’, but they do so from a comprehensive ignorance. First, the most essential event is the provision of the Lamb of God, our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). The application of that blood on our behalf (effecting the remission of our sins) leaves us with the mandate to exclude sin from our lives. Being forgiven, we are to be no longer subject to the bondage of sin (its guilt) and we are called upon to no longer continue in it!

That brings us to the full lifetime (represented by the seven days of Unleavened Bread) of putting sin (leaven) out of our lives. Paul understood. He emphasized to a Gentile congregation that since Christ was our Passover, we should “*keep the feast ...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*” Not only that, but that we should “*purge out of ourselves ... the old leaven.*” (1st Cor. 5:6-8) No, observing Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were not just Jewish observances. Under the New Covenant they’d become fully incumbent upon Gentiles as well! Why? Because they picture the vital components of conversion, excluding sin from our lives, and more importantly, from our character. When we come ‘under grace’ we are forbidden to continue in sin! (Rom. 6:1-2; 12 & 15 - 19) We are to break free of our personal bondage to sin and become bond-slaves of righteousness. (Rom. 6:16-18) That righteousness is pictured by our partaking daily of **unleavened** bread also while we diligently exclude that which is leavened.

But, as any Christian knows, easier said than done!

That brings us to the next element in the process, that of the firstfruits, or more correctly said, the first of the firstfruits. (1 Cor. 15:20-23) The wave sheaf offering represented our Passover, after having been raised from the dead, being accepted up to stand before the Throne of God in Heaven, to be accepted for us. We see that ceremony in Daniel 7:13-14 and then what was said at it in Psalm 110:1. (Both verses, which when blended, got Jesus a prompt and predictable death sentence! (Mk. 14:62)) Why THE Firstfruits Offering had to be accepted for us (not just Himself) was that He had to serve on our behalf in an intercessory capacity. We alone are incapable of maintaining a sinless life. We need assistance. Our elder Brother intercedes for us continually. (Heb. 7:20-25 & 6:20 & 9:11-15 & 1 Jn. 1:7-9, etc.) Christ is our Wave Sheaf Offering.

So we see the beginning event of the first harvest being the ascension of Our Lord to serve as the ongoing intercessor for us. He is the beginning of that harvest. But we aren’t spiritually ready for harvesting in this life. It takes a full lifetime of overcoming both ourselves and the sin by which we are so easily overwhelmed. A full lifetime is represented by the seven days of Unleavened Bread, a period of completion. But, we are not

‘harvested’ firstfruits at the end of our lives either. There’s a waiting period, of undetermined duration, represented by the length of time between the end of that week and the Feast of Pentecost.

Bringing in the Sheaves

While Pentecost is also known by the name: “The feast of Firstfruits”, we are able from that to realize its place in this Harvest season’s conclusion. Pentecost, known to have many other associations, such as being the day of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, as well as being the day that the Holy Spirit was given, it is also known as the founding date for the New Testament Church. But it also portends another future significance: It illustrates the completion of the first harvest, by the resurrection of the righteous dead into a glorified immortality, as we read of in places such as Revelation 14:1-5 & 20:6. The resurrected firstfruits are there shown standing with Christ on Mount Zion. Pentecost also represents the conclusion of the first spiritual harvest. During any harvest, at least those using manual methods, grain stalks were cut and bundled into standing sheaves, left in the field for a time. Those were, a short time later, gathered up together and brought in for the processing of their grains.

While some may identify the actual calendar date of the Second Coming and first resurrection as being at the start of the later harvest season, (for which there is abundant evidence) we should recognize Pentecost as the illustration that it is, the completion of the first harvest season. Christ, our Wave Sheaf was ‘accepted up’ for us on Wave Sheaf Day, the ‘morrow after the Sabbath’, which was also the day just after His resurrection. That awareness lends significance to the prohibition of His being touched prior to the Ascension. (Jn. 20:17) He’s the first of the Firstfruits, the firstborn of many brethren, the prototype of what we are destined to become in the main firstfruits harvest.

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” (James 5:7) *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”* (James 1:18) 

The Harvest of Ingathering

James' Epistle mentions an important aspect regarding the opportunity for salvation, that there IS to be More than One Day of Salvation and Harvest of Souls. What does this mean as it involves the Redemption of Unconverted Humanity?

In James chapter 5, verse 7, we are reminded of the phenomenon of “*the early and latter rain*”. The Lord is compared to the farmer who is willing to patiently wait for the harvest that is the purpose for which He labors. What James was alluding to there is something that was generally known among God’s true worshippers even from ancient times, that situation of there being both an early and a late harvest. Two harvest periods – a smaller harvest in early summer and a much greater harvest at the end of summer. Their awareness was further illustrated in the harvest festivals God gave them to observe after coming out of their Egyptian bondage.

These two harvests were known by two different names. The Holydays God gave to Israel reflected their annual grain harvests, and were known as the Feast of Firstfruits (Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:10 & 17) and the later Feast of Ingathering. (Ex. 34:22 & 23:16)

We can know also that Jesus saw the world as a field for harvest from His own statements to that effect in Matthew 13:38 and Luke 10:2.

Simply Harvest Celebrations?

But, were these only agricultural festivals, meant to celebrate the physical abundance they were given, or did the agricultural harvests correlate to what God ultimately is to do regarding the redemption of **all** of mankind? It’s when we comprehend the parallel meanings God illustrates within His Feasts in how they are reflected in physical Creation that we can understand how His Plan is more inclusive than the average church-going public is aware of.

This chapter will focus on what we call the **fall** Holydays and the phenomenon of the great Harvest of Ingathering and the events that make such a situation possible.

In the previous chapter, titled, “*The Harvest of Firstfruits*”, the matters of personal salvation were considered. Where the first harvest celebrations built upon historical events, the second is built around events that are prophetic. There’s an important reason for that. The spring “firstfruits” harvest deals with matters relevant to **personal** salvation, which is ongoing now, where the fall “ingathering” harvest considers the matters and events related to a future **world** salvation! Full salvation of the entire world from day one was not God’s Plan. In the “Christian Era”, **only those** whom the Father specifically called COULD come to conversion! (John 6:44; Rom. 9:16-23 & 11:7) That is profound. Once we realize there’s such a limitation, that a person can’t truly come to Christ except with the Father’s election, we can better appreciate the hope these later era days reveal as it regards the ‘calling’ of the rest of humanity.

The Book of Life’s Enactment!

With Christ’s Second Coming, humanity will experience something unique in all of history. In a moment of time, there will be no converted human beings left, dead or alive, that remain in their physical state. All names that were in the Book of Life will have been raised as Immortal Spirit beings. The Book of Life at that point will have been emptied of names destined for Eternal Life as all those formerly in it will have been awarded it!

Where does that leave the rest of humanity? Where does that leave the rest of the dead, especially those who **never had** any real opportunity for salvation? The harvest of God’s Firstfruits will have already been gathered-in. Is that all there is? Listening to your typical evangelical ‘soul winner’, you’d think

so! This is where ‘the rest of the story’ begins to provide important answers.

Firstfruits to Assist the Lamb

*“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads...These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them:... 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.”* (Rev. 14:1, 4-5 & 20:4-6)

The firstfruits are to rule on earth with Christ! In the 5th chapter of Revelation, verses 9-10, all the Saints praise Him in 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; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and **we shall reign on the earth.***”

Opportunity Opened

In distinct contradiction to the end-of-life reward scenario posed by traditional religions, the Saints **will not** spend eternity in idle repose up in Heaven, but will be in God’s service, ruling with Him over a vastly transformed world order. Satanic influence will be removed from society (Rev. 20:1-3) and the ‘books’ (*biblos*) will be opened (Rev. 20:12), as will the Temple in Heaven. (Rev. 11:19) It’s this realization that dramatically changes everything!

So, how does this effect another harvest?

This is where the fall Holydays come into play, as they reveal God’s Plan for the redemption of the rest of humanity, those who were never called.

On the first day of the seventh month, there is an annual Holyday known by the name, the Feast of Trumpets.⁴¹ On the tenth day there is another, currently a fast, known as, the Day of Atonement.⁴² On the fifteenth day, there is another Holyday which begins a seven-day festival known as the Feast of Tabernacles.⁴³ As we can see in places such as Zechariah 14, Christ’s Second Coming will require that all nations come up to observe the Feast of Tabernacles each year. (v.16-20) There’s an important reason for this, as it pictures a new world condition, one which involves their ‘day of salvation’. This **second** ‘day of salvation’ is the 1000 years that so many prophecies refer to as the Kingdom of God on earth.

Yet One Final Holy Day!

But it’s the last Holyday in God’s Plan for humanity, which includes all who have ever lived, that’s so essential to our comprehending how the great fall harvest of Ingathering is to be completed. Most of the world’s religions, including modern Judaism, even Messianic Judaism, is not aware of how the events pictured in this day play out. This concluding Holyday, occurring immediately after the seven day Feast of Tabernacles, is known as the Last Great Day.

The entire spectrum of the fall harvest of Ingathering is illustrated by these four prophetically-oriented observances, all falling within the seventh month, over a span of about three weeks. We should not be, we need not be, ignorant of these insightful illustrations.

The Living and the Dead

After the Great Tribulation period and the Day of

⁴¹ This feast day celebrates the end of the series of seven Trumpets associated with the end-time events, particularly the seventh (the Last Trump) which announces the Second Coming and the first resurrection of Saints. (Rev. 11:15-19)

⁴² A special occasion celebrating the unity of God and man, made possible by Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Could this day also picture the union of Christ and His Bride? They together will ‘call’ all to their day of salvation. (Rev. 22:17 & John 7:37-38)

⁴³ A seven day period which celebrates the new world in which no limitation on the opportunity for salvation will exist. Christ and His Bride will justly govern all nations in peace and righteousness for 1000 years. (Rev. 20:6)

the Lord, there will still be a remnant of people who have survived through it all. These and their descendants will provide many **living** generations of physical humans who will repopulate the nations which Christ and His Bride will govern for 1000 years, (Isaiah 9:6) and will teach. (Jer. 31:34)

Also, in the vast ethnicities and generations never called, who were never provided opportunity for salvation, we have the vast numbers of **dead**, asleep in their graves. (Called 'the rest of the dead' in Revelation 20:5) What provision is made for them? This is where the Last Great Day factors into the latter harvest scene. They are to be resurrected after the 1000 years. The Last Great Day is for that final generation **after** the millennium, during which those raised dead will be provided the same opportunity for salvation as the living generation had during the millennial age (the 1000 years).

Not Universal Salvation

This is not to say that all will respond positively or will acceptably avail themselves of their opportunity. The same is true of those who live during the millennial age. We can see that from the response that Satan gets from the late millennial generation in Revelation 20, verses 1-3 and 7-10. There will always be the susceptible. The millennial and post-millennial ages will not bring 'universal salvation' but will provide the 'field of opportunity' to any and all who choose to avail themselves of it.

