BEYOND THE GRAVE

Prepared by
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for
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Beyond

the

Grave

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The first mention of any doctrine in Scripture is considered by some commentators to have special significance, and if this is the case, the meaning of *sheol* is clarified.

The first mention of *sheol* is in Genesis 37:35 when Jacob mourned the loss of Joseph and said, “I will go down into the grave (*sheol*) UNTO MY SON mourning.” The KJV translates *sheol* as “grave”, but it is clear Jacob was not referring to the grave, for at that time he thought that Joseph had been eaten by a wild beast! It is also obvious that *sheol* could not be translated “hell”, because Jacob was a believer and God had already changed his name to Israel which means a “prince of God” (Gen.32:28 and 35:10). Also God had promised the land of Canaan to him, and his seed after him.
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Four Types of Saints

To rightly divide the Word of Truth, we must recognize that there are four types of saints.

a) There were Old Testament Saints, who lived and died from Adam to Christ and were saved under the Old Testament or Old Covenant.

b) There are New Testament Saints, who have become partakers of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant and are “in Christ”; in the body of Christ, the Church.

c) There will be Tribulation Saints saved under the New Covenant that God will make with Israel after the Rapture of the Church. Many of these will die as martyrs during the 7-year Tribulation.

d) There will be Millennial Saints, who enter the Kingdom after surviving the Tribulation or are born during the 1,000 - year reign of Christ on earth, and enter into the New Covenant experience of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Since the position of Old Testament saints changed after Christ died and rose from the grave, it is of the utmost importance to understand what happened:

- when Christ died;
- when Christ rose;
- when Christ ascended; and
- when Christ returns.

Understanding sheol highlights the greatness of the work of Christ on the cross, which opened heaven to mankind and made our resurrection possible. The resurrection and ascension of Christ took paradise out of sheol and into heaven.

Two Resurrections

All men will experience resurrection, either to life (for the saved), or to damnation (for the unsaved).
The "first" resurrection (Rev.20:5), or "resurrection of life" (John 5:29), is likened to Israel’s harvest. It has firstfruits (Christ and the Old Testament saints - Matt.27:52-53), the main harvest (the Church at the Rapture-1Cor.15:23,51-54), and the gleanings (Tribulation martyrs - Rev.20:4 and Millennial saints - Rev.20:5).

The "second" resurrection, or "resurrection of damnation", will occur in two phases.

i) At Christ’s second advent Antichrist and his followers will go directly to the lake of fire. Since only resurrected unsaved souls go to the lake of fire (gehenna), he and his followers must receive a resurrection body at that time. See Matt.25:41; Rev.19:20-21; Dan.12:2.

ii) The "rest of the (unsaved) dead" (Rev.20:5) will be raised at the end of the 1,000 - year reign of Christ, when all the unsaved dead incarcerated in hades will stand before the great white throne (Rev.20:11-15). Death (the bodies) and hades (the unsaved souls) will be reunited, raised, judged, and cast into the lake of fire.

The purpose of the judgment of the great white throne is not to determine whether the souls from hades will be cast into the lake of fire (gehenna), but the degree of punishment. Their names have been blotted out of the book of life for rejecting God’s mercy, and their eternal destiny has already been determined.

Gehenna, Hades, Tartaros

Clarification is needed concerning the relationship within the New Testament of “hades”, “gehenna”, and “tartaros”.

Hades refers to the place of torment where the souls of the unsaved go after death, and gehenna equates to the lake of fire for the body and soul.

Hades is therefore God’s remand centre where the souls of the guilty await the day of judgment at the great white throne, when they will receive their degree of punishment for the deeds done in the body.

Tartaros is where fallen angels are restrained while they wait to be cast, with Satan, into the lake of fire (gehenna). There is only one reference to tartaros in the New Testament (2Pet.2:4).

The study of the unseen realm will bring us to a clearer understanding of God’s great plan of redemption and His purposes for mankind.
Introduction

Ancient Pagan Concepts of the Hereafter

In his book *Ancient Times*, Professor J.H. Breasted discusses the beliefs of the ancient Sumerians who lived in the period after the Flood. Excavations by an Anglo-American expedition led by Sir Leonard Woolley at the ancient city of Ur uncovered the tomb of a king, revealing the appalling ignorance of men in Abram’s home city, from which he was told to depart. Woolley wrote:

“The dead were often buried in the town...Of the next world they had only vague and sombre impressions, as a gloomy place of darkness and dust beneath the earth, to which all men, both good and bad, descended. However, they shared in a widespread belief that when a man died he would need his household in the next world. Provisions were made therefore, that the dead man might not be obliged to live without his servants and animals in the life beyond the grave. Tombs found at Ur have disclosed the dead man’s bodyguard, his servants, male and female, his draft oxen still yoked to the chariot, all lying slain at the door of the burial chamber, that they might accompany their master and serve him after death” (page 150).

The sketch above is an artist’s impression of servants and animals standing where they were found slain at the door of the burial chamber. This gruesome practice indicates how far civilization had drifted from the truth within a few hundred years of Noah’s flood.

In Egypt, the sons of Ham had established an advanced civilization but were no more advanced in their understanding of spiritual things. Egyptians worshipped many gods, but the two main gods were the Sun and the Nile River. Osiris was
the lord of the underworld but was intimately associated with the annual flooding of the Nile. Isis was the wife of Osiris and their son Horus was the sun god, usually depicted as a man with a falcon’s head. From the tombs of the kings, we know that they believed in an afterlife and sought to preserve their life by having their body mummified and placed in secure tombs or pyramids. After death, they expected to be judged by Osiris.

In the age of the Pharaohs, when Egypt was brought under one ruler, the pyramids were built of limestone blocks each weighing up to 2.5 tons. The line of pyramids extends for 60 miles, and each had its chapel where it was believed the deceased returned daily. Food and drink left in the chapel was no doubt consumed by the priests.

### Reincarnation

Pythagorus, to whom is attributed mathematical theorems, was a Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C. who founded a school and a philosophical system. He was born on the Greek island of Samos off of the coast of Asia Minor, and in 530 B.C. migrated to the Greek colony of Croton in southern Italy. The basis of Pythagorus’ teaching was ethical and mystical. He believed in the concept that the soul, both human and animal, passes from one body to another body. He taught vegetarianism and rituals of purification which were thought to promote superior reincarnation.

Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism teach reincarnation; that after death the soul may return to live in a lower form of life such as an animal or insect. Spiritism and the occult believe that reincarnation is the soul’s learning process and that it proceeds to higher forms of life after death. Occultists engage in hypnosis and interpretation of dreams to establish who they were in a previous incarnation.
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**Purgatory**

The Catholic Church teaches that purgatory is where departed souls go after death to have their venial sins (forgivable sins) expunged. Prayers for the dead are supposed to assist in the early release from purgatory, and these prayers come at a price. According to Roman Catholicism, pardon for sins and purification can occur during life—for example, in the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Penance. However, if this purification is not achieved in life, venial sins can still be purified after death in purgatory. Purgatory is a device to gather revenue for the Roman Catholic Church, and plays on the emotions of the bereaved.

**Soul Sleep**

Seventh Day Adventists believe in soul sleep; that after death the soul is unconscious until the body is raised at a future judgment. They also teach annihilation for the unsaved after the second resurrection. Both of these teachings contradict the plain statements of Scripture.

We will now turn to the only source of truth, the Word of God, and examine many passages of Scripture that will clarify for us what lies beyond the grave.
Chapter 1

Death, the King of Terrors

When God created man and all the animals there were no predators. Lions did not hunt deer, and within the animal kingdom there was peace. Neither did Adam slaughter sheep or oxen for food; there was harmony between man and the animal world.

From the very outset of civilization within the garden of Eden, God said: “Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And TO EVERY BEAST of the earth, and TO EVERY FOWL of the air, and to EVERY THING THAT CREEPETH upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat (food): and it was so” (Gen.1:29-30).

There was no exception. Every animal, bird, and reptile ate a vegetarian diet. In fact there was no death in the garden of Eden. Adam lived to 930 years and, had he not sinned, would have lived forever.

The relationship between Adam and the animal world was one of leadership. He was to “have dominion” or “reign” as a king over subjects. Adam was the first king to rule on the earth, and his subjects were “every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen.1:28).

Adam was a farmer, to care for the land, but not to slaughter the sheep and cattle. When he was expelled from the garden he was to “till the ground from whence he was taken” (Gen3:23), but the killing of animals in sacrifice began at this time. For about the first 1,656 years men and animals died, but the killing of animals was only authorized for sacrifice.

The first death occurred when God made coats of skin to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. The next death that we read about was the offering by Abel of “the firstlings of his flock with the fat thereof”. Sacrifices continued to be offered, because Noah offered burnt offerings after the Flood and with these offerings God was well pleased, for we read, “the LORD smelled a sweet savour”(Gen.8:20-21).

After Adam sinned God said, “Thou shalt eat the herb of the field” (Gen.3:18), but meat, as a part of men’s diet, was not authorized by God until after the Flood; about 1,656 years later. When Noah emerged from the ark, God said:

“And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth...Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the
green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man (Gen.9:2-6).

Here is a remarkable change, for now animals were to fear mankind and man was authorized to kill animals for food. On the otherhand, human life was to be treated as sacred because only man was made in the image of God. Judgment was to be executed upon any animal or man that killed a man or woman.

This was later supported by the law of Moses:
“If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten” (Exod.21:28).

But death will be abolished after the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth has run its course. The order of events is given:
“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1Cor.15:21-26).