Now, if that world is to be the field, and is to be considered for harvest, certain things must first take place. First, Christ must assume full power and take to Himself all governing authority (Rev. 11:17). Satan must be removed from society (Rev. 20:1-3). All false religions must be banned (Rev. 14:6-10). Then, each individual will be able to pursue *faith*, *repentance* and *baptism* (the basic steps of conversion), free of deceptions, in order to receive the Holy Spirit. But then, each person must complete a lifetime in faithful compliance with all of God's Commandments (Rev. 22:14), unhindered by any corrupted society, a far better circumstance than what the firstfruits generation had to live in.

The 'process' of conversion will be the same then as it is now! These living in the millennial age will live out their lives and will go to their graves, just as

now, with full rights to immortality. (Rev. 14:13) They'll come up in their resurrection for sentencing to Eternal Life in the Family of God. These though, won't have the same family stature as the Bride, but will be 'children' of Christ and His Bride. They will be included in the greater second Harvest of Ingathering, but an important consideration must be implemented before that occurs.

The Rest of the DEAD!

Not to be overlooked is the inclusion in the second harvest of vast numbers who died prior to the Second Coming, who never had a real opportunity for salvation, to finally have their chance. After the millennium, they will be raised back to a physical state to complete a full lifetime without Satanic influences, like those who lived in the millennial age had. This is **not** a 'second chance' per se, but is the first chance for multiple billions who died without ever having been rightly evangelized, or who might have died too young to be able to adequately comprehend what conversion is, or who were deliberately blinded, either by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) (which God allowed) or by God Himself! (Rom. 11:25-32). When it isn't their fault that they were blinded, can a just God exclude them from any chance of salvation?

An interesting passage is found in Romans 11. In verse 32, Paul explains that God blinded certain people, "*That He might have mercy upon all*" of them! If their 'blindness' excludes them from an opportunity for salvation in their first lifetimes, how can that be regarded as 'merciful'? Well, it can be if we realize that their opportunity period, provided them in the second resurrection era (the post-millennial age), is in a spiritual environment free of the societal depravities and doctrinal perversions that plague this present evil world. God places certain ones aside who He knows could not make it in this evil world condition, but will open their minds, will open 'the books' and will open His Temple to them under far more amenable circumstances.

Particularly mentioned in Ezekiel 37, we see the two Houses of Israel raised to a physical existence, reunited nationally and having God's Spirit placed within them. (Ezek. 37:12-14)

Now, it ought to be explained that those who **did** have opportunity for salvation previously, and who spurned it, will not come up in the second resurrection after the 1000 years. They will remain asleep in their graves, awaiting the Final Judgment appropriate to their condemned situation.

Mentioned earlier, the meaning of the concluding Holyday, the Last Great Day fails to register with most of the churchgoing public. That day provides the period of opportunity for salvation to all who never had a real opportunity. It will comprise one full generation. It's known also by the name, "the Great White Throne Judgment" which is the indeterminate span of time between the second resurrection and the Final Sentencing event at the very end.

The Coming Final Harvest

But all of this is merely the 'field' from which the fullest possible 'yield' will come. The millennial age is not the entirety of the second harvest without the post-millennial 'second resurrection era'. These are the ages during which God will be reproducing additional vast numbers for His Family. (Jn. 1:12)

However, we should recall that many whose names are added into the Book of Life after the first resurrection will have gone to their graves, and will remain in that state ('*asleep*') until the Judgment Day arrives. These who attained salvation will be raised to join those alive at the end for final sentencing. The rest of the wicked dead will arise with them. No one will be sentenced while still dead! This will be the time of the Final Sentencing, as the Great White Throne era draws to a close.

The Earth is RIPE!

But, the **second and final harvest** itself will come only when the harvest is fully ripe: When all who have ever lived have been provided an opportunity to decide whether or not to accept God's atonement for them and when further time wouldn't make any appreciable difference, the End will be declared. We read of that event in Revelation chapter 14. Beginning in verse 14: "*And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.* (a harvest tool)" [15] *And another angel came out of the temple,*

*crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for **the harvest of the earth is ripe.***

[16] *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."*

This is the Great Final Harvest of humanity. And notice, the one doing the reaping of this 'grain' contingent is Christ. Continuing with scene two...

[17] *"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

[18] *And another angel came out from the altar, which had **power over fire**; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for **her grapes are fully ripe.***

[19] *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the **great winepress of the wrath of God.***

[20] *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (that's 200 miles!)*

Associated with the second harvest of all these righteous peoples is another event, one not commemorated by any Holyday. Carrying out the Final Sentencing of **wicked** humanity will be accomplished shortly after the prior contingent of righteous individuals are harvested. As Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46, He will at the end, gather all nations, by a general resurrection and will separate them, the righteous from the wicked. In this scene we see reaping angels (Matt. 13:39) gathering up that other contingent for Wrath. These are they who have **rejected** God's Salvation, and will be required to pay the penalty for their sins with their own blood. As it describes the situation, we see a massive outflow! These are then burned-up in the Lake of Fire, which produces a total extinction of life and consciousness. (both soul and body, Mt. 10:28)

So in this series of fall Holydays, we can see exactly how and when all the rest of humanity will have completed its being made ready for inclusion in the Family of God, **or not**. It is those lacking in understanding who reject what God has provided us as a means to understand these most important considerations. 

Great Battles in Prophecy

Christian Eschatology is replete with Possible Explanations as to how “the End of the World” will play out. Many Scenarios are built around Prophecies applied to situations to which they may or may not actually relate. We should carefully examine each of these Prophecies to be certain that they’re applied accurately and in their proper timeframes.

As if there wasn’t enough controversy in the wild world of religion, particularly among its prophecy buffs, a general concept seems to pervade most, having to do with “the-End-of-the-World”. The greater consensus is that this world will come to a spectacularly catastrophic end, with all who have been ‘converted’ (‘saved’) having been ‘taken’ from earth to spend eternity up in Heaven. And, that’s the explanation, so far as is foreseen of how this human experience here on earth will wind up.

But, the problem is, it isn’t quite so simple as that, not that extinction of the human kind and the full end of life on earth is all that simple. But in its oft-described ‘simplicity’, preachers and ‘prophets’ of various persuasions (yes and even moviemakers) love to wax eloquent about the inescapable carnage and massive fiery destructions of all that exists, both of man and his environment.

Not So Fast!

What complicates the picture is the fact of, and the abundant biblical witness of, there being an age out beyond this present world order, one in which the returned Christ will rule the nations together with His Spirit Born Saints. Once we factor-in those clear biblical statements, we can see that the predictions of so many religious peoples are more than a little bit off base. In fact, correctly said, way off base!

What modern religion has missed is the amply supported fact of there being another 1000 years of civil society here on earth after the event they try to describe, but under a dramatically different administration. Among the Bible’s clear prophecies we have accounts of a whole new world order, one

ruled by the firm hand of Christ together with His Spirit Born Saints, who then comprise His Bride!

What we should be talking about is **not** the end of the world per se – that term in itself is misleading – but “the-end-of-the-age”.⁴⁴ The end of the present age, ordered by mankind, and the beginning of the age ruled by God. Six thousand years are allotted to humanity to prove that man’s ways don’t really work, (ways that produces all kinds of repressions and conflicts) and a final thousand to show how to live the right way. Those final 1000 years define the era known biblically as “the Kingdom of God”.

Further confounding this arena of understanding, modern religion typically misidentifies what is meant by the term, “Kingdom of God”. Most expect that it refers to the church in this age, the kingdom of saints in the world, or something along that line. Rather, it refers to the actual Millennial Kingdom that will be present on earth for 1000 years. The Kingdom of God is that age in which Christ will rule over the nations (yes, there will still be nations in the post-Advent era)!

In Heaven or OF Heaven?

Just as a side note, the Gospel of Matthew uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven” where the rest of the Gospel writers and the New Testament uses the equivalent term “Kingdom of God”. Now to some, the Kingdom of Heaven alludes to the Heavenly Realm, people having gone TO Heaven. But, with some of these same people, the Kingdom of God means the component of the Church existing within

⁴⁴ The Greek word, translated “world” is Strong’s #2889, *kosmos* (world or world order) or #165, *aion* (age). It isn’t the world that will end, but its administrations will.

civil society, here and now on earth. (In other words, the living Church.) Even this apparent discrepancy doesn't seem to alert churchgoers to their casual mis-perceptions.

But we should be clear as to what the term means. We'll see why this is important as we get deeper into this subject.

Another problem area with regard to that "final battle" at "the End" is that people having interest in "the End-of-the-World" scenarios seem only to recognize there being ONE final great battle. From that approach, if they recognize only one, it's easy to understand how they could apply the many biblical accounts just to that one event. A primary objective of this chapter is to address the common mis-applications of some prophecies that actually relate to other events.

How Many Battles?

There isn't just one! In fact, there are two major armed confrontations between God and the forces of evil, and those two are separated by 1000 years. Then a generation later, another amazing event will take place, one which religion in general seems to have little awareness of or too little comprehension of to explain. It's the purpose of this chapter to bring out this amazing story in full. Without it, we can't appreciate the account of how "the End" actually will occur, and what objectives will be achieved by those events.

Casual 'prophesarians' commonly refer to the cataclysmic 'end of the world' as "Armageddon". The term is used widely, without their being familiar with what it means. On the news recently, a newscaster, referring to a huge meteor explosion heard over Nevada and central California, assured the public that "this was not Armageddon"! Many times people refer to natural disasters "being of biblical proportions." From these we can see the general perceptions and the gross ignorance as to what the battle of Armageddon is in reality. The name has taken on a whole new meaning due to relative ignorance. It has come to express the idea that an angry God intends to blast unconverted humanity from existence in the end time. People are convinced that this is quite biblical.

Three Major Prophesied Events

The "Battle of Armageddon" is the event with the widest awareness. But there's another great battle, plainly prophesied, that few know of or can explain in its proper timeframe. When we include this other event, we are forced into an awareness of a number of clear Biblical Truths that many churchgoers haven't heard about. They being: the Millennial Kingdom with its many generations of humans who'll live in a world free of war and oppression. A world free of religious deception and free of the evil spiritual element that drives this world, AND a distinct and separate time period beyond that in which peoples from ancient to modern times will be raised and will live together in a righteous society as did their millennial predecessors.

This other great battle is Satan's rebellion after the 1000 years. Satan will be bound during Christ's reign on earth, but will, for an important reason, be released briefly toward the end of the 1000 years. This fantastic allegation is revealed in Revelation 20.⁴⁵ What makes it so fantastic is the fact that from among the final generations of the millennial age, Satan will find so many whom he can deceive to such extent that they will willingly join with him, becoming a part of his army, to encircle and attempt to 'take' the millennial Capitol, Jerusalem!

*"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:..."* (Rev. 20:7-9)

You would think that living in a righteously administered society would produce universal conversion. Apparently, there's something to learn about human nature and the conversion process. There will always be a segment of the population that is quietly resentful and harbors rebellion against God and His Way! It only takes a special circumstance to bring that out!

⁴⁵ See the next chapter "Why MUST Satan be Released?" for a full explanation of this necessary event.

But the enigmatic thing about this realization is that the ‘infamous’ battle of Armageddon **is not** the final battle of all time, as so many uninformed ‘believers’ allege! Nor does it represent the “end-of-the-world” as is commonly assumed.

Of these two great confrontations against God that we’ve discussed this far, neither represents the end-of-the-world! Rather, they mark major turning points where a new age (*aion*), a whole new world order, will begin. After Armageddon will be the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom of God, populated by the survivors and their descendants. Peace and prosperity will abound like never before, thru some 40 generations, due to God’s righteous administration, with humanity finally living God’s Way. It isn’t a matter of vengeful wrath, but a confrontation that marks the end of one administration (one world order) and the beginning of another.

Then after Satan’s rebellion will be the general resurrection (Rev. 20:5) where ‘the rest of the dead’ will arise to have the opportunity their previous lifetimes never provided them. This is the era Christ referred to in places such as Matthew 12:41-42 (& 11:20-24) and Luke 11:31-32 (& 10:13-14). That age referred to as “the Great White Throne Judgment”. Having rejected the doctrines of the resurrections and of the millennial Kingdom, religion is greatly impeded in understanding.

Yet a Third Event?

While we have considered **two** clear and distinct armed engagements with Christ, one at His return and another after the millennial age is concluded, there is yet another event. It’s this third event that is the envisioned end-of-the-world in reality.

But before we consider this third event, and the reason for it, let’s first re-review the prior two.

Those with a serious interest in this area of prophecy are familiar with where the battle of Armageddon is to occur and where it gets its name. It is from that region in the land of Israel, (also known as the Levant) some 55 miles north of Jerusalem, called the Plains of Megiddo, near the town bearing the same name. It is a vast flat area near the Mediterranean coast, providing adequate space for a huge army to assemble and maneuver.

It was the battleground for many armed incursions into the region in the ancient past.

The army that will assemble there to oppose the returning Christ will be that of “**The Beast**”, a consortium of Ten Kings who will have merged their powers and interests, coalescing into a great Super Power. Places such as Revelation 13 and Daniel 7:19-27 describe The Beast in great detail. It is based in Europe, ridden upon by the predominant European religion (and the spirit power that gained preeminence over it (in Rev. 13:11, called **the Dragon**)).

The army of the Beast will be of **European** origin, having recently defeated the forces of ‘the king of the South’. (Dan. 11:29-45) This is that seventh head (restoration) of the fourth Empire (Rome), as prophesied in Daniel 2. Upon this seventh head are ten contemporary ‘crowns’ (old monarchies). The defeat of this armed force will be nothing less than uniquely spectacular. We read of that in Zechariah 14:12-15. No army is presented in opposition, only the forces of Almighty God. Their flesh consumes while they stand, and extreme chaos and panic causes them to fight among themselves.

This is the battle ending the age of man. But notice, the force is European, with religious under-support.

Now, the great battle that develops next, after the 1000 years, is a different ethnicity altogether. None of these nations mentioned are European. Rather, they are predominantly Asian, allied with certain Middle Eastern ethnicities. Read of them in Ezekiel 38. Persia (Iran), Ethiopia (Cush), and Libya (Put), are the southern allies of Gog and Magog along with Gomer and Togarmah! This force is regionally and ethnically different from that of the former army of the Beast Power. Nor is organized religion a factor with these. The Dragon himself ‘inspires’ this vast innumerable army.

Revelation 20 describes Satan’s final rebellion, and places it in its proper timeframe. This is clearly after the millennial age. And notice, the objective of Satan’s forces, drawn primarily from the lands of the far north (Ezek. 38:11-13) are more economically motivated: To gain **great spoils** from the ‘undefended’ World Headquarters: representing a “sharing-of-the-wealth” mentality!?

Their defeat will also differ from the former battle. They also will fight among themselves, but will be blasted from above with flooding rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone. (Ezek. 38:21-22) These forces and their remains will be scattered throughout the land, even east of the Dead Sea. It will take seven months to bury all of the scattered dead, as Ezekiel 39:12-15 explains, again in detail, and years to salvage all of their weaponry (v.9).

These are two distinctly different battle scenarios. We need to be careful to distinguish between the two. Not all are careful!

Is All Life to End?

Now, an important question we should be asking ourselves at this point is, do these battles represent the extinction of all of mankind?

As to the Battle of Armageddon, we must conclude that, **no**, only the combatant armies are destroyed, there in the Middle East. Surviving generations will succeed them, living on into the Millennial Age.

After the battle after Satan's release, other raised generations will be around for years, burying these dead and 'gathering up' their arms. So, again, **no!**

The Truth is different, isn't it?

The Sixth Trumpet Sounds

Now, the Seven Vials and the Trumpet Plagues from within the sixth vial, as found in Revelation chapters 6, 8, 9 & 11, may offer some explanation of the conceptions religious people have regarding end-time events. But these are not the two battles described to this point. They are plagues from God upon rebellious and evil humanity overall, directed by angels. Their intent is to entice some degree of repentance from God-opposing humanity. This apparently will not elicit a lot of positive response! (Rev. 9:21) As it says, in spite of these plagues, they adamantly will NOT repent of their murders, drugs, (pharmaceuticals) sexual sins or thefts. (The sins of our generation exactly!) A major population reduction (against the evil – destroyers of earth and society) will be a necessary step in preparing the earth for God's Kingdom. (Rev. 9:15) Yet, those 'sealed' by God's angels against such wrath are 'protected'. Again, this is not human extinction!

An END Will Come!

Though we have assurance that there'll be a world beyond this present age, there will be an 'end' of physical humanity, but it will not occur at the time or in the way it's conceived by people today.

The battle of Armageddon transitions between the age of man and the Millennial Kingdom of God. The battle at Satan's release transitions between the Millennial age and the Great White Throne Judgment period, when the 'rest of the dead' are raised to complete their lifetimes, providing them the opportunity for salvation that their first lifetimes didn't provide. (Rev. 20:5 & Ezek. 37:12-14)

But, once these redemption opportunities are concluded, and there is no more likelihood of any further spiritual development, the 'harvest' of souls will be declared 'fully ripe'. At which time God will begin the harvest He has long awaited (Jas. 5:7) This is that **third event** mentioned earlier.

Christ said that in the fullness of time, He will gather all nations, alive, and will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) At **that** time, there will be the Final Sentencing event. Christ, sitting on a White Cloud, will harvest His late-era Saints, those who became converted during the millennial and post-millennial ages, then two angels will 'harvest' the rest for destruction as we read in Revelation 14:14-20. The unconverted will pay the penalty for their own sins with their own blood, and then be consigned to the Lake of Fire.

These are just some of the basic parameters that "end-of-the-world" prophets fail to explain to their fascinated audiences. Why does any of this matter?

What we can see from this is that the world's religions and society in general has wrapped itself in a cloak of false perceptions of what'll happen in the near future. In the process, it also represents a false picture of God and His Plan for redeeming mankind. God's wrath is against the forces of evil, to wrest power from them, but not to destroy all life on earth. **Man's false perceptions expose a full ignorance of the resurrections (plural) of the dead and the millennial Kingdom of God on earth. Once these inadequacies are corrected, a completely different picture of "the End" emerges.** 

Why Satan MUST be Released

Revelation 20 shows Satan being Held in the Bottomless Pit for 1000 Years. For WHAT Possible Reason will He be Released Again After the Millennium?

Among the many curious events that have bearing on the spiritual climate in the Millennial Age, we find the twentieth chapter of Revelation to describe a long period of time during which Satan will be restrained from having any contact with humanity, those living during that one thousand year period of time. Presumably, this restraint from contact and influence will include his fallen angelic hosts being imprisoned as well.

We can only imagine the dramatically different societal conditions of that age, with all Satanic influences totally absent. No longer will false religion or godless scientific errors be imposed upon wayward humanity. No longer will there be any doubt as to who is the True LORD God, Creator of the universe or of what is the Truth in any educational discipline. Righteous standards will be the foundation and structure of day to day living, and none of the aggravations or injustices will be present to provoke hateful or violent reactions. What spirit influences there are will be wholly Holy! (Isaiah 30:18-21)

What a different world it will be when Christ and His Spirit-born Saints **are** the government of the world.⁴⁶ The primary motivations for rage leading to wars, either interpersonal or international, will be completely absent from anyone's thinking.⁴⁷

The Bottomless Pit

Revelation chapter 20 provides this insight:

1. *"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*
2. *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*

3. *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."* With the revelation of his removal from society, we're told of his release. Not only his release, but that there is a NEED for it. "He **must be** released, it says! Well, WHY?

Later in the same chapter, we're told more:

7. *"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*
8. *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.*
9. *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.*
10. *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."*

Does it make any sense to restrain Satan for 1000 years, but then release him again into society? Is there an explainable reason for doing such a disruptive thing? Here we have a long period of time in which some forty generations will live out their lives in full and un-interrupted peace and prosperity. (Consider the impact of military expenditures and the waste and destruction of war no longer being a drain on the world's economy.) Forty generations of true righteousness and the 'restful' environment that will yield. Sort of a 'sabbatical' from man's destructive ways!

To fathom why Satan will need to be released for just a short season as this millennial era draws to a close, we need to understand the great event that will occur just afterward. What's that great event?

⁴⁶ Daniel 7:26-27, Revelation 20:6, 1:6 & 5:10.

⁴⁷ Isaiah 2:1-4

We're told of it in the intervening verses. Verse 5 tells us: "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*" The rest of the dead involves massive populations!

The Second Resurrection

These forty generations living in the millennial age will be blessed to not have to deal with the pulls and influences present in this age in which we live. Their experience will be vastly different. There, the greatest thing to overcome will be personal sins and lethargy. With all of society going the 'right way', it will be easy to just drift along with the flow, which in and of itself is not 'conversion' per se. No, in fact, what the release of Satan tells us is that there will be a segment of society who will in effect be 'faking it', seemingly compliant, but inwardly, secretly, they will not take their opportunity for true conversion all that seriously! The spiritual condition that we see in the seventh 'church era' will to some degree also carry over into that age!