It is resurrection that abolishes death, and the order given in the above verses is as follows:

1. Christ rose from the dead. He was the “firstfruits of them that slept”. Nobody could experience resurrection BEFORE Christ came as the Lamb of God and offered His perfect sacrifice. “Through death” He destroyed “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb.2:14).

Immediately after Christ rose, the Old Testament saints rose (Matt.27:51-53). Although their graves were opened when Christ died, they could not receive their resurrection bodies before Christ rose. They “came out of the graves AFTER his resurrection”.

On the resurrection morning God gave the assurance that we would rise again, just as Christ had risen, and this is seen in type in the “sheaf of the firstfruits” (Lev.23:9-14), which was waved before the LORD in the temple on the first day of the week after the Passover was offered. The Old Testament saints were pictured in the sheaf which was being
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waved by the Jewish priests at the very time that Christ and the Old Testament saints rose!

2. “Afterward they that are Christ’s (His bride, the Church) at his coming.” When Christ comes at the Rapture, the bodies of Church-age saints who have died will be reunited with their souls in resurrection and the living saints will be changed. These will be caught up together to be with Christ (1Thess.4:13-18). Seven years later, the Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected at Christ’s second coming (Rev.20:4).

3. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” When Christ returns He will reign over the entire earth for 1,000 years, and at the end of the 1,000 years the final rebellion by Gog and Magog will be put down, and “death and hell”, the bodies and souls of the unsaved, will be raised and cast into the lake of fire with Satan. Millennial saints who are alive at that time will necessarily be changed, and there will be a new heaven and new earth in which “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev.21:4).

Isaiah spoke of this day when the LORD “will destroy in this mountain (Jerusalem) the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa.25:7-8).

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1Cor.15:26).

4. Redemption will be complete. Death, which God imposed as a sentence in Eden to make a way back to God, will be abolished, and the spoils of Christ’s victory will be delivered to the Father. When Adam sinned, God immediately informed him that the “seed of the woman”, His beloved virgin-born Son, would bruise the serpent’s head. Finally the serpent, Satan, will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev.20:10). “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” (1Cor.15:24).

The future eternal state of the redeemed will be on a new earth renovated by fire. There will be no more sea, no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, “for the former things are passed away”(Rev.21:4). Nor will there be any possibility of the tranquility of that glorious eternal state ever being disturbed by sin, for “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” (Rev.21:27).
In that day, we will look back and sing:
   I’ll bless the hand that guided,
   I’ll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
   In Emmanuel’s land.
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Age of Law
Israel
"Salvation is of the Jews"
John 4:22

Church Age
"The fulness of the Gentiles"
Rom. 11:25

Tribulation
Israel
"The time of Jacob's trouble"
Jer. 30:7

Millennial Kingdom
Israel and Gentiles
"I will pour out my spirit upon ALL flesh"
Rev. 20:1-10; Joel 2:28

Earth burned.
A new heaven and earth

Firstfruits
Living
Old Testament Saints
NOT Raptured, but became
New Testament Saints
Acts 1:8

Harvest RAPTURE
Living
Tribulation Saints
NOT Raptured but become
Millennial Saints
Zech. 14:16; Matt. 25:34

Gleanings SECOND COMING
Living

Only Dead
Old Testament Saints
Raised
Matt. 27:52-53

Dead “in Christ” Raised and Living Saints Changed
1Thess. 4:13-18
1Cor. 15:51-54

Only Dead
Tribulation Saints Raised
Rev. 20:4

The “rest of the dead”, Living Saints and Dead are Raised and Changed
Rev. 20:5

THE "FIRST" RESURRECTION OF LIFE
John 5:25-29
Chapter 2
Life after Death in the Old Testament Era

Adam’s Testimony

The knowledge of death was with Adam and Eve even in the days of their innocence, for when God forbade them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, He warned: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen.2:17).

The experience of death would have been foreign to Adam, but we can assume it would have communicated the idea of separation from life and God.

We know Adam understood that death involved the destruction of the body at the end of the days of his labour, because he was told:

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen.3:19).

However, when Adam sinned he was not immediately struck down in physical death. Physical death was a process which began in his body as a consequence of sin. His spirit was separated from God and he became “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph.2:1).

God spoke to the serpent, Satan, and foretold a day when the virgin-born seed of the woman would “bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen.3:15).

The picture presented in this prophecy is of the seed of the woman (a man), a descendant of Eve, who would place His foot on the serpent’s head and overcome the serpent (Satan). At the same time, the seed of the woman would physically suffer death. The Epistle to the Hebrews records:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy (render powerless) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb.2:14-15).

Paul tells us:

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1Cor.15:26).

Obviously some period of time would elapse before the “seed of the woman” would appear to destroy Satan’s power of death, and in the intervening years the soul of Adam, and all mankind, would have to
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wait in the **unseen realm**. That unseen realm is called *sheol*. 
“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” (1Cor.15:22-23).

At this stage we are not given details of the unseen realm, but it is clear that nobody would have a resurrection body **until** the seed of the woman came and, as the **firstfruits** from the grave, arose Himself, to raise the redeemed to resurrection life.

*Enoch’s Testimony*

The Bible tells us little about the hereafter in the early chapters of Genesis. The first hint of a life after death occurs in the genealogy of Seth, where we are told: “*Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him*” (Gen.5:24).

We are not told **where** God took him or **how** God took him, but we do know from his prophecy recorded by Jude what he understood about future events, and this indicates certain facts about the future life. Enoch, “the seventh from Adam”, prophesied:

> “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...” (Jude14-15).

From this short prophecy we learn that Enoch knew there is a future day of reckoning, that the Lord will come to earth to judge mankind, and when He comes He will bring His saints WITH HIM. By implication this indicates that the saints must have gone to be with Him **at some prior time**.

How much more Enoch understood and preached, we do not know, because the first 1,656 years of human history on earth is covered in only five chapters of the Book of Genesis, much of which is genealogies. **Satan’s existence** was well understood by his tempting of Eve, and the **existence of angels** (Cherubims) would have been stamped indelibly on the memory of Adam (Gen.3:24). Early generations were not ignorant of **the unseen world** or of a **future world**, but what did they know of their own existence after death?

Enoch did not go to heaven when he suddenly disappeared, as some have supposed, though he was a “type” of those who will one day be suddenly removed before the Great Tribulation.

*Noah’s Testimony*

Noah also “*walked with God*” (Gen.6:9), and God warned him of a universal flood that would bring death to most human beings. He was
told how long the interval would be before the flood came (Gen.6:3), and was instructed to prepare an ark. God directed him to enter the ark, and later to leave it. Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and the earth. Noah was a prophet and had open communication with God, so it is unlikely that he did not have a clear understanding of what lay beyond the grave. However, we have no record in Scripture.

**The Patriarchs’ Testimony**

Abraham was born 350 years after the flood, in the same year that Noah died. By this time many had turned to idolatry, so God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees to place him in a land which God would give to him and his descendants. Abram was not the only person with knowledge of the hereafter, for we read concerning Melchizedek king of Salem that he was a priest of the “most high God”. How many other contemporaries had the knowledge of God, we do not know, but Job must have lived just before the days of Abram and he made some very clear statements about life after death. His three “friends” also were well aware of the living God, even though they gave poor counsel to Job.

Abraham was promised the land of Canaan, but the New Testament tells us:

“He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb.11:10).

Not only Abraham, but all the patriarchs looked for that **heavenly city**, for we read:

“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb.11:16).

Many of the covenant promises to Abraham involved material blessings, however, the city for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob looked, was not an earthly city but a heavenly one. **It can only refer to the new Jerusalem** in the eternal new heaven and new earth.

It is important to realize that God’s gift to Abraham of a land, and His instruction to Moses to build a tabernacle, were in some eternal way linked to the scene in heaven. The pattern which God showed to Moses on Mount Sinai was replicated in the tabernacle on earth.

There is a temple in heaven, and John saw it opened in Rev.11:19, filled with the glory of God Rev.15:8, and angels coming out of it announcing judgments (Rev.14:15; 16:1,17). There is also an altar of incense in heaven (Rev.14:18), and an ark of “his testimony”(Rev.11:19).
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The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem were but shadows of what existed in the heavenly “mount Sion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb.12:22).

By faith, Abraham looked beyond the material city to the eternal city whose builder and maker is God. He must have known a great deal more about what lay beyond the grave than what we read in the Book of Genesis.

With the benefit of New Testament revelation, we also know more of that city. Jesus said:

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

John was shown the new heaven and new earth, and he said:

“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” (Rev21:1-3).

This is what Abraham looked for about 2,000 years before the Christian era began. He knew a great deal about what lay beyond the grave.

Jesus’ Testimony about Abraham

About 500 years after Abraham, Moses stood at a burning bush in the desert and God declared Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All three of these had died, yet God did not say, “I was the God of Abraham...” but “I AM...the God of Abraham...” (Exod.3:6). Jesus pointed out to the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection,
that God was the God of the living, and therefore Abraham was still alive. His body was at Hebron, but his soul was very much alive in the unseen world.

“No now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for ALL LIVE unto him” (Luke 20:37-38).

Therefore, when resurrection takes place, the conscious souls in the unseen world are reunited with their bodies which had been placed in the grave. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s bodies had died, but their souls were alive; as we can see in Luke chapter 16 where Jesus records a conversation between Abraham and the rich man in the torment of hell (Luke 16:25-31).