But it isn't so much the complacent that are the concern. As in present society, there will be a certain few who will not care about becoming converted. Not only not care, but will inwardly resent the Way of God, and effectively come to despise His standards. We have those kinds today! Not only disinterested in conversion, though aware of it, there are those in society today who actually hate God and His Way of Life! That component is buried rather deeply within the natures of some people. Human nature will not change, though future societal conditions will. So, why would these be a consideration as the millennial age draws to its close?

Those who live in the millennial age will be blessed to not have to deal with Satanic influences. Yet, there will be some militantly unconverted people among them. What influence will they have? Upon the converted, perhaps little. But we need to consider those, called 'the rest of the dead', who are raised up after the 1000 years. The rest are those who lived and died prior to the second coming, who were not called in their lifetimes, who did not have the opportunity for salvation offered to them. They also are to live again in an age, like the millennial age, without Satan being present. But in their previous lifetimes, they **did** have to deal with Satan. How vulnerable to a similar mentality will they be, should they be exposed to one, in people, carried over from that final millennial generation?

Conversely, the last generation in the millennial age as they complete their lifetimes, living on over into the early second resurrection era, will be exposed to people raised-up who originally lived in a Satan-inspired world. What impact will they have on that last millennial age generation who knew none of that? After having just been exposed to the released Satan, likely very little! (Keep in mind, those living in the millennial age will live out their lives and die, as happens in this present age. Those unconverted among them will end their lifetimes in an 'accursed' state, as we read in Isaiah 65:20.)

But it's the final generation of the millennium that would interface with and potentially impact, or be impacted by, these who will come up in the post-millennial age: That age we call the second resurrection era. If there's a segment of that then-living society who harbors resentments toward God, wouldn't their attitudes resonate with any who had been exposed to similar Satan-like resentments toward God in their previous lifetimes, if the newly resurrected generation were to interface with them?

It's this militant element within the late millennial age that needs to be removed prior to that great event, the time when the 'rest of the dead' will come up. Satan's release will facilitate that removal!

Deceiving the Nations

With Satan being released back into society, that element who has basically rejected their opportunity for salvation, will coalesce, joining together with Satan, responding to his ever-resentful attitude, and arming themselves for an attack against the world headquarters at Jerusalem. "*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 20:9)

With that element removed from the final generation of that society, the 'rest of the dead' will come up into a society cleansed of Satanic thinking and repressed human resentments. This will provide them with the environment that will allow them to better avail themselves of conversion with the least distraction or negative influence. The final generation of the end of the millennial age will have been rid of its resentful types. This is the vital function that Satan's release will provide. 

Blood to the Horse Bridles!

A most Astounding Visual Picture is Presented in Revelation 14:20 of a Flow of Blood, as Deep as Horses' Bridles, extending out for 1600 Furlongs. What Extraordinary Event is being Described Here, and is it a Reality?

It's an historically unprecedented situation to see a huge stream of blood flowing out from a battle location. On rare occasion, such as during the Revolutionary War, a pond was stained red by the blood of British soldiers, or on invasion beaches during WWII where the sands and surf were stained red, has anything like that been reported. But to have an event where an actual river of blood flows out from a wide valley for a considerable distance, suggests an event on a scale well beyond anything mankind has ever experienced or even imagined! Our question is, IS this a real prophetic event, or is it merely exaggerated figurative language?

High reputation commentaries and various churches regularly associate this event with the great battle of "the Day of the Lord." That being, the defeat of the Beast Power's armies at or near Jerusalem at Christ's return. Our challenge is to settle in our minds if this event is real or not, and if it is an actual event, when is it destined to happen? After all, the scale of the carnage is mind boggling!

Now, many regard the Battle of Armageddon, as it most often is called, to be the final battle with the enemies of the returning Christ. With that in mind, it is somewhat logical to associate this event described in the 20th verse of Revelation 14 as being that very event.

However, the narrative in this chapter doesn't specifically describe a **battle** scenario, per se. Rather, it seems to describe the **harvest** of a 'fully ripened vintage' of humanity. To envision this scene as being a battle, with armies coming to war against the returned Christ, we must draw upon other cross-referenced passages, as the language for a battle just isn't found in this particular passage. That seems to have escaped the notice of many a theologian!

The particular passage that presents this picture is found in the last seven verses of chapter fourteen:

14: *"And I looked, and behold a **white cloud**, and upon the cloud one sat like unto **the Son of man**, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

15: *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, **Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.***

16: *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and **the earth was reaped.**"*

What is noteworthy at this point in the narrative is that there are **two separate and distinct reapings**: One by 'the Son of man', (isn't that Christ?) seated on a white cloud, followed by another reaping, conducted by two angels, one wielding a sickle, the other controlling fire. Of the second reaping, we see: 17: *"And **another angel** came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.* 18: *And **another angel** came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, **Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.*** 19: *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

20: *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and **blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.**"* (that's 200 miles!)

The general consensus with regard to this passage is that the battle of the Day of the LORD is being described, or at least the result of it. But the picture represented may not be one so simple as that!

A Commentary's Observation

Regarding this passage, verses 17 to 20, a JF&B Commentary⁴⁸ makes reference to Joel 3, another passage having similar sounding language and from this, deducing that the event describes the obliteration of the antichrist's armies. However, these commenters do very insightfully note that the event described in the preceding three verses, 14 to 16, present the **harvest of the righteous!** "*(Mark 4 29, where also He sendeth the sickle') The Son sends His sickle-bearing angel⁴⁹ to reap the righteous. By the harvest-reaping the elect righteous are gathered;*" So says JF&B! A more pertinent cross-reference would be that in Matthew 25:31-46, where the righteous are set apart and awarded Life before the confirmed wicked are then sentenced to a just and everlasting punishment.

This observation of there being **two** quite separate groups at this event leaves us with a problem. Who are these righteous who are harvested at this event? And why, if this is a scene of battle against the antichrist, are they in any way a part of this action?

It might also be relevant to point out that to assign the winepress of God's Wrath to this scene breaks the internal time sequence of this inset chapter! (It should be noted that the subject of this inset is to describe all of the harvests of humanity: The first resurrection of the 'firstfruits' is in verses 1 to 5, and the final harvests at the end in verses 14 to 20. Also, verse 10 gives insight to the verse 19 event.)

More Than One Event

A couple of questions we need to ask ourselves, at this point is this: Will there be **only one** great battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat? (Note: It is presumed, from language in another prophecy, that this is the location being referred to in Revelation 14, despite the fact that no such reference is contained in this chapter!) Second, if all of the righteous are made alive and given Spirit bodies at the Last Trump, at the moment of the Second Coming, then who are these 'righteous' we see harvested by Christ at this

⁴⁸ Jamieson - Faucet – Brown Bible Commentary, volume 3, page 704, by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody, MA, March, 1997.

⁴⁹ For some reason the JF&B commentators chose to ignore the clear statement in verse 16 that indicates it was the seated Christ who Himself thrust in His sickle!

(supposed) just weeks-later event? Could it be that we have diverted our focus as to the true meaning of this revealing passage by associating it with another earlier, though conceivably similar, event?

Battle or Harvest?

Also, we need to consider more of the imagery. Why describe a great battle by repeatedly calling it a harvest and using a harvest instrument rather than a war instrument, such as a bow or a sword? After all, in many other battle scene descriptions, the LORD is portrayed wielding a great sword! What is the picture here, a military defeat or the final reaping of all of humanity? To be dealing with the military, it still would leave the majority of the general population back at home, not included!

If we were instead to associate Revelation 14:14-20 with Matthew 25:31-32, a very different explanation of the passage emerges. What we need to resolve in our minds is whether or not the words of Christ, here and in other places such as Matthew 13:41-43, Matthew 13:47-50 and Luke 19:27, are literal events. These others are 'final sentencing' events, not specifically battle scenes!

Places such as Luke 19:27 reveal that these who experience the wrath of their Lord have **had** their opportunity for salvation already. In order for them to have made such a decision as "*we will not have this man to rule over us*" it shows that they were aware of who He is and then made a conscious, even determined, decision! This certainly isn't a non-cognitive situation on their part.

But there are other details contained within the chapter that we should also consider. What **is** the 'white cloud' and what does that picture represent? What means, "*The harvest of the earth is ripe*" (v. 15) and again, "*is fully ripe*" (v. 18)? Should we be expecting, after seeing this statement, that there will be **yet another** significant harvest at some future date? Or, is this describing that final one?

Not only are we introduced to the scene of the harvest of the earth, (and in it we see more than one group identified!) but apparently and ultimately the final one, beyond which no further ripening of humanity is anticipated! If we're seeing an event that's just at the time of the battle of Armageddon, then other questions are apparent, as there clearly IS

a continuing 'ripening toward harvest' to occur after Christ's return. For example, those generations that live during the millennial age will to a greater degree become converted. Beyond them, vast multitudes, who are to be raised in the second resurrection, after the 1000 years are finished, will then also enter into 'judgment', and, as we understand it, will then have their first and true opportunity for salvation which their first life didn't provide them. (Rev. 20:5, 11-12) Logically, any 'fully ripened **final** harvest' would include them as well.

Another Great Battle

We're introduced to another major rebellion against the long-ruling Christ in Revelation 20:7-10. This is clearly after the Kingdom of God on earth has been in existence for 1000 years. In that event, an antichrist is not part of the scene, but rather **Satan** himself works to deceive the nations, specifically those nations to the far north, Gog and Magog. At times, verses that refer to this event are associated with the battle of Armageddon also, though it is actually a separate invasion force in a later age.

Ezekiel 38 & 39 describes an invasion by the forces of Gog and Magog, but in it we see a very different occasion than we read of in Revelation 14. In this one, the dead bodies will be scattered abroad throughout the land, eaten by scavengers, and it will take seven months to locate and bury all the dead and seven years to collect and burn all their weaponry. Also, Gog and Magog and their allies invade a peaceful land without defenses! This invasion is set in the pre-restoration years, as we can see in verses 21 to 29 of chapter 39. **THIS** is a better description of how the battle of Armageddon will play out, rather than what we read is to happen in Revelation chapter 14.

The book of Joel is another factor in this matter. Noting the similarity of language in Joel 3, verses 9 to 17, the latter four verses of Revelation 14 are commonly represented as describing the same exact event. Now the Joel 3 battle scene is clearly **pre**-millennial, as we can see from the re-gathering of all the Israelitish peoples and the inhabitation of Jerusalem as a pure city thereafter. But it's when we assign Joel 3 and Revelation 14 as having a coincident time-frame, that we cause ourselves to miss the real point of Revelation 14:14-20.

A Careful Look at Revelation 14

If we are to accept this chapter as being topically whole and internally sequential, (though an inset into the running narrative of the overall book), we find some interesting details. The chapter begins with a description of 'the firstfruits' (the first resurrected Saints) and then it presents a three-stage announcement to all surviving humanity, explaining that Babylon has now fallen (again) and prohibits any further worship in its former antichrist system, pronouncing a dire warning against any who defy the prohibition. That warning of what will happen, in verses 10 & 11, is generally what we see being brought upon the second group in this grapes of wrath harvest scene. Does that indicate that this event in Revelation 14:20 is in fact **post**-millennial?