**Job’s Testimony**

We are not told exactly when Job lived, but we know that he was “the greatest of all the men of the east” when God allowed Satan to test his faith. He must have lived before Abraham, for he lived 140 years after he was tested (Job 42:16). In all probability he lived for about 400 years, which places him in the era immediately after the flood when there were four generations who lived for that number of years.

Job stated:

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

It is obvious that Job knew he would die and be buried, but in the latter days he would be raised from the dead and receive a resurrection body, which would be the same body for he said: “Yet in my flesh shall I see God.” He also believed that his Redeemer would stand on the earth in the last days.
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The implications of Job’s statement are wide indeed. It indicates a clear understanding that God’s ultimate purpose is to raise the bodies of the human race, that death is not the end, that the earth will be the final location of resurrected saints, and that there is a terminus point in history which he calls the “latter days”. We can assume that God had revealed a great deal more to him.

Concerning life immediately after death, Job spoke about the unseen realm called “sheol” in the Hebrew.

“O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave (sheol), that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live [again]? all the days of my appointed time WILL I WAIT, till my change come” (Job14:13-14).

It might be objected that Job contradicted this thought when he said:

“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave (sheol) shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more” (Job 7:9-10).

The context clarifies Job’s statement. Here he is not referring to coming up from sheol at the resurrection, but coming back to life to occupy his house and possessions. Job fully expected to come out of sheol when the voice of the Son of man was heard, as he indicates in Ch.19:25-27.

Of the wicked, Job said:

“They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave (sheol). Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us” (Job 21:13-14).

“Drought and heat consume the snow waters: [so doth] the grave (sheol) [those which] have sinned” (Job 24:19).

The Testimony of Samuel

Samuel had anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel, but Saul failed dismally under pressure and Samuel had the onerous task of telling him that God had rejected him from being king (1Sam.15:23). Saul’s life became greatly disturbed and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. As he saw the blessing of God resting on David, Saul was filled with jealousy and moved further and further away from God, even slaying the priests of the Lord because they had supplied David with hallowed bread and a weapon when David fled from him.

When the Philistine army came into the land Saul feared and enquired of the Lord, but “the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets” (1Sam.28:6).
Forsaken by God, Saul sought help from a woman who was a witch with a familiar spirit, living at Endor. He disguised himself and asked her, “Divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee” (1Sam.28:8).

When the woman asked who he wanted her to bring up, Saul replied, “Bring me up Samuel”. However, God intervened, and much to the woman’s amazement, instead of the familiar spirit appearing as an impersonation of Samuel, God permitted Samuel himself to appear and speak to Saul. He said:

“Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?...Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?...Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me” (1Sam.28:15-19).

Samuel was agitated that he should be disturbed in sheol, where his spirit had been. Obviously Samuel had not come from the torment section of sheol, or he would have been glad to escape for respite. To appear and speak to Saul was an imposition, but Samuel knew what would happen the next day when Saul went to battle with the Philistines. Since only God has foreknowledge, it would seem that it was a revelation from God for he was a prophet.

Samuel’s prophecy was fulfilled, and Saul was slain on Mount Gilboa the next day. His body was taken by the Philistines and hung on the wall of the city of Bethshan. The men of Jabeshgilead took the body to Jabesh, where they burned it and buried his bones under a tree.

Saul’s body was buried and his soul went to sheol with Samuel. So it is clear that sheol is a place where the souls of both God’s servants and God’s enemies go after death.

Saul’s son Jonathan was also in sheol with Samuel the next day. From all that we read of Jonathan, it seems clear that he was in the paradise section of sheol.

The Meaning of Sheol and Hades

The Old Testament described the hereafter with the Hebrew word “sheol”, which, according to Dr Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary, means:

“Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates. In the KJV it is translated: grave, hell, pit.”

“Hades” is the Greek equivalent used in the New Testament, and it means “not seen”, or “unseen realm”, i.e. the unseen realm beyond this life.
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The word “sheol” does not differentiate between the place where the saved go after death, and the place where the unsaved go. All souls in Old Testament times went to “sheol”, the unseen realm.

As already noted, the translators of the KJV have sometimes translated sheol as “hell”, sometimes as “grave”, and three times as “pit”.

The Amplified paraphrased Bible makes no attempt to translate but inserts the word sheol. In some places it even adds in brackets after sheol, “the place of the dead”.

The New King James (NKJV) sometimes translates sheol as hell, sometimes as grave, but also as sheol e.g. Ps.86:13; Ps.16:10.

The Interlinear Bible by J. Green tranliterates “sheol”.

Two Sections in Sheol

Twice in the following Old Testament Scriptures we read of the “lowest hell” (sheol):

Deut 32:22 - “For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell (sheol), and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.”

Psalm 86:13 “For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell (sheol).”

The expression, “the lowest sheol”, indicates that there were different parts of sheol and, from the context, the lowest sheol was a place of God’s wrath upon the ungodly. Because David was the object of God’s mercy, he knew he had been delivered from the torment part of sheol.

When the rebellious sons of Korah opposed Moses, they were judged and went to sheol.

“They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit (sheol), and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation” (Num.16:33).

Jesus described sheol in Luke chapter 16 when He spoke about the rich man and Lazarus:

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivesth thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and
thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence “ (Luke16:22-26).

We learn a number of things from the Lord’s description of the unseen world of sheol.

First, that there are two sections of sheol. One is a place of blessing, and the other is a place of torment and remorse.

Second, that the souls of the deceased are conscious and can communicate with each other.

Third, that paradise and torment are far apart. The rich man saw Abraham “afar off”. There was “a great gulf” between these two locations.

Fourth, that there is no possibility of escape from the torment section and no possibility that any saved person could be lost from paradise. The Roman Catholic concept of purgatory is entirely foreign to Scripture; once death comes, the soul is eternally consigned to blessing or torment.

Scriptures speak of communication between sheol’s inhabitants. God told the king of Babylon, through Isaiah, that he would be brought down to sheol where the heathen kings of the earth had gone. He was also told of the reception he would get from the kings that he had slain.

“All Hell (sheol) from beneath is moved (quiver with violent emotion) for thee to meet [thee] at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, [even] all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave (sheol) (Isa.14:9-11).

It is clear that there is recognition and emotion in the unseen realms beyond the grave. This surely answers the false teaching of the Seventh Day Adventists who would have us believe that the souls of the deceased have no consciousness.

The Book of Proverbs indicates that sheol has no limit as to size.

“All Hell (sheol) and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied (Prov. 27:20).

Did Jesus go to Hell?

Many Christians believe that after Christ died He descended into hell and there suffered the torments of hell for our sin. The Church of England Common Book of Prayer (1662) quotes the Apostles Creed as follows: “I believe...Jesus Christ...descended into hell”. This was amended in the Book of Common Worship (2000) to, “I believe in Jesus Christ...he descended
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to the dead”. The Presbyterians and Lutherans continue to use the 1662 edition, according to Encyclopedia Wikipedia. However, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ bore our sins “in his own body ON THE TREE” (1Peter2:24). He did not suffer the wrath of God in hell.

When Jesus cried, “It is finished,” He had finished the work of redemption; nothing more needed to be added. It was during the three hours of darkness, when God shut from human view His beloved Son, that the Father forsook Christ as He “who knew no sin” was made sin for us (2Cor.5:21).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which (Spirit) also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1Peter3:18-20).

“My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Ps.16:9-10).

Peter explained this prophecy on the day of Pentecost.

“He (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell (hades) (Acts 2:31).

Jesus did NOT go to the place of torment with the lost souls. After He died, He went to paradise (Abraham’s bosom) with the repentant thief, where all the Old Testament saints were waiting for Him to accomplish a perfect salvation by His death on the cross. Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross: “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke23:43).

Nor did Jesus, after He died, preach to “spirits in prison” who were disobedient in the days of Noah. We should note that Jesus preached to the disobedient world in the days of Noah by His Spirit. When Noah preached, the Holy Spirit convicted men of sin, and we read that God said:

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” (Gen.6:3).

Peter is simply saying that Christ was “quickened by the Spirit” of God when He was raised, and that this was the same Holy Spirit who strove with the evil world of Noah’s day, who were now imprisoned in hades. It was the third person of the Godhead, NOT Christ’s human spirit that raised Christ from the dead. No doubt it was possible for those in paradise to communicate with the lost in the torment section of sheol, as Abraham spoke to the rich man in hell (Luke 16:22-31). Jesus could have
done likewise, but this Scripture does not say that He did. It certainly was not necessary for Him to go into the torment section of sheol for He had already endured the wrath of God on the cross.

**Sheol is for the Soul, Death is for the Body**

In Psalm 6:5 David said:

“For **in death** (the body) there is no remembrance of thee: **in the grave** (sheol) who shall give thee thanks” (or worship holding forth the hands)?

The opportunity for service and worship is here on earth or in heaven, and sheol was a place where the souls of Old Testament saints waited consciously in the unseen realm after death for the day of resurrection when opportunity for worship would be available in the presence of God. When John was caught up through the open door into heaven (Rev.4:1-4) he saw twenty-four elders worshipping before the throne. We will discuss these worshippers later.

Isaiah reinforces this Old Testament truth:

“For **the grave** (the soul in sheol) cannot praise thee, **death** (the body in the grave) can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (Isa.38:18).

We remind the reader that Jesus described this division within sheol in Luke 16:19-31 when He told the Pharisees about the rich man and Lazarus; both died, and both went to the unseen realm. Lazarus went to “Abraham’s bosom” where he was comforted, and the rich man to a place of fire and torment. There was an impassable gulf between the two places in the unseen realm. The souls of Old Testament saints in paradise were conscious, were comforted, and could communicate, but they were captive until Christ would lead them to heaven (Eph.4:8).