Finally, in chapter 14, we see the great harvest of **all** of humanity (not just combatants) at the very end of time. Two distinct groups are represented: the righteous and then the wicked. These are separated and harvested to differing destinies.

We need to ask ourselves, is the Day of the Lord a single point in time? Is there **just one** occasion referred to in Scripture using this name? Another study paper with that title considers the multiple uses of the term "Day of the Lord" in biblical prophecy. (for example, consider 2nd Peter 3:10-12, where it's used in reference to a different day and even a different member of the Godhead!)

We also need to be clear in our minds, exactly who are the 144,000? Who are the innumerable multitude described in Revelation 7?

So, if we are to identify Revelation 14:17-20 with that Day of the LORD, **just after** the Second Coming, we must disregard the white cloud, with its harvest of the righteous and the emphasized fact of the earth being 'fully ripe'. Not only that, but that there's no internal reference in this chapter to any battle situation, no mention of the Day of the Lord, of Armageddon or the armies of the Beast, just a mass assembly of humanity to a 'harvesting'.

It seems that when we mis-assign placement of a passage of Scripture, we effectively lose its relevance to the issue at hand and the information it was intended to convey. That being, the **final sentencing** of all of humanity at the End! 

■ A Postnote on the Winepress location:

The Kidron Valley, IF it actually IS the same as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, presents certain problems with the narrative of Revelation 14:20, at least as it has traditionally been understood.

We are given a distance of the flow of the blood 'pressed' from this 'fully ripened' vintage of wicked humanity. That stated distance being 1600 furlongs (a furlong being some 600 feet, or nominally an eighth of a mile). Thus, 1600 furlongs would be approximately **200 miles!**

Our problem arises in the fact that the Brook Kidron, in the valley of the same name, IF this is the same location as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, (and that association seems to be dated to the fourth century) the Brook Kidron flows southward and then eastward through the Judean Desert. In its flow distance it drops 4,000 feet in elevation, and empties into the Dead Sea. It's total distance from the city to the sea being a mere twenty miles.

What this information poses to us is that it may prove that the association between the location and the event that is traditionally made, that the event in Revelation 14:20 is the battle scene with the armies of the antichrist who have come up to Jerusalem to oppose the recently returned Christ, has in some way been mis-identified. Either the location is elsewhere OR the event is mis-dated when being identified as being **at Jerusalem in** the year of Christ's Second Coming.

The current natural topography does not in any way provide for a possible flow of that great distance, by a factor of ten!

Now, if somehow the flow could be conveyed into another valley, one that originates to the southwest of Jerusalem, that stream's flow is to the west and then northwest, and empties into the Mediterranean Sea, but with a flow distance of only about fifty miles from Jerusalem.

When and Where?

What we need to consider is that there might be proof in these topographical facts that the scene we

read of in Revelation 14:20 is **not** one for the present day, (the end of this present age) but of some later time, when the topography of the area has been altered either geologically or by human engineering. (See Zech. 14:10) This would strongly pose the likelihood that it is in fact, as the preceding article suggests, that the event we read of is a much later time, not in the twenty-first century, but more than 1000 years into the future.

(It is logical that the fresh water drainage within the land, rather than 'wasting it' by dumping it into the Dead Sea, in the millennium might be rerouted to flow thru the land southward to Elath (Ezion-geber) on the Gulf of Aquaba (the Red Sea). Such a diversion would make fresh water available to the southern interior, (the Negev) and co-incidentally, create a flow distance of 200 miles! Then again, where is all that sparkling fresh water that continually drains from under the threshold of the Temple to go, that we read of in Ezekiel 47?)

If it's a fact that this event in Revelation 14:17-20 is the full harvest of all of humanity (in this case the wicked of all time, raised up for final sentencing) **after** the millennium, then the flow dimensions, its depth and distance, would have a far greater plausibility.

Death and Opportunity

Now, on the 'punishment' issue, we recognize that the warriors of the antichrist's army are not 'lost' for all time, but they, being blinded and deceived, will have opportunity for understanding and salvation in the second resurrection. Not so of that other contingent who come against world headquarters, Jerusalem, in the post-millennial release of Satan to gather his army. (Rev. 20:7-10) These from that era are within their opportunity period, and will die to await final sentencing in the third resurrection.

We shouldn't overlook the fact that there will be more than one great battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. (There will be two great battles, 1000 years apart, and one immense slaughter.) Nor should we be casual in our assignment of Revelation 14:20 to a day other than when the great and final sentencing event will actually come to pass. 

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▣ Further Comments on Revelation 14:20

It is a common perception in the scholarly religious world that Revelation 14:20 is referring specifically to the great Battle of Armageddon, which is to marshal on the plains of Megiddo but will engage up in the Jerusalem area some 55-miles south, an event prophesied to occur just after Christ's return. But what is noteworthy is the detailed account of that very battle that we find in another place.

Armies Engaged

Revelation 19:14-16 *“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

This particular account of what we would have to conclude is that same battle, is given in the chapter just before. But what we need to allow is that a very different scene is presented. In Chapter 19, we see God's army from Heaven being involved, we see the combatants slain with **a sword**, the sword of His mouth, not a sickle! Though we have some similarity in wording, such as *“treading the winepress...”* we also see the slain lying dead on the ground unburied to be eaten by raptors (birds of prey). This is nothing like the fate of those we see described in chapter 14, verse 20.

Continuing in Chapter 19, resuming with verse 17: *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 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. 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. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Not only here, but in Zechariah 14, we read of another battle description, this one conclusively at the time of Christ's return: 1. *“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2. 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. 3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”*

Contrasting Descriptions!

Does this sound anything like the scene we read of in Revelation 14:17-20? There the death instrument is a **harvest** tool: **a sickle**, not a sword, the dead are first pressed of their blood and then burned-up. In the battle of Armageddon, the combatants are opposed by Christ's army, not just two 'reaping angels', with Him mounted upon a white horse, not seated on a white cloud. The Revelation 14 scene is not the same at all as the accounts we read of the battle of Armageddon!

Some may regard Ezekiel 38 & 39 as describing the same battle scene, based in large part on the reference to Gog (and Magog). But this battle is more correctly identified with the battle that we read of in Revelation 20:7-10. Gog and Magog are the major players in the battle resulting from Satan's release and his attack against the Holy City of God and His Saints **after the millennium**, not the battle of Armageddon at the Second Coming. In Ezekiel 39:11 we see all those dead are to be buried. But in Revelation 14, they are burned up in fire (presumably eternal fire / the Lake of Fire!).

After the Revelation 20:7-10 battle, there is yet one more generation until the Revelation 14:20 event!

Passages that belong with one event have been crossed-over and identified with another! We need to look at these various accounts more critically to be sure they are considered in their proper context!

The 14th Chapter of Revelation

This Revealing Chapter steps aside from the Book's sequential narrative to present an Oblique Look at the three Main Segments of Humanity, as it Relates to being awarded their Just and Due Rewards. Has Religion fully appreciated its Comprehensiveness? Encapsulated within this one Chapter is a Message Profoundly Revealing with respect to God's Plan for the Salvation or Condemnation of ALL the World's Un-evangelized Masses.

Many aspects of the Book of Revelation remain an enigma to most of the religious world. To most, it is a mystery without clear comprehension. Of the multitudes who have made attempts to explain its mysteries, wide variations exist in what they perceive its messages and imagery to be.

To some degree, Chapter 14 is not as profoundly unfathomable as are many other chapters.

Breaking away from the prophetic story-flow, that chapter pauses to focus on a subject largely misidentified in traditional theology. The picture we get from commonly accepted religious teachings is rather bleak as they attempt to explain the situation involving the uncountable and 'hopelessly lost' masses of humanity, as they're so often described. A degree of Calvinistic thought is incorporated into the outlook of more of our churches' teachings than they'd like to admit.

What Hope for the Masses?

Uncountable billions have gone to their graves ignorant of God's Salvation Message since the time of Adam. World over, and especially throughout non-Christian lands, infants and children have died and continue to die without even the least awareness of salvation, let alone having had opportunity to have pursued it. It isn't much better with their elders. The thought of their being summarily consigned to an ever burning hell at death is patently objectionable to most sensitive thinking people, causing some to incorporate a non-biblical 'age of accountability' idea into their explanations, which at least provides them a more comforting answer as

it regards at least those little ones! But, what about the vast numbers who never had a real opportunity for salvation? Why are so few among us able to provide good answers?

It is the rejection of certain fundamental Biblical teachings that has caused this perceptual blind spot. Clear fundamental doctrines, such as the (plural) **resurrections** from the dead (particularly the one mentioned in Rev. 20:5) and the purpose for Christ's **Millennial Kingdom** on Earth, have no explainable purpose among the traditional 'heaven or hell' persuasions. Despite numerous Biblical passages devoted to these teachings, few denominations have a clear understanding of their essential place in the overall Plan of God for mankind. With the result of that being that the subject isn't a part of their theological positions.

Revelation 14, when correctly understood, presents a scene which contains a picture of hope that accepted religiosity cannot offer. But in order to see that hope, we must correctly identify the intent and message of this insightful chapter.

The Harvests of the World

My Nelson NKJ Bible sub-titles verses 14 to 16 as "*Reaping the Earth's Harvest*". Above verses 17 to 20, it has a sub-title, "*Reaping the Grapes of Wrath*". My old Oxford KJV sub-titles the second half of the chapter, "*The Harvest of the World*". What this tells us is that both of them indicate at least a general awareness of what is being presented.

An Inset Chapter

Revelation 14 is representative of what is known as an 'inset' chapter, in which the writer breaks away from the overall chronological story flow to pause and focus-in on a particular subject. In pursuing the intended message of this chapter, we need to remain attentive to these **key questions**: Does the chapter subject present a comprehensive whole, and is it internally chronological? With those two answers, we can better grasp its real message.

Before we look into the message of Revelation, chapter 14 analytically, it is presented below, in its entirety without comment.

Scene One – The 144,000 Firstfruits

1. *“And I looked, and, lo, a **Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.***
2. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*
3. *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but **the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.***
4. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were **redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.*
5. *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault **before the throne of God.***

Scene Two – Angelic Messages

6. *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto **them that dwell on the earth**, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,*
7. *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for **the hour of his judgment is come**: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*
8. *And there followed another angel, saying, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen**, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath*

of her fornication.

9. *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,***

10. *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:*

11. *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.*

12. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

13. *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth**: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

Scene Three – White Cloud Harvest

14. *“And I looked, and behold a **white cloud**, and upon the cloud one sat **like unto the Son of man**, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

15. *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, **Thrust in thy sickle, and reap**: for the time is come for thee to reap; for **the harvest of the earth is ripe.***

16. *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and **the earth was reaped.***

Scene Four – Winepress of God's Wrath

17. *“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a **sharp sickle.***

18. *And another angel came out from the altar, which had **power over fire**; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are **fully ripe.***

19. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and **gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.***

20. *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the*

horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” (all King James Version)

Apparent from the text is the fact that there are four distinct presentations: The 144 thousand (which are further explained in Chapter 7), then we see the messages to that segment of humanity who survives the Great Tribulation and the fall of Babylon, then at some undetermined later time, a harvest scene involving one group, reaped by one like the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud, followed shortly thereafter by a second group, assigned to wrath, reaped by two collaborating death angels.

Above, it was asked, Does the chapter subject present a comprehensive whole, and is it internally chronological? Let’s consider the chronology issue first.

Internally Chronological?

First, we’re presented a time-referenced scene with the Lamb standing on Mount Zion together with His 144,000 Saints. We know when that is. It’s shortly after the Second Coming! These, we are told, are redeemed from among men, being *the firstfruits* unto God and to the Lamb.

Next, we shift to a three-angel address to those who are living on the earth AFTER the Second Coming. It involves all of humanity. The message to them begins with: *Fear God, give glory to Him, and worship the Creator*. It also announces to them that **their** judgment period has begun. Do we know when that is? There we have another time reference: Judgment is extended upon all the world at this time, where previously it had been upon only the ecclesia (those called ‘the house of God’).⁵⁰ So in this detail also, we have a time marker.

The second messenger (an angel) announces that modern Babylon has fallen (its second fall). This too is a positive time marker, which is further explained in another inset chapter, chapter 18, when Revelation’s running narrative continues.

⁵⁰ 1st Peter 4:17 We need to understand ‘judgment’ in its evaluative sense, not its condemnative sense. The first to be judged toward salvation are those **called** of God. The rest of humanity is destined to be called **later**. May we call it Post-destination as opposed to predestination? (And would such a consideration shed light on the meaning of what is called ‘predestination’? Judgment is upon the Church now!)

Then the third messenger pronounces a prohibition against any further worship under the Beast’s worship system (and that system had existed long before the Beast Power became manifest in the end time), and a dire warning of what the punishment will be on those who defy the prohibition. This too indicates a time reference, that of the age beyond the Second Coming. It shows that mankind will be worshipping God in the coming era, and that all the former forms of manmade worship will be strongly prohibited. Verses 10 & 11 describe the dire punishment imposed upon any who disregard the warning, which we see imposed in verses 19 & 20.

(Those who identify verses 17 to 20 of chapter 14 with the defeat of the Beast’s armies impose a break in the internal chronology of the chapter and impose that severest of penalties BEFORE the warning is issued to them!)

The White Cloud Harvest

Next we move to the third scene: The “*White Cloud*” harvest. In this scene, we see Christ Himself wielding the harvest instrument to “reap” the earth’s harvest, for **it IS ripe!** Commentaries, such as the respected Jamieson Fausset & Brown⁵¹ correctly identify these as being *the righteous!* Halley’s Bible Handbook⁵² presents a similar assessment, that these in verses 14 to 16 are the righteous, making a further point that these are referred to as ‘*the harvest*’, while those reaped later in verses 17 to 20 are referred to as ‘*the vintage*’.

Considering this scene for its chronological aspect, we need to ask ourselves, when will this harvest of the earth’s Saints occur? It can’t be at Christ’s return, because we’ve seen that contingent identified in the opening verses of the chapter, with the 144,000, His ‘firstfruits’, standing with Him on Mount Zion. That ‘harvest’ is **past** already, and as we’ve seen in verses 6-11, we have moved beyond the fall of Babylon and into the millennial age.

So, **who are these** righteous individuals harvested by Christ sitting upon the White Cloud? That

⁵¹ JF&B Bible Commentary, Hendrickson Publishers, March 1997, Volume 3, page 704.

⁵² Halley’s Bible Handbook, Zondervan Publishers, 1965, 24th edition, page 728.

answer is provided in part by the drastic contrast we see presented in the next scene.

With that distinction clearly in mind, we are now ready to move on to the final scene of this chapter. Using angelic representatives, this order also goes out from the Temple in Heaven to gather the vintage destined for the Wrath of God. In this reaping, *'fully ripened'* grapes are gathered by two angels. These represent the wicked of all time, who had opportunity for salvation, and who rejected it, many choosing to perpetuate prohibited forms of worship or not worship at all. One thing apparent in this scene is its finality. These are assigned to receive God's Wrath. This completes the harvest of all of the earth's humanity for all time.

Some may notice, and may think to ask, that IF this is THE harvest at the absolute end of time,⁵³ what is there that suggests such a **lengthy time gap** in the narrative? Such an event will be only after the millennial age and the second resurrection era is completed. Where certain scholars have assigned verses 17-20 at least to the battle of the Day of the Lord, (not that that phrase is in the narrative), their assignment requires a set-back in time placement. That is similarly 'problematical'!

Well, actually there is such a consideration. If we notice the continuing narrative after the three angels' messages, we see the Saints addressed. Verses 12 & 13 address them, third party: 12. *"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the **commandments** of God, and the **faith** of Jesus.* 13. *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.**"* Now, which Saints are these? They can't be the 144,000, as their 'patience' is already rewarded in the fact of their being made immortal Spirit Beings at the Last Trump. Is this speaking to present day Saints? If so, we have to break away from the internal chapter sequence to a

⁵³ The 'end of time' as it relates to the end of the existence of mankind in **physical** form. Not the 'end of the age', as we typically refer to the Second Coming to be, but that Judgment and Sentencing event that occurs **AT** the third resurrection. There is to be a great indeterminate age after the 'last man' is made Spirit in the immortal Family of God, which is another subject for another day. (see 1st. Corinthians 15:24-28)

time before Christ's return. If not either of them, then it must be those who are **becoming** Saints in the millennial age. And, that's where they are addressed: after the three angels' messages, at the onset and duration of the 1,000 years. It indicates that they will live out their lives and die, but await a sure reward for their faithfulness to the Commandments (yes, they are still quite applicable and relevant). Verses 12 and 13 take us sequentially through the millennial age, from the beginning of it clear to the time of the White Cloud Judgment event. This then provides us another increment in a chronological progression, applying to that interval between the start of the millennial age and the end of the Great White Throne Judgment period in which those who never had an opportunity for salvation will be afforded one at last!

Seven Distinct Increments

So we have these seven chronological benchmarks: 1) Christ standing on Mount Zion with His first-fruits, 2) Announcements to the survivors of the Great Tribulation at the onset of the millennium, 3) The second (final) fall of the Great Babylon, 4) A warning at the onset of the millennium against employing old worship forms, 5) A message of hope to those who successfully attain salvation during the millennial age, 6) The Harvest of the righteous, and 7) The extinction of the wicked at the end. The entire chapter maintains and presents a chronological order within itself, though aside from but set into the running narrative of the overall Book of Revelation.

Is the chapter internally chronological? YES! (But, if we pull verses 12 and 13 out to apply them to present day individuals, and if we assign verse 20 to the battle of Armageddon, then, NO, it isn't!)

Comprehensively Whole?

Now, as to the narrative being comprehensive within itself, and I mean by that, does it address one single topic? Does everything within it relate to that topic? We need to consider what it is picturing. It begins with a picture of the righteous standing with Christ at His Triumphal Return. It ends with the 'harvest' of those righteous of a later timeframe into the God Family, and then the utter destruction of those who **would not** have Christ to rule over them. If we consider the chapter's message to be

the “**harvests of the world**”, then, YES, it’s also internally comprehensive. But again, if we make those same assignments as described in the paragraph above, we lose its comprehensiveness as well as its chronological order.

A Vital Answer

The beauty of this chapter is that it places and describes the event that we read of in Matthew 25:32-46.⁵⁴ We can see in Revelation 14 when and how this ‘final sentencing’ (either to a good or bad sentence) will be brought upon those who have had their opportunity to come to know the Truth and to avail themselves of True Salvation.

It shows the absolute necessity of understanding the three resurrections. Without that, we can never come to understand how this final sentencing will come to pass in its proper time context and in its full inclusiveness. The *resurrections of the dead* is a fundamental Christian Doctrine. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

The first resurrection is of the Saints, living and dead, whose names are in the Book of Life at the time of Christ’s Return. (1st Cor. 15:50-58; 1st Thess 4:13-18). The second resurrection adds all those who died without a real opportunity for salvation onto the end of the millennial age to be provided with their first opportunity. (e.g. Ezek. 37) The third resurrection brings up **all** the dead from their graves to stand conscious before God for final sentencing. The general outline of these all being evident in Revelation Chapter 20 and John 5:24-29.

The millennial age begins with the first resurrection and ends with the second. The second resurrection era begins with the second resurrection and ends with the third. The third resurrection brings to the human experience the finality of sentence to eternal Life or the **second death**, after which there is no consciousness and no prospect of ever being brought back to any kind of living state.

In the second resurrection, those who died prior to the time of Christ’s Return, without having had opportunity for salvation, will be raised (as Rev. 20:5 indicates). They will live on into the post-millennial age, within the same Satan-free culture as those

⁵⁴ Related passages being: Luke 19:27, Matthew 25:31-46, Matthew 13:47-50.

who lived in the millennium had, and then in the ‘last day’ stand before the Judgment Seat for sentencing to either Eternal Life or Death, according to their responses. (Their ‘works’!) This is the scene we see set in Revelation 14:14-20.

How Long IS the Post-Millennial Age?

Among the ‘mysteries’ we enjoy speculating about, we have this one. How long will it last? I feel it safe to conclude that it will afford sufficient time for those raised in it to become fully converted. In an age with the whole world full of the knowledge of God, and with no Satanic influence (Rev. 20:10), perhaps as much as one full lifetime. We aren’t told specifically how long the post-millennial age will be, but we do see the ‘final sentencing’ scene time-set, located and described in detail!

The Harvest of the WORLD!

But, what this chapter DOES give us is a comprehensive answer to the enigmatic question that God’s Church has struggled with for decades: **Those converted** during the millennium and the comparatively short opportunity period after it, will be made immortal Spirit Beings, (as were those before at Christ’s Return), in a great Harvest at the White Cloud harvest. This is the clarity that Chapter 14 provides us.

Those who willfully do not repent and do not avail themselves of true conversion will pay the penalty for their sins with **their own blood**, as Hebrews 9:22 so clearly requires. The wages of sin is death! The picture we see in Revelation 14:20 illustrates that fact very graphically. 