When David spoke of the “lowest hell” (lowest sheol) as a place of judgment he was referring to the place of torment, where the soul of the rich man went after death.

**The Wicked and Righteous went to Sheol**

Unsaved souls went to sheol; to the torment section. We read that the king of Babylon went to sheol. To the king of Babylon, God said:

“Thy pomp is brought down to the grave” (sheol) (Isa.14:11).

Pharaoh was reminded in 586B.C. (Ezek.31:1) that the king of Assyria went there when “the mighty one of the heathen” (Babylonians) had destroyed Nineveh (612B.C. - Ezek.31:11). “**When I cast him down to hell** (sheol)...” (Ezek.31:16).

In Ezekiel chapter 32 a number of heathen kings are seen in sheol; kings of Asshur (Assyria), Elam, Meshech and Tubal (Scythians), Edom,
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and Zidon. Pharaoh was told that he would soon see them all in sheol (Ezek.32:21-22, 24, 26, 29-31).

Sheol was not a Permanent Location

David looked beyond sheol to the time when his soul would leave and go into the presence of God. He said:

“But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (sheol): for he shall receive me. Selah” (Ps.49:15).

We know this happened when Christ rose from the dead and took the Old Testament saints from sheol into heaven (Matt.27:52-53; Eph.4:8-10).

Someone may object, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses do, that David has not been taken to heaven because Peter said:

“For David IS NOT ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Acts 2:34-35).

However, the tense of the words in this passage makes it clear that Peter was NOT saying that David had not been taken to heaven, but that David was not already in heaven WHEN HE SPOKE THE WORDS, “The Lord said unto my Lord...” He could therefore not be speaking about himself, but his words must be a prophecy referring to Christ. Peter was seeking to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, and that He had risen from the dead and was now seated at the Father’s right hand on the throne of heaven.

Sheol is Distinguished from the Grave

“Qeber” is the Hebrew word for a grave, as Dr. Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary indicates:

“qeber; a sepulchre: — burying place, grave, sepulchre.”

When Sarah died, Abraham asked the sons of Heth for land to bury her body:

“I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace (qeber) with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight” (Gen.23:4).

Nowhere in Scripture is qeber translated any other way than “grave, buryingplace, or sepulchre.” The body is spoken of as going into death, and the soul into sheol, as seen in Ps.6:5 and Ps.89:48.

“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his SOUL from the hand of the grave (sheol)? Selah” (Ps.89:48).

God had preserved David from dying physically and he was grateful his soul had not gone down to sheol. Both aspects of death are covered
in these verses.

“O LORD, thou hast brought up **MY SOUL from the grave** (sheol): thou hast **kept me alive**, that I should not go down to the pit” (“pit” is from a Hebrew word, **bore** meaning grave, or a hole in the ground) (Ps.30:3).

We have already noted that David spoke prophetically of Christ.

“**My flesh** also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave **my soul** in hell (sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Ps.16:9-10).

Peter explained this prophecy on the day of Pentecost.

“He (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that **his soul was not left in hell** (hades), neither his **flesh did see corruption**” (Acts 2:31).

Paul takes up the same prophecy in the synagogue at Antioch.

“Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: **BUT HE, WHOM GOD RAISED AGAIN, SAW NO CORRUPTION.**

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:35-38).

In Old Testament times it was understood that the body, in death, went to the burial place described as “the pit”, “grave” or “sepulchre”(geber), but **the soul** went to the “unseen realm” (sheol) to await resurrection; either the first resurrection for the saved, or the second resurrection for the lost. The Jews understood this, and when 72 Jewish scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek in the Septuagint version, they translated “sheol” as “hades”.

**When did Old Testament Saints go to Heaven?**

No Old Testament saint could go to heaven until Christ had come and offered the perfect sacrifice, of which all the Jewish sacrifices were but a type. Christ is the **“firstfruits of them that slept (died)”** (1Cor.15:20, 23). The **paradise section** of sheol was the waiting place in the unseen realm for the souls of the Old Testament saints. They had been saved by faith and looked forward to the day when atonement would be perfected. This was evident on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elias appeared and spoke with the Lord. Luke records:

“**And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem**” (Luke 9:29-31).
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Moses and Elijah had been waiting in sheol for hundreds of years, and now at last God’s plan of redemption was about to be fulfilled. Their great interest lay in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, “which he should accomplish at Jerusalem”. For them, it would mean release from the captivity of sheol into the glorious liberty of God’s presence.

The Old Testament sacrifices were inadequate. They had been ordained by God to point to the true sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ. They were a “shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (Heb.10:1). They were repeated again and again and could never make the offerers perfect. Christ was the perfect Lamb of God who, by one sacrifice, would take away the sin of the world. His coming was to open heaven to redeemed men and women.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb.10:19-20).

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” (Matt.27:50-51).

We read that the veil was rent; the way into the holy place was opened. Then we are told that the Old Testament saints were raised. Their graves were opened by the earthquake which shook the earth when Christ finished the work of redemption on the cross, but three days later, when Christ had risen,

“many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the city, and appeared unto many” (Matt.27:52-53).

The veil of the temple was a type (picture) of the body of Christ in which dwelt the Son of God, the eternal Word. John wrote:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

When the temple was built the glory of God resided in the holy place and only the high priest could enter beyond the veil once each year, and then, “not without blood”(Heb.9:7). Within the holy place was the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat, which was a picture of the throne of God in heaven. The tabernacle was made according to the pattern which Moses was given on Mount Sinai, when he was shown the temple in heaven (Heb.8:5; 9:23).

The rending of the veil from top to bottom therefore signified that “the way into the holiest of all” (Heb.9:8), into heaven itself, was now possible.
At death, saints need no longer go to sheol, but immediately into the presence of God.

The death of Christ opened the way into heaven on the grounds of a better sacrifice, releasing their souls from sheol. Christ’s resurrection released the Old Testament saints bodies from the grave, and forty days later they were released from this world when the Lord Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, led “many sons to glory” (Heb.2:10).

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph.4:8-11).

The ascension of Christ, just ten days before the Church was formed at Pentecost, saw a new era which we call the Church age. In this age a Gentile bride is being won to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel (Acts15:14). The Church of Jesus Christ is being built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph.2:20), and hence we find that the ascension of Christ is linked to the gifts of “apostles” and “prophets”, “evangelists”, “pastor and teachers”. The apostles and prophets were foundational to the Church, but evangelists, pastors and teachers continue. These have replaced the Jewish priestly system until the Rapture, when Israel will again become God’s witness on earth.

Where are the Old Testament Saints Now?

The answer is obvious. They have been taken to heaven in resurrection power and are worshipping in heaven around the throne. Now in His presence they have “fulness of joy” and “pleasures for evermore” (Ps.16:11).

When God revealed to John “the things which must shortly (quickly) come to pass”, he saw his own translation (Rapture) through the open door of heaven (Rev.4:1-2), and there round about the throne were 24 seats on which sat 24 elders who were leading the worship. These were the leaders of the 24 courses of priests from Israel who led Old Testament worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Now in resurrection bodies, they continue their work in the heavenly temple. The original 24 elders are
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In Old Testament times, when Gentiles were saved they were called “strangers” in Israel. They joined Israel and worshipped the God of Israel, but Divine worship was led by the Jewish priests ordained of God for service in the earthly temple. In Solomon’s day the number of these believing Gentiles (“strangers”) was 153,600 (2Chron.2:17).

Thus, in the temple there were 24 courses of priests (1Chron.24 and 25) leading the worship of the redeemed from “every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation”, and since the Old Testament saints have already been resurrected to heaven, the 24 Jewish elders continue to lead the worship in heaven (Rev.5:9-10). Each of the 24 courses consisted of 12 priests, so there was a total of 288 priests (1Chron.25:9-31) of the sons of Aaron who were responsible for the offerings. In addition to the sons of Aaron, David appointed the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun as musicians to “prophesy with harps, psaltries and with cymbals” (1Chron.25:1-31). There were 24 courses of singers. With their brethren, 12 per course, the total number of singers and musicians was 288. We read of the 24 elders in Rev.5:8 that they too have “harps, and golden vials full of odours (incense)”.

In Jesus’ day, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was said to be a priest of “the course of Abia” (Luke 1:5) serving in the temple. The course of Abia was the 8th of the 24 courses, which places it in the last two weeks of the fourth month of the Jewish year, the month Tammuz.

It is clear that all Old Testament worship in the temple was led by 24 courses of priests and 24 courses of singers. Whether it was offerings of incense, offerings of animals, or the offering of praise, it was orderly under the leadership of these elders. Finally, there were 24 porters who daily served at the gates of the temple (1Chron.26:13-19). No doubt the 24 elders around the throne are the leaders of the worship of Old Testament saints in heaven (Rev.4:4).
There are Now Three Companies in Heaven

To the Hebrews, Paul wrote:

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb.12:22-24).

In this dispensation of the Church age, when believers come into the presence of God they do not need to worship at an earthly temple located in an earthly city of Jerusalem, but by faith they come to the heavenly Jerusalem where, we are informed, there are three companies.

1) An innumerable company of angels.

2) The general assembly and church of the firstborn. On earth Christians are located in local assemblies, but in heaven the souls of all Church-age saints are gathered in a general assembly.

3) The spirits of justified men who have been perfected in resurrection. These are the Old Testament saints who have received their perfect resurrection bodies when Christ rose from the dead.

Where will the Old Testament Saints be in the Future?

When Christ returns to the earth He comes WITH ALL His resurrected saints (Zech.14:5). The saints who are with Him at that time will be the Old Testament and New Testament saints. We read about both Old and New Testament saints in Revelation chapter 19:

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great...Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God (Rev.19:4-9).

Here are two companies of saints represented in the same passage; the four and twenty elders and the wife of the Lamb. Paul said to the Church at Corinth:

“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Cor.11:2).
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To the Ephesian Church, Paul wrote:
“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph.5:25-32).

Following the second advent there will be the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the Bridegroom will ask His guests to attend. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he said:
“I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:28-30).

Old Testament saints are the friends of the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, and they, together with Tribulation saints, will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Church, the bride, will be attired in wedding garments, “clean and white” (Rev.19:8).

The marriage supper of the Lamb includes those who are found watching when Christ returns so it must occur AFTER the Lord returns to earth. Jesus said:
“Blessed are THOSE SERVANTS, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make THEM sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve THEM” (Luke 12:37).

Heaven will rejoice in anticipation:
“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev.19:7-9).

Three Invitations to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 22:1-14 about a king who prepared a marriage supper for his son. Three invitations were given, and it was not until the third invitation that the wedding was furnished with guests.
The first invitation was given by the Lord during His earthly ministry, but they would not come.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come” (Matt.22:2-3).

The second invitation was given by the Apostles in the early Church period, but the Jews “entreated them spitefully and slew them” (Matt.22:6). Peter reminded the Jews that the Gospel had to go to Israel FIRST in Acts 3:26 and Paul and Barnabas told the Jews: “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it far from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts13:46). The parable says: “They which were bidden were not worthy” (Matt.22:8).

The king in the parable is the Father who responded and “destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.” In A.D.70. God sent the Romans to besiege Jerusalem for five months, slaughtering or enslaving its inhabitants. The city and temple were burned.

The third invitation to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb as guests will be given by 144,000 Jewish witnesses in the first half of the Tribulation, and at that time “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom.11:26; Ezek.39:22-29). In the third invitation the servants are told to go “into the highways” and “gather together as many as ye shall find, both bad and good” (Matt.22:10). This suggests that the 144,000 will preach the “gospel of the kingdom... in all the world” (Matt.24:14) and that converted Gentiles will be among the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb just as converted Gentiles were numbered among Old Testament saints.

A solemn warning is given that those invited must have a wedding garment, and the parable tells of one man who came unprepared. He was cast “into outer darkness”, where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt.22:13). Only the redeemed from the Old Testament and Tribulation periods will qualify as guests. “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev.19:9).

The marriage supper of the Lamb will be on earth after Christ returns, as indicated in Luke 12:36-37. The bride will have “made herself ready”,}

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having received her rewards at the bema seat in heaven (Rev.19:7-8). If the marriage supper was in heaven then how did the man without a wedding garment get there? It can only be on earth. The order of events in this passage of Scripture is as follows:

1) Israel is to “wait for their lord”.

2) When the Lord comes to earth He will “return from the wedding” in heaven. So the second advent is AFTER the wedding of Christ and His Church in heaven, which means the Rapture must take place BEFORE the Tribulation. There can’t be a wedding without a bride.

3) When the Lamb returns to the earth with His wife after the wedding in heaven, He will prepare a feast and “make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them”. When John was describing the return of Christ, he wrote: “BLESSED are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Rev.19:9). Jesus will say to the “sheep” (saved Gentiles at the end of the Tribulation) “Come, YE BLESSED of my Father, inherit the kingdom...” (Matt.25:34). Daniel, speaking of those who enter the kingdom, wrote, “BLESSED is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (Dan.12:12).

In the millennial kingdom, the Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs will serve in resurrection bodies together with Israel and the living nations that survive the Great Tribulation in natural bodies.

A Jewish Wedding

The story of Eliezer Ben Yehudah, who, almost single-handedly revived the Hebrew language, illustrates the simplicity of the Jewish marriage ceremony. In 1881, Eliezer and his bride-to-be, Deborah, decided to marry in Vienna but this was not possible without birth certificates and so they caught a river steamer along the Danube to Constantinople where they were told to go to Cairo.

At Cairo the young lovers stood before a Rabbi and two witnesses. Eliezer took Deborah’s hand and, looking straight into her eyes, said: “Harei at Mekudeshet lee.”

One of the two witnesses was a Gentile friend who asked, “What do the words mean?” The Rabbi explained, “The words mean, You are herewith betrothed to me. According to Jewish custom, this alone is sufficient to unite two young people in marriage if spoken in the presence of two witnesses.”

After the marriage in heaven the Bride will receive her rewards and make “herself ready” for the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth.
Chapter 3
Life After Death for New Testament Saints

The “New Testament saints” are all the saved persons on earth between Pentecost and the Rapture. The death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ were essential before the Church could be formed. Jesus said: “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you” (John 16:7). The distinguishing characteristic of the Church age is the indwelling Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, He not only filled the disciples, but also baptized them into the Body of Christ which is His Church. The Body of Christ did not exist before Pentecost.

When Christ rose from the dead, He opened heaven. The veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom signifying that the way was now made open into the holy of holies, into heaven itself, where Christ appears as our great high priest on the throne of heaven (Heb.9:11-12, 24).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb.10:19-20).

So if sheol has been emptied of its saved from the Old Testament era, where do New Testament believers go after death? There is no need for New Testament believers to go to any waiting place in the unseen realm because access into the immediate presence of God is now available to all who believe.

Paul says:
“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil.1:23).

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)
We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Cor.5:6-10).
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These verses make it clear that the soul of the believer is immediately transported into the presence of Christ in heaven at the moment of death. It may be that the angels have the task of ushering the saints into Christ’s presence. We know that Lazarus was “carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (paradise) (Luke 16:22), and that the angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb.1:14).

Paul said:
“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the THIRD HEAVEN. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into PARADISE, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities” (2 Cor.12:2-5).

Paul is obviously speaking of himself in the third person, and identifies the third heaven with paradise. He was caught up to heaven where God dwells and calls it paradise. The first heaven is the atmosphere, the second is the starry space, and the third is where God dwells. This Scripture confirms that paradise is now in heaven, and we know the Old Testament saints are there already.

Paul was not permitted to speak of those things which he saw, and he said:
“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” (1Cor.2:9-10).

If it were not for the Holy Spirit’s revelation in Scripture of some of the glory that awaits the believer, we would be entirely in the dark about our future. However, God has revealed much to us by His Spirit.

Old Testament Saints Conscious after Death

The Seventh Day Adventist teaching of “soul sleep” contends that after death only the body exists in death; put simply, it denies the immortality of the soul.

Just as the souls of the deceased in sheol were conscious, the state of departed souls beyond the grave now is one of conscious activity. There is no Biblical support for the false doctrine of “soul sleep”. We have already seen that in the record of the rich man and Lazarus there was conversation between Abraham and the rich man. On the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elias appeared and “spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31).
When Saul wanted to enquire of the Lord about the imminent battle with the Philistines, the Lord would not answer him, so he went to the witch of Endor in the hope that he would be able to contact Samuel who had died. God intervened, and instead of a spirit impersonation, Samuel appeared and spoke the Word of the Lord to him. The witch was afraid, because she expected her “familiar spirit” to appear but instead it was Samuel.

If Samuel did not have an immortal soul, how could he appear? He could not have appeared in a resurrection body, because Christ had not risen at that time and He was the firstfruits of them that slept!

Tribulation Saints Conscious after Death

We learn of the souls of martyrs raising their voices in heaven during the future Great Tribulation. They were conscious, and vocal.

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar THE SOULS of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev.6:9-10).

Throughout the Book of Revelation there are many indications that the redeemed in heaven are conscious (Rev.5:9; 7:9-10; 12:10-12; 14:3; 18:20).

“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; and CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev.7:9-10).

When John was asked, “Who are these?” he was told:

“These are they which came out of (the) great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple” (Rev.7:14-15).

This great multitude of Tribulation martyrs are obviously very conscious immortal souls serving the Lord in heaven. They await their resurrection bodies at the end of the Tribulation when Christ comes to the earth (Rev.20:4).

New Testament Saints Conscious after Death

In the great passage of Scripture which describes the Rapture of the Church, we read:

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep (have died) in Jesus WILL GOD BRING WITH HIM. For this we
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say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep (have died)” (1Thess.4:14-15).

If man does not have an immortal soul, how will God bring with Christ those Christians who have died? The purpose of this coming is to give a resurrection body to all who are “in Christ”. The deceased believers must be raised first, “then we which are alive and remain” will be caught up in resurrection power, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air.

The expression, “them that sleep in Jesus”, refers to death. At the moment of death the believer’s soul departs to be with Christ, and his body sleeps in the grave awaiting the resurrection. At the resurrection of the Church the same body is raised and reunited with the soul.

When the Old Testament saints were raised, their souls came from sheol to be reunited with their bodies, but since Christ has opened heaven and the souls of believers now go immediately into His presence, the souls of deceased Church-age saints come WITH Christ from heaven at the Rapture.

The Spirits of Just Men made Perfect

The Epistle to the Hebrews is written to Hebrews (Jews). Unless we understand its Jewish context, we will not be able to rightly interpret its message.