For a more comprehensive study of the *Resurrections and Eternal Judgment*, request my **free** 96-page, 18-chapter booklet. (See the address on the reverse of the Title Page.)

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- “The Early and the Latter Rains”
- “Whosoever Will May Come!”

And the Elements Shall Melt

The Apostle Peter describes a Major Event that seems Rather Implausible as it Regards our Understanding of the Millennial Age. What do we Not FULLY Understand and Where does this Disconcerting Prophecy Factor-In?

With all of the ‘doom and gloom’ prophecies put forth by both the religious world and now even our secular world, it would seem that a scenario such as we read in 2nd Peter 3 would fit right in. Though Peter says it more than once, few cite this passage, as it seems to contradict our depiction of the Millennial Kingdom that is the major focus of our understanding of the post-Advent future. Those who envision the Earth being devoid of life, becoming just a burned-out clinker, following Jesus’ second coming may find this ‘useful’ but only after rejecting all of the other clear prophecies which describe the 1000 years rule of Christ and His Spirit-Born Saints on the Earth.⁵⁵

The END of the Earth?

The passage of interest is: *“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. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2nd Peter 3:10-13)*

I don’t know about you, but this description, taken literally, doesn’t come anywhere near to my expectations of the coming Millennial Kingdom of God. It appears that Peter is telling us that the material Earth and its atmosphere as we know it is not a permanent structure. That at some point in time **all**

that we know is going to be consumed! (The Greek word: *Luo*, (Strongs #3089) *destroy, dissolve, melt*)

The question is, what do we do with this passage? Was Peter correct? Did he understand the same things we understand? Is this prophecy only semi-metaphorical, something that we can dismiss, or is there a real time when the heavens and earth as we know it will be dissolved by a great consuming fire unlike anything we’ve conceived of? (Heb. 12:29)

If literally true, we have major questions! What was Peter talking about, exactly **when** is this event to happen, for what reason and what is the ultimate point of it all?

Understanding GOD

In fact, we are here given a rare and priceless glimpse into the *ultimate* future. One some won’t see! But in order to understand when this passage applies, we must first understand the nature and the ultimate intent of the TRUE GOD, the Father and GOD⁵⁶ of Jesus Christ and His Spirit-Born Saints. Admittedly, it is the rare occasion when such things are spoken of, but that doesn’t diminish the value of the gift we see presented in 2nd Peter 3.

A scripture that enhances our understanding of what Peter is describing can be gleaned from 1st Timothy 6:16. Christ’s present abode with GOD is described as being IN the aura of brilliant Glory that would consume a physical being. *“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 ever-*

⁵⁶ Hebrews 1:8-9 *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

⁵⁵ Revelation 1:5-6, 5:10 & 20:6

lasting.” Other scriptures confirm, that our GOD is a ‘**consuming fire**’.⁵⁷ So we have a picture of the potent and lethal aura which GOD the Father emits continually which no mortal can approach or exist within. (See my article: “*My Father, Our Father*”)

Christ Rules on Earth

Secondly, we need to keep in mind that during the Millennial Kingdom and thru the second resurrection period, Christ will rule on the Earth **alone** with His Saints, while His Father remains in Heaven. We are told that Christ’s mandate is to rule UNTIL His enemies are made His footstool. This reveals that there’s a **time limit** on His ordained Rule, after which His mandate is to terminate! So, when the last of His enemies are conquered, **what changes?**

First Corinthians 15 addresses this question clearly: Verse 24: “*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. 25: For he must reign, **till** he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26: The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27: 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. 28: 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.***” A most profound revelation! Not only that God the Father will come to Earth, much later, but that we see two distinct and separate Beings, one working on behalf of the other. We also see one Being able to co-mingle with sinful humanity in their carnal state, while they’re being introduced to, and some going thru, their redemptive process, while the other Being remains insulated from contact until such point in time that all remaining are Righteous Spirits, so as to not contaminate His Presence with any thought or product or anything of carnal origin. The phrase “**that God may be all in all**” indicates our being absorbed into His Divine existence. Obviously then, nothing containing sin could be tolerated within Him!

We see Jesus Christ ruling the nations on Earth for

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3, Hebrews 12:29

1000 years *plus*,⁵⁸ after which He surrenders up the Kingdom to the Father! Now, we see this as happening after the ‘last enemy’ (death) is destroyed. Both death and hell (the grave) are to be eliminated in the Lake of Fire that just previously consumed all the wicked, who had just been sentenced thereto! After that, it will **not be possible** for death to occur (shedding light on that well-known pronouncement in Revelation 21:4), as there will be no beings left alive subject to or capable of death!

So we see the Son reigning on Earth while the Father remains in Heaven. In what religions is this taught? Then, after God’s Plan for man is fully implemented, in which all mortal humans are sentenced to their appropriate end: either eternal Life or extermination in the Lake of Fire which is the **second death** (from which no resurrection or restoration to existence is possible), the Earth will then see the **descent of the Father** for the first time to Earth to assume the Family from the One known up to that point in time as the “*Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*” (from Isaiah 9:6)

So Peter describes that Advent of GOD the Father to Earth **after** the millennial and post-millennial age: After judgment of all of humanity is fully completed and the only living beings then remaining have been made righteous immortal Spirit. No longer just ‘begotten’ of God’s Spirit, but ultimately composed of it! Only after that point in time can those living tolerate the presence of the All-Powerful Father, and can He tolerate theirs!

We have here in 1st Corinthians 15:28 the ultimate encompassing of all living into the over-all genre, the Family of GOD. 2nd Peter 3 describes for us the event of GOD the Father’s descent to Earth to accept the Kingdom of Christ and His Saints **into** His Essence, He becoming the ‘**all-in-all**’ at that point. (1st Corinthians 15:28; 2nd Peter 1:4)

⁵⁸ The ‘*plus*’ period being possibly up to another century beyond the millennium, based on Isaiah 65:20, the era known as the second resurrection period, in which those who never had opportunity for salvation are to be afforded opportunity, after which the resurrection to final sentencing of all but those previously glorified in the first resurrection. This being the culmination of the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11

This is profound in its own right, in that we see GOD as **not** being present in Heaven for all eternity! We see His Son ruling on Earth for 1000+ years, beginning with His second Advent, so who will all the ‘*Goin’ to Heaven*’ people be with when they supposedly go there? ⁵⁹ Not with the Lord!

Elemental Dissolution

With the reality of Peter’s description in mind, and with this literal application, we then can draw from his statements a picture of a future beyond original comprehension. ⁶⁰ Some have speculated that we’re seeing a description of nuclear war, but reading it as Peter stated it, that obviously is inadequate. The heavens will be dissolved and the elements will melt with fervent heat. As anyone who ever melted metals would realize, it takes an enormous amount of energy to produce this result. Where is that limitless energy to come from to produce this described result planet wide?

We are again drawn to the description of GOD the Father given in 1st Timothy 6, “...***the light which no man can approach unto...***” God is the summation of and source of all that exists, of both matter and energy. The material universe and its vast effusion of energy is but a fraction of God’s all-sustaining Power: That radiant energy-field that no mortal can exist in or anywhere near.

I submit to you that the descending GOD the Father will be that Energy-field Source that will consume all that mankind has ever produced, altering the elemental make-up of material Earth, with

⁵⁹ “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...***” Revelation 21:1-5

⁶⁰ “But as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*” 1st Corinthians 2:9-10

His Radiant Presence turning this planet into a brilliant heavenly body, perhaps then the most brilliant locale in the entire universe, emitting not only glorious light, but also being the focal point of the emission of all righteousness into the Universe!

With this understanding, we can see what Peter was referring to. **Not** the start of the Millennial Age, but the **next phase** of God’s Ultimate Plan for His Creation: His expanded Family. “*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*” Our visualization of our **ultimate destiny** remains well beyond our present comprehensive ability, but Peter has ‘opened the door’ for us a little bit. “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1st John 3:2) Something not possible beforehand?!

As the Stars of Heaven?

Many have been thrown off by the phrase in verse 10, “*But the day of the Lord (Kurios) will come as a thief in the night...*” assuming this refers only to Christ’s descent. But he repeats, using a different wording in verse 12, calling it “*the day of God*” (*Theos*). He wasn’t referring to that day of the Lord as we know of it, that series of events leading up to and including the return of Jesus Christ to Earth, to set up His Millennial Reign, but ANOTHER ‘day of the LORD GOD’, when GOD the Father descends to assume the Kingdom from Christ, AFTER the Millennium and final Judgment, as we read of so clearly in 1st Corinthians 15:24-28

Peter was entirely correct in what he wrote. Just that his description extended beyond the end of this evil age, to the **full end** of the age of physical human existence, out past the final sentencing of the ‘last Judgment’, to that era beyond, of our purified Spirit-Born ‘Sonship’, regenerated from the human kind and the enjoinder of ourselves into Himself!

Daniel penned what to some is ‘the unthinkable’ in chapter 12, verse 3: “*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.*” (Confirmed in Matthew 13:41-43) This describes our Ultimate Destiny! Peter describes the time-setting of that for us. 

Comments on 1st Corinthians 15:24-28 & 2nd Peter 3:10-13

This previous chapter presents something fundamentally new to some theological circles. We should take a more calculated look into the subject of the passages in question.

2nd Peter 3:10-13 ***“But the day of the Lord... We are generally conditioned to this expression applying to the events at the end of this age, Christ’s return, where in this case, it represents something unique. We can see that clearly from what happens! So long as we try to understand this passage in the context of Christ’s return at the onset of the millennium, we are forced to disallow the literality of this account. ...will come as a thief in the night;... Unexpectedly! ...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,... With Christ’s return, there is a shout and the sound of a great trumpet, but not the deafening dissolution of our atmosphere that we here see! ...and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,... This also distinctly different from what happens at Christ’s return. The scale of this ‘blasting heat’ isn’t localized. ...the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. We have an extreme development: The fiery elimination of all the works of human craft. Notice it doesn’t mention the ‘burning-up’ of individuals. There is an important reason for that omission while eliminating all the products of human endeavor. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,... Bringing us back to the consideration of continuing human existence, if the Earth is deprived of its atmosphere and its elements are reduced to a molten state, then what physical being could hope to survive? It makes rather clear that the timeframe beyond this event isn’t meant to accommodate human beings! ...Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,... So, we’re being introduced to the Day of GOD (the Father, not the Son this time!) ...wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Repeating the event for emphasis and clarity! Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. No human being in his physical state can ever be ‘righteous’ enough to be***

acceptable in the direct presence of GOD the Father! His presence can’t tolerate sin, or anything produced by a sinner. (Even a prayer must be ‘processed’ thru the name of His designated Intermediary. (John 14:6)) Thus the need for all Saints to have been made Spirit, prior to this radical reconfiguring of the planet, occurring at the Father’s first descent to Earth.