Throughout the Epistle Paul is showing that Christ is the fulfilment of the law, which was a “shadow of good things to come” (Heb.10:1). Christ is seen as the “better” sacrifice, and a “better” high priest administering a “better” covenant. Jerusalem and the temple, which had been the place of God’s presence on earth, was also a shadow of a heavenly Mount Sion, the place of God’s throne in heaven.

In this Church age, we Gentiles, who have become “partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Israel - Rom.11:17), enjoy all the spiritual blessings of the new covenant; thus we can approach God’s presence with boldness (Heb.4:16). We do not come to an earthly temple in an earthly Jerusalem, but to

“mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb.12:22-24).
Besides the vast number of angels, there are two great companies of saints in heaven. There is the Church of the firstborn (from the dead), and the “spirits of just men made perfect” (complete). We know who the Church is, but who are “the spirits of just men made perfect”? The “spirits of just men made perfect” are the Old Testament saints who have already received their glorified bodies and are therefore complete in Christ’s presence.

The Church is not yet complete, for we await the resurrection. Neither is the Church complete in number, for there are still those who will yet be saved before the Rapture, as Paul wrote in Romans 11:25. “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”. The Church is the Gentile bride of Christ. When Israel rejected the message of the resurrection of Christ, Paul said: “The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles” (Acts 28:28).

At this present time we are “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest (guarantee) of our inheritance UNTIL the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph.1:13-14).

The body is the “purchased possession” which has yet to be redeemed and awaits the resurrection, but the souls of deceased believers are already in the heavenly Mount Sion.

**Rewards for Believers**

After the Rapture, Church-age believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The purpose of this judgment is not to determine whether we are saved, or to receive punishment for failure, because all of our sin has been once and for ever dealt with at the cross when Christ “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Peter2:24). Our debt has been paid, and at the moment of our salvation we were “justified freely by his grace” (Rom.3:24).

Furthermore, we had imputed to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is therefore not judicial, but for the purpose of assessing rewards for service in helping to build the Church of Jesus Christ. If we have built with gold, silver, or precious stones, then our works will abide and we will receive reward; but if we have built wood, hay and stubble, we will suffer the loss of reward to our great sorrow.

Paul gives a solemn warning to Christians: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
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Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.

If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Know ye not that ye (all of you) are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile (destroy) the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye (all of you) are” (1Cor.3:10-17).

The rewards of believers are spoken of as crowns, and there are two types of crowns in Scripture. There are kingly crowns (diadema) which are worn by Christ at His appearing (Rev.19:12), but also worn by the dragon (Satan) (Rev.12:3) and by the beast (Antichrist) (Rev.13:1).

The crowns that are given to the saints from Old Testament (Rev.4:4; 12:1) and New Testament eras (James 1:12; 1Thess.2:19; 2Tim.4:8; Phil.4:1; 1Pet.5:4; 1Cor.9:25; Rev.2:10) are the victor’s wreath (stephanos), such as are awarded at the Olympic Games. They are awarded for running the race that is set before us with patience (Heb.12:1).

When Paul came to the end of his earthly journey, he could say:

“The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2Tim.4:6-8).

There are a number of crowns for which Christians may strive:

1) Faithful elders in the Church of God will receive “a crown of glory that fadeth not away”, from the Chief Shepherd (1Peter 5:4).

2) Those who are “faithful unto death”, and those who endure testings and persecution will receive the “crown of life” (Rev.2:10; James 1:12).
3) Those who love the “appearing” of the Lord Jesus will receive a “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim.4:8). The Blessed Hope is a purifying hope producing righteousness which will be commended by the Lord (1 John 3:2-3). This is a special crown for those who keep the Word of God’s patience i.e. the truth of the Lord’s return; patiently waiting for His coming and continuing to confess His name (Rev.3:8-11). A number of Scriptures speak of “waiting” for the Lord, and the “word of my patience” is the message of the Lord’s return for which the Church at Philadelphia was commended. James wrote: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord...Be ye also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7-8).

The letter to the Church at Sardis (the Reformation Church) warns that Church about its failure to watch, and the Church at Philadelphia is warned to “hold fast that which thou hast” lest someone else takes their crown.

4) Soul-winners will receive a “crown of rejoicing” (1 Thess.2:19; Phil.4:1). Every soul won to Christ will be the cause of great joy in the presence of Christ. It will include those we know about, and those we don’t know about.

5) Faithful saints who boldly stand for Christ will receive an “incorruptible crown”.

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor.9:24-27).

Crowns can be lost if we fail to serve as we ought. God will give the service to which we were appointed to others, who will receive our reward. We recall the words of Mordecai to Queen Esther:

“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2 John 1:8).

“Stephanos” (the victor’s wreath) is used in relation to the Lord Jesus in His incarnation and resurrection in Hebrews 2:7 and 9. He is “crowned with glory
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and honour” because He was made a “little lower than angels for the suffering of death”. His death on the cross won Him the victor’s crown. He laid aside His glory and was found in fashion as a man. “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” (Phil.2:9-10).

When the soldiers platted a crown (stephanos) of thorns and pressed it into the brow of the Lord Jesus, it was done in mockery. The victor’s wreath has replaced the crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse (Matt.27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2,5). The 24 elders in heaven wear crowns (stephanos) of gold which they cast before the eternal throne (Rev.4:4,10).

When are Rewards Received?

Rewards are given at the end of the race. At the Olympic games only three medals are given as each race is finalized. Many who have striven lawfully and well are greatly disappointed. Paul noted this fact:

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1Cor.9:24).

However, Paul did not say that only winners would be rewarded in the race of life. He said that we are to “so run” as though there was only one prize. Every effort should be expended, every weight laid aside and every rule observed as we “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (upward call) of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil.3:14).

“No man that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1Cor.3:8).

Unlike the Olympic games, every believer will receive reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Every child of God will receive some commendation. We may suffer loss as the wood, hay and stubble is burned, but the grace of God which has worked in each believer from the day of salvation will find some devotion, some service, some sacrifice, some victory, and some labour for the Lord to commend.

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every (saved) man have praise of God” (1Cor.4:5).

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb.6:10-11).

After the Rapture of the Church, the wedding will take place in heaven and all rewards will be distributed. Then Christ will appear in glory
and we read: “his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness(es) of the saints.” (Rev.19:7-8).

The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. The rewards of the saints will be the cause of much praise to the Lord at His glorious appearing. Paul wrote:

“When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2Thess.1:10).

Just as old soldiers march with their battle ribbons and medals to commemorate victories for their country, so, at the second advent, the army of the saints will display the rewards for every victory won for Christ, and it will all be “to the praise of his glory” (Eph.1:12,14). He will be admired!

**The Resurrection of the Saved**

We have already seen that the Old Testament saints were raised with Christ when He took paradise into heaven, but what of the Church-age saints?

Jesus taught us that there are two resurrections.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is (Old Testament saints), when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:25,28).

When Jesus stated that the time of resurrection had come, He was no doubt thinking of the Old Testament saints who would come forth from their graves immediately after His resurrection, but in the future there will be other resurrections. The first resurrection applies to the saved, and the second resurrection applies to the lost. One is to life, and the other is to damnation.

The fact that the Old Testament saints rose with Christ makes it plain that there has to be more than one stage of the first resurrection, and that is borne out by other Scriptures.

The first resurrection is staged like any harvest. It has its firstfruits (Christ and the Old Testament saints), the harvest (the Church at the Rapture), and the gleanings (the Tribulation and millennial saints).

The resurrection of the Church-age saints will occur at the Rapture, when those who are raised are specifically identified as those who “sleep in
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Jesus” and the “dead in Christ” (1Thess.4:14, and 16). This expression is peculiar to the Church, for since Pentecost believers have been baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ at conversion. This was not true of Old Testament saints, who were members of the Israel of God.

Only in the Church Epistles do we find believers being addressed as the “saints in Christ Jesus” (Phil.1:1), and it was a term applied to ALL New Testament believers, for Paul says:

“Therefore if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Cor.5:17).

Jesus forewarned the disciples that this change would occur. He told them that the Spirit who was WITH them, would be IN them after He had been taken from them:

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and YE IN ME, and I in you” (John 14:20).

Being “in Christ” means to be placed into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Body of Christ (the Church, Col.1:24) did not exist in the Old Testament, for Jesus indicated it was still future during His earthly ministry. He said:

“I will (future tense) build my church” (Matt.16:18).

When Peter preached at Pentecost 3,000 souls were saved, and we read:

“The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts2:47).
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So those who are raised in the Rapture are exclusively those of this present age and can only be Church-age believers.

It is important to note that the Rapture includes living saints as well as those who have died. This was not true of the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. At that time the living saints remained to establish the Church, and after Pentecost became part of the Body of Christ.

The Tribulation saints who die, will be raised when Christ returns to reign. We read about that in Rev.20:4.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

However, the living saints who survive the Tribulation will not be changed for they go alive into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew’s Gospel states that when Christ returns He will sit upon the throne of His glory and before Him will be gathered all nations. Then the Lord will separate the sheep (saved Gentiles) from the goats (unsaved Gentiles). The goats go away into “everlasting fire”, and the sheep go into the “kingdom” (Matt.25:31-46).

Zechariah states that the nations that are left after the Tribulation “shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech.14:16).

When the age of Law finished, Old Testament saints who were living became New Testament saints, and when the Tribulation comes to an end the surviving saints will become millennial saints. However, when the Church age ends, all Christians will be removed; the Church comprised of converted Gentiles and converted Jews, all one in Christ Jesus. The Tribulation is the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer.30:7) in which Israel will turn to the Lord, and through their testimony a great company of Gentiles will be saved.

The day of Israel’s conversion cannot come until the Church is complete, as Paul made very clear:

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom.11:25-27).
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Age of Law
Israel
“Salvation is of the Jews”
John 4:22

Church Age
“Fullness of the Gentiles”
Rom. 11:25

Triublation
Israel
“The time of Jacob’s trouble”
Jer. 30:7

Millennial Kingdom
Israel and Gentiles
“I will pour out my spirit upon ALL flesh”
Rev. 20:1-10; Joel 2:28

Firstfruits
Dead raised
Living changed

Harvest RAPTURE
Dead raised
Living changed

Gleanings SECOND COMING
Dead raised
Living changed

Only Dead Old Testament Saints Raised
Matt. 27:52-53

Dead “in Christ” Raised and Living Saints Changed
1 Thess. 4:13-18
1 Cor. 15:51-54

Only Dead Tribulation Saints Raised
Rev. 20:4

The “rest of the dead”, Living Saints and Dead are Raised and Changed
Rev. 20:5

Living Old Testament Saints
NOT Raptured, but became New Testament Saints
Acts 1:8

Living Tribulation Saints
NOT Raptured but become Millennial Saints
Zech. 14:16; Matt. 25:34

THE “FIRST” RESURRECTION OF LIFE
John 5:25-29
Chapter 4

Life after Death for the Unsaved?

Thus far we have seen that when Christ died His sacrifice opened heaven to redeemed souls. When He rose, He made it possible for bodies to be raised from the dead, and when He ascended, He took the Old Testament saints into heaven, leading the first of many sons to glory. All who have been saved since then will follow in their train.

Peter expressed the joy which the Christian enjoys in anticipation of our ultimate triumph:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations” (1Peter1:3-6).

Hades, God’s Remand Centre

The unsaved dead, however, enjoy no such comfort. Ever since the beginning of time unsaved souls have languished in the “lowest hell” (lowest sheol); in the torment section of sheol. When Christ rose, paradise was removed from sheol and taken to heaven, but sheol continued as the place of departed unsaved spirits of men. In the New Testament Greek it is called hades, and is best described as God’s remand centre.

When a person is arrested for a crime, our legal system places the guilty party in remand until brought before the judge to receive an appropriate sentence. Remand centres are similar to gaols, but the degree and length of sentence is not determined until a day appointed, when the evidence is read out in court and the prisoner stands before the judge. Our legal system assumes the person is innocent until proved guilty in court, but God has perfect knowledge and only the guilty are remanded to await the great white throne judgment.

God’s remand centre, hades, has only unrighteous sinners in it, and these are detained in hades (sheol in the Old Testament Hebrew) until the day when Christ will sit upon the throne of judgment to pass sentence. There are only two occasions when Christ sits upon the throne of judgment; first when He returns, and later when His 1,000-year reign on earth has ended. The books of works will be opened, and the book of life will be
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opened. At the first judgment living nations are judged, while at the great white throne only resurrected unsaved are judged.

Just as the first resurrection is in several stages, the second resurrection is in two stages. There will be a resurrection of “some” of the dead when Christ returns to the earth, but the “rest of the dead” (Rev.20:5) are not raised until the end of the 1,000 years.

Who will be Raised at the Second Coming?

Daniel wrote:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at THAT TIME thy people (Israel) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (saved Israel). And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, SOME to everlasting life, and SOME to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan.12:1-3).

These verses undoubtedly refer to the Great Tribulation and the coming of the Lord to rescue repentant Israel. The “time of trouble” is what Jesus called “great tribulation” (Matt.24:21), and it is at “that time” that many that “sleep in the dust” will be raised, “some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt”.

Words could not be plainer. There will be SOME saved and unsaved who receive resurrection bodies at the end of the Tribulation, but it is NOT a general resurrection because John states that “the rest of the dead lived not again UNTIL the thousand years were finished” (Rev.20:5).

Those raised to eternal life are the Tribulation martyrs (Rev.20:4), and those raised to everlasting shame are the Antichrist, his false prophet, and those who followed them, described by the Lord as “goats” (Matt.25:33). Isaiah described the Tribulation in Isaiah 24 to 28 in what is known as the “little apocalypse”, and told the remnant of Tribulation saints to “hide thyself as it were for a little moment”. This applies to the second half of the Tribulation, when Israel will be preserved by God in “the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God” for “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev.12:6). The resurrection of the Tribulation saints is promised in Isaiah 26:19:

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body (Christ’s body) shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (i.e. in resurrection).
Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain” (Isa.26:19-21).

The context is unmistakeably the Tribulation and the coming of the Lord to judge the nations. God will protect repentant Israel in a wilderness place which He has prepared (Rev.12:6) for the last half of the Tribulation, but there will be a resurrection of Tribulation martyrs, while those who followed Antichrist will be slain and given resurrection bodies to be cast into the “everlasting fire” of the “lake of fire”.

When John described the judgment of Antichrist, he wrote: “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” (Rev.19:20).

Daniel described the judgment of Antichrist (the beast) as follows: “I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame...the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Dan.7:11, 26).

“He shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (Dan.11:45).

We are told two things: first, that Antichrist is cast “alive” into a lake of fire, and second, that he is “slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” The lake of fire is only for resurrected persons. The soul of the unsaved goes to hades, but body and soul of unsaved are consigned to gehenna which is the lake of fire, as we shall see later.

Those who follow Antichrist and survive the Tribulation are described by the Lord as “goats”, and are gathered before the “throne of his glory” after Christ returns. Sentence is passed by the Lord, and Scripture records: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS” (Matt.25:41).

These followers of Antichrist go to the place where the Devil and his angels (demons) will be consigned, and that will be the lake of fire (Rev.20:10). Hades (sheol) is not where the Devil is cast, for it is only the remand centre for the SOULS of unsaved men and women.

It becomes quite clear from these Scriptures that the “everlasting fire” into which the “goats” are banished when Christ returns, is the same place into which the Devil is cast at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ,
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and since the lake of fire requires a resurrection body for sentence, these receive their resurrection body when Christ returns and sits upon the throne of His glory.

Since Antichrist does not go to hades but directly to the lake of fire, he too would receive a resurrection body, and Daniel chapter 12 therefore describes a part of the second resurrection for Antichrist and his followers. However, the “rest of the (unsaved) dead” will not rise till the 1,000 years are finished.

Who are Raised at the End of the Millennium?

John saw “death and hell” deliver up the dead which were in them, and these stood before the great white throne. “Death and hell” (hades) refer to the body and soul of the unsaved. Sheol, or hades, will finally be emptied of all remaining unsaved souls, who will be reunited with their bodies in the final stage of the second resurrection, which the Bible calls “the second death”. Jesus referred to it as “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29).

The dead will be judged “according to their works” (Rev.20:13). We read:

“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke12:47-48).

Perfect justice will be administered at that throne, but there can be no mercy, for “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”. Only the souls from hell (hades) will stand before the great white throne.

When John saw his own entry through the door of heaven at the Rapture (Rev.4:1-3), there was a “rainbow round about the throne” of God, signifying the mercy of God on the grounds of a covenant relationship (Gen.9:13). However, there is no rainbow at the great white throne, and the One who occupies it will not appear precious “as a jasper and a sardine stone” (Rev.4:3) but fearsome, for we read: “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away” (Rev.20:11).
A full circle rainbow cannot be observed while standing on earth. The writer observed a full circle rainbow while flying over rain clouds in the north of Queensland. As the shadow of the plane moved across the clouds below, a rainbow completely encircled the shadow, which may be a parable to teach us that we can never fully appreciate God’s mercy while on earth, but when we are heaven-borne at the Rapture the fulness of His love and mercy will be apparent. At conversion we are sealed unto the day of redemption, but at the Rapture these vile bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Halleluiah!

The Book of Life

It is evident from a number of Scriptures that God keeps a record of the deeds of men. For the believer, that record is not imputed because Christ has obtained eternal redemption for us (Rom.4:4-8); but for the Christ rejector, the record stands, and the factor which determines the destiny of the unbeliever is not the degree of sin, but whether his name remains in the book of life.

"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:15).

The book of life is also called the book of the living. Every soul born into the world was recorded there before the foundation of the world. Throughout each life, opportunity is given by God to repent and turn to God. If a soul refuses to turn from sin to God, that name is blotted out. When Moses offered to have his name blotted out of the book in order to atone for Israel’s sin, God replied, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (Exod.32:33). To the saved in the Church at Sardis, the Lord says:

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Rev.3:5).

Footnote: Rev.13: 8 and 17:8 may appear to indicate that some names were not written or are not written, in the book of life from the foundation of the world, however, in the original Greek language both Scriptures are the same in the perfect tense. The perfect tense does not have an exact equivalent in English, but indicates “a present condition resultant upon a past action”. Thus the translators have used the past tense in Rev.17:8, and the present tense in Rev.13:8. All names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world and the perfect tense indicates that IN THAT FUTURE DAY, only some names will remain because of a past action; their names were not blotted out as a consequence of rejecting God’s mercy.
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The **overcomers** in the seven Churches of Asia are not victorious Christians but the true believers in the professing Church. John wrote:

“Whosoever is born of God **overcometh** the world: and this is the victory that **overcometh** the world, even our faith” (1John5:4).

“Who is he that **overcometh** the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1John 5:5).

Throughout time, the book of life has contained the names of all souls that will be born. However, at the end of time, all unsaved will have made their choice and been blotted out. All destinies will then be determined, and those remaining in the book of life will be the redeemed who have trusted in the Lamb of God for salvation. Thus it is finally called “the Lamb’s book of life”.