This brings us to the question of the state of humanity at this point in time. Jesus must rule **until** He has conquered all enemies, the last of which is identified as the institution of death. (1st Corinthians 15:26) Death itself (and its counterpart, the Grave) will be expunged from existence by means of the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:14) This is just **after all the wicked are consumed** therein! At that point in time, there will be no longer any need for death, as all capable of it will have been assigned their appropriate ‘reward’, either *Eternal Life* or the *Second Death*. The final consummation of the second death will be the inclusion of Death itself in the Lake of Fire. In other words, there will be no physical human beings left alive in original form. All alive at this point in time will have been brought into the Glorified state, no longer physical, nor subject to death nor heat, no matter how intense!

Another exposé on this development is found in 1st Corinthians 15:24-28. ***“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”*** A paraphrase of the mandate declared in Psalm 110:1. ***“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”*** (We see that conquest described in Revelation 20:14.) ***“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.”*** In other words, there is a Divine Power above and exempt from subordination to Christ, Who awaits a stage of attainment, after which He will enjoin the Kingdom’s progeny to Himself and take the Family from there on into a Fully Glorified state! v. 28: ***“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.” Again, very specifically calling attention to the fact of the two-person Godhead, with one having ultimate authority over the other.

Matthew 13:41-43 *“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;”* (Notice: the Son’s Kingdom will process-out ‘all offenders’.) The process of the second harvest, produced during the ‘latter rains’ period, (the latter day of salvation) will have placed into the Book of Life additional names of all worthy of Life. Those not entered, *“...And shall cast them into a furnace of fire:...* the rest, are assigned to the Lake of Fire at the Final Resurrection. *...there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”* The expressed frustration of having blown their opportunity. *“...Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”* (Notice: their Father’s Kingdom!) Confirming Daniel’s account in 12:3, which says: *“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.”* (Are we seeing two different levels of Glory, those who understand, and those who do and who also accomplish something with what they know?) The Glorified Saints who emerge from the Kingdom, will exhibit these characteristics. The Kingdom of the Father, in His Full Omnipotent Glory, will drastically change the state of this planet, making it an appropriate place for His own Presence as well as those purified and made of His Kind. They will eternally inhabit this New Heaven and New Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness.

“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (1 Pet. 3:13) Concluding the subject passage.

In this context we can better understand the description of the new age **beyond** the Millennial Era as described in Revelation 21.

1: *“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.* (Seas have to be present thru to the end of the Millen-

nial age in order for the seas to give up the dead that were in them. (Rev. 20:13) 2: *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* (This is another New Jerusalem, not the one built during the Millennium.) 3: *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.* (Not Christ, but speaking of GOD the Father.) 4: *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.* 5: *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”* After this point, the speaker is Christ, referring to Himself. *“And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.* 6: *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.* 7: *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* (Notice the lower case on ‘son’. (Meaning us!)) 8: *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* 9: *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.* 10: *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, The Millennial New Jerusalem is constructed on Earth. For a description of that, see Ezekiel 40 & 41. 11: “Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12: And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the*

south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14: And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15: And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16: 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. 17: 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. 18: And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19: And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20: The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21: And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. 22: And I saw no

temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

Both are now present ruling together, not the situation on Earth at any previous time. 23: “*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*” 24: “*And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*” Earth’s Kings will then be Glorified. 25: “*And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*” 26: “*And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*” 27: “*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*”

This is very obviously a distinct and separate world than the physical Millennial Age, in which is provided and presented opportunity for Salvation to the vast majority of humankind. That age will be completely over with and the Great White Throne Judgment period concluded before this Day of GOD will begin. 

Paul’s Theology Wrested and Mis-Constued

Immediately after this enigmatic passage in 2nd Peter 3:10-13, he also makes reference to Paul’s writings. It is in this particular context that we ought to regard Peter’s observation. Peter said, “*And account that the long suffering 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.*” (2nd Pet. 3:15-16) Notice, he mentions Paul as having written of “*these things*”! Well, the subject was the Glorification of the Saints of GOD and the full redemption of mankind, and the descent of GOD the Father to Earth to be with mankind, and to enjoin mankind to Himself. Paul was the most explicit (until perhaps John in Revelation 21) in explaining that Christ would rule on Earth UNTIL a certain point in time, after which GOD the Father would descend also, and assume full control over the Kingdom, enjoining the Spirit-born Family to Himself. That’s why the commentary above on 1st Corinthians 15:24-28.

“*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature...*” (2 Pet.1:4) It appears that ‘*his divine power*’ refers to Christ and the ‘*knowledge of him*’ refers to the Father whose existence Christ came to make known! We can’t take on *Divine Nature* without partaking of the Nature of GOD the Father at the same time! This was what Peter was using to encourage steadfastness. 

GLOSSARY of TERMS: Presented in their general order of occurrence.

Great Tribulation: That series of prophesied world events, unprecedented in all of history, which impacts world populations greatly, and is largely the doing of a great Beast Power, endorsed and upheld by a Great Religious Power. The Tribulation culminates with what is called the Battle of Armageddon, on a great plain 55 miles northwest of Jerusalem. (Matt. 24:21-22; Mark 13:19-20; Rev. 13:1-18.)

Second Coming: That point in world history when Jesus Christ returns to the Earth to put an end to the Beast Power and to take control of all nations, ethnicities and language groups. The Beast will be defeated in the field, and his headquarters city will be incinerated. The site of His descent will be to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. (Luke 21:25-28; Mark 13:24-27; Joel 2:30-32; Rev.13:15-18)

First Resurrection: Concurrent with the Second Coming, the Saints of God will be raised from their graves, or if living, instantly changed into their incorruptible spirit form, and will meet the descending Christ in the air. (1st Cor. 15:42-54, 23; 1st Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 14:1-5; Rev. 13:18; Rev. 20:6; John 5:24)

Destruction of the Beast and his Army: Having moved his second headquarters to the Jerusalem area, (Dan. 11:45) the Beast's Army will be defeated on the Plains of Megiddo (Armageddon). The Beast and his deceiving cohort, the False Prophet, will both be cast alive into the Lake of Fire. These are both living human beings, but empowered by Satan. (Rev. 16:12-16; Rev. 17:7 thru 18:24; Rev. 19:21)

Binding of Satan for 1000 Years: Satan and all his demons will be captured and incarcerated, being isolated and kept away from surviving humanity for the duration of the 1000 years. (Rev. 20:1-2)

Angels' 3 Messages: As a prelude to the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of God on Earth, announcements will be made to surviving humanity: defining and mandating true worship of the True God; that the Babylonish System of government and religion is ended; and announcing a prohibition against employing those forms of worship under penalty of eternal death. (Rev. 14:6-13)

Millennial Age: That period of 1000 years in which Christ will reign on earth with His Spirit-Born Saints. (Rev. 5:9-10; Rev. 20:6; Dan. 2:35 & 44; Dan. 7:18 & 27)

Satan's Release: As the millennial age is drawing to a close, Satan will be released, and he will find a great number of supporters who join him in a campaign against the world capitol at Jerusalem. His vast army will be exterminated and he will join the Beast and False Prophet in the Lake of Fire, to be isolated from contact with humanity forever after. This will serve the purpose of culling out of the late millennial society all who resent God and His Ways, preparatory to bringing up the vast billions for their opportunity for conversion in the second resurrection era. With that resentful unconverted element removed from that society, the world will then be ready for the next event. (Rev. 20:3 & 7-10; Ezek. 38:1- 39:16;)

Second Resurrection: With Satan permanently banished from contact, that segment of 'the rest of the dead' will be restored to physical life, in order to pursue conversion free of Satanic influences. This event will begin an era at least one generation long. These individuals will be resurrected in perfect physical health, and will remain alive until their counterparts, who are still in their graves, rise to stand with them for 'final sentencing' in the third resurrection. (Rev. 20:12; John 5:25-27; Ezek. 37:1-14; Luke 10:13-16)

Post-Millennial Age: That period following the millennial age assigned to those who come up in the second resurrection. It spans between the second resurrection and the third. Other terms for it are the 'Great White Throne Judgment' period and the 'second resurrection era'. Each of these terms identify the same interval of time. (Rev. 20:11-15)

Great White Throne Judgment: That period of time following the millennium in which all of those who come up in the second resurrection are subjected to their evaluative judgment, pursuant to their becoming truly converted. The Temple will be opened, the books will be opened and the Holy Spirit will be available to all who desire to become converted. (Rev. 20:11-12; Ezek 37: Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:12, 11:19 & 15:5)

Third Resurrection: That date in which ALL who remain in their graves (those who died during the millennial age and the wicked from the pre-millennial ages) will be resurrected to stand with the second resurrection generation and with them be segregated for sentencing to their appropriate destinies. This will be the final day of human existence. All living beings alive after this sentencing event will have been made Spirit! (Rev. 20:13; Dan. 12:2; Matt 25:31-46)

White Cloud Reaping: That event in which Jesus Christ will ‘harvest’ His converted Saints from all prior ages (other than those raised in the first resurrection) making them Spirit, and enjoining them into His Family. (Rev. 14:14-16; Rev. 7:9-9-17; Matt. 25:34-40 & 46)

Winepress Reaping: Two Angels will ‘reap’ all of the remaining wicked of all time into the winepress of God’s Wrath for eternal destruction. Their ultimate destiny will be Eternal Death, being cast into the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 14:17-20; Matt. 25:41-46)

Lake of Fire: That reservoir of burning sulfur (brimstone) which consumes both body and spirit. Those who have rejected salvation and proved themselves incorrigible will become extinct in this consuming flame. (Rev. 21:8; Rev. 20:14-15; Rev. 19:20)

Conquest of Death: With the ‘final judgment’ (sentencing) completed, those beings remaining alive will all be spirit-born Saints, no longer subject to death. The institutions of death and the grave will then be no longer necessary, and will themselves be brought to extinction in the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:14)

God the Father’s Descent: Upon completing His Commission, (to rule until the last enemy is defeated) (1st Cor. 15:25-26) after the Judgment is completed, Jesus Christ will turn-over the Family to the Father, who then will also descend to Earth and place a new Heaven-built Jerusalem. All Earth inhabitants will have been made Spirit Beings by this point in time. The presence of the Father will consume the atmosphere and all human evidence. (1st Cor. 15:24-28; 2nd Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1-4; Rev. 22:1-5)



For additional information related to this subject, request the following booklets:

① **Understanding the Resurrections of the Dead and Eternal Judgment.** A ninety-six page, eighteen chapter booklet, which examines the many biblical accounts concerning this all-important subject of not only the resurrections, but their important purposes.

③ **Understanding the Millennial KINGDOM of God.** An eighty page, ten chapter booklet, which presents the living conditions and the worship system that will dominate the next 1000 years after the return of Christ in power and great glory.

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