**Only Christ can Raise the Dead in Resurrection**

Jesus said:

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; **even so** the Son quickeneth whom he will. For (because) the Father judgeth no man, but **hath committed all judgment unto the Son**... and hath given him (Jesus) authority to execute judgment **also**, because he is the Son of man”” (John 5:21-22,27).

“The dead shall **hear the voice of the Son of God**: and they that **hear shall live**” (John 5:25).

It is clear from this Scripture that the Father and Son are equal in honour and power and there are certain things which the Father has given the Son to do. Resurrection is linked to judgment, and Jesus, as the Son of man, has been given power to raise the dead and to judge. The “times” and “seasons”, however, are in the Father’s power (Acts 1:7).

Jesus said:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. **I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. THIS COMMANDMENT HAVE I RECEIVED OF MY FATHER** (John 10:17-18).

Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). Because He, as the perfect Son of man, has raised Himself, He has the power to raise all mankind, either to life or to damnation.

Every time we read of someone being **resurrected**, it is by Christ. “**ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth**, and be raised in resurrection power either to life or damnation (John 5:28-29). None can resist His call.
The Old Testament saints rose “AFTER his resurrection” (Matt.27:52-53). Jesus said: “The hour is coming, AND NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). This undoubtedly refers to the resurrection of the Old Testament saints.

At the Rapture, the Church will hear the Lord’s shout (1Thess.4:16). When two Jewish prophets are raised from the street of Jerusalem the Lord’s voice is heard from heaven saying, “Come up hither!” (Rev.11:12).

At the great white throne the Lord Jesus is personally present to execute judgment, “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away” (Rev.20:11).

Why is Christ the only one who can call forth the dead from the grave? Because, as the Son of man, He is the “resurrection and the life”, and has risen in triumph over death. He took the righteous judgment of God which we deserve, and for this reason the Father has committed all judgment to the Son.

**Gehenna and Hades**

The Bible uses two different Greek words in the New Testament when referring to the place where the unsaved go after death; they are *gehenna,* and *hades,* and both are translated as “hell”. We have already seen that *hades* has the same meaning as the Hebrew word *sheol,* but since the Lord Jesus has taken paradise out of *sheol* and into heaven, *hades* now is exclusively the remand centre for the souls of unsaved persons as they await the second resurrection; “the resurrection of damnation” at the end of the 1,000 - year reign of Christ. Therefore it is now correct refer to *hades* as hell, because it contains only torment and flame and only unsaved are confined there.

The justice system in our land has two types of prisons: remand centres and gaols. When a person is arrested for a crime he is held in a remand centre awaiting the day when he will appear in court before the judge, and once guilt is established, the judge determines the degree of punishment. *Hades* is God’s remand centre, however, God has perfect knowledge and the question of guilt is already settled. The Word of God states:

“He that believeth on him (Christ) is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

Not to believe in Christ, establishes one’s guilt and seals one’s destiny, and the lake of fire is God’s gaol where the eternal sentence is carried out.
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There is not one Scripture that states that the Satan will ever be in hades, but we know that he will be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev.20:10).

During the millennial reign of Christ on earth Satan will be bound in the “bottomless pit” (abyss), but he will be freed for a short while before being cast into the “lake of fire and brimstone”. Hades is not prepared for the Devil and his angels, but “everlasting fire” is (Matt.25:41), therefore the “everlasting fire” described in Matthew 25:41 must be the lake of fire and not hades.

An examination of the New Testament references to gehenna will indicate that the body and soul are cast into gehenna. However, it is only the soul that goes to hades at the death of the unsaved, therefore gehenna is another name for the lake of fire where souls go in their resurrected bodies. Gehenna is also described as a place where there is a “fire that never shall be quenched” (See the following references where gehenna is translated hell: Matt.5:29-30; 10:28; 18:9; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:4-5; James 3:6. Nowhere in Scripture do we find the body in hades, but “death and hades are cast into the lake of fire” (Rev.20:14).

This of course immediately raises an important eschatological question. If the “goats” (the living unsaved at the end of the Tribulation) go to the lake of fire, then they must receive their resurrection bodies 1,000 years before the “rest of the dead” (Rev.20:5). We know that the resurrection referred to in Rev.20:4 is only of the Tribulation martyrs. Is it possible that at that same time the “goats” go directly to the lake of fire in resurrection bodies? It would seem so.

We know that Antichrist and his false prophet are consigned bodily to the lake of fire at Christ’s coming (Rev.19:20), and that 1,000 years later Satan is cast into the same lake of fire “where the beast and the false prophet (already) ARE” (Rev.20:10).

If the everlasting fire into which the living nations are cast at Christ’s second coming is “prepared for the Devil and his angels” (Matt.25:41), then it follows that those who attach themselves to Antichrist in the Tribulation will be given resurrection bodies and cast into the lake of fire with him before the 1,000 years of Christ’s reign begins, but why?

During the Tribulation there will be great deception (2Thess.2:9-12), but there will also be great light and understanding. After Daniel is told of
the coming Great Tribulation, he is advised that “the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Dan.12:9). Then we read:

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Dan.12:10).

The “wise” are those who will heed the Gospel of the Kingdom preached by the 144,000 Jewish servants of God. These will realize that they are in the last days which the disciples described as the “end of the age”.

In the first half of the Tribulation the Gospel message will be “preached in all the world for a witness”, and men everywhere will clearly know the issues. To reject Christ and follow Antichrist will be a deliberate choice, but once that choice is made, they will come under his extreme power of delusion. All other religions will be replaced with Antichrist’s god. The world will be divided into two clearly defined camps; those who worship Christ, and those who worship “the dragon” (Satan) who gave power unto the beast” (Rev.13:4).

Guilt in God’s sight is greatest when light has been rejected, and these will be sinning against light in open defiance against Christ. Just as the angels who sinned in the full knowledge of the light of God’s presence have no opportunity of salvation, so those who, during the Tribulation, align themselves with the Devil against Christ, will go directly to the lake of fire. They will not wait till the great white throne judgment 1,000 years later.

The deception which deludes the unsaved in the Tribulation will cause men to worship Satan and oppose Christ. When Christ returns, the armies of this world will be gathered to fight against Him.

“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” (Rev.19:19).

In Acts 4:25-26 Peter quoted the second psalm, which will have its ultimate fulfilment when Christ returns.

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed (Christ)” (Ps.2:1-2).

Armageddon will not be merely another global conflict of nation against nation, but the mobilization of the armies of the whole world against Almighty God and His Christ.

The armies which follow the Antichrist will therefore be slain by the “sword which proceeded out of his (Christ’s) mouth”. Those of Antichrist’s
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followers who survive and stand before the throne of Christ’s glory (Matt.25:31) will be given resurrection bodies and go straight to the lake of fire.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Rev.14:9-11).

Those who worship Antichrist will follow him to the lake of fire and brimstone.
Chapter 5
The Future Eternal State

Beyond the millennial kingdom there is an eternal state, described in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, about which we do not have a great deal of information. It is called the new heaven and new earth, and into this scene there comes a new Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven.

In this new heaven and new earth, all the saved dwell in resurrection bodies about which we have very little understanding. If it were not for 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and details which we may observe about our Lord’s risen ministry, we would have little concept of the nature of our eternal bodies or how we will operate in the new environment.

The future eternal state has as its centre the earth for, when the new heaven and earth are announced, we read:

“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” (Rev.21:3).

David wrote:

“The LORD’s throne is in heaven” (Ps.11:4), but in the eternal state “the throne of God and of the Lamb” will be in the new Jerusalem (Rev.22:3).

Scripture indicates that many of the distinctions which have existed throughout past ages will continue in the new heaven and new earth. Some have used 1Cor.15:28 to teach that after death has been swallowed up and Christ has “delivered up the kingdom” to the Father, then the Son will be subject to the Father, “that God may be all in all”. It is assumed that believers of all ages will merge into one homogeneous mass of saints, but is this what the Bible teaches? Paul’s description of the final stage of Christ’s victory over death cannot fairly be interpreted as extinguishing distinctions between believers of past ages.

A word of caution is in order. Since little more than two chapters (Rev. chs. 21 and 22) tell us all that we know, we should be careful not to go beyond the details provided. Our eternal home will no doubt be an unspeakably glorious place in an entirely new environment, and it is difficult for humans, with the limitations imposed by our world and by sin, to comprehend the vastness of what God has in store for us, while we are still on this side of the grave.
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The Jew, the Gentile, and the Church

What we do know, is that in the eternal state the earth will be renovated by fire, there will be "no more sea", and "the former things are passed away" (Rev.21:4). The new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and when the angel showed John the "bride, the Lamb's wife", he showed him the new Jerusalem which has "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" in its foundations (Rev.21:14).

Paul wrote that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph.2:20), and stated, "I have laid the foundation" (1Cor.3:10). The Church is espoused to Christ "as a chaste virgin" (2 Cor.11:2) and is identified with the new Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

The twelve gates of the new Jerusalem will be inscribed with "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev.21:12), and through those gates "the kings of the earth" will eternally "bring their glory and honour into it". "The nations (Gentiles) of them which are saved shall walk in the light" of the new Jerusalem (Rev.21:24-26).

Revelation chapter 22:6-21 is the final appeal to sinners, and we note that Christ is described as "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" as well as the "root and offspring of David and the bright and morning star" (Rev.22:16). "The Spirit and the bride" (the Church) make a final appeal. "Come...come...come!" (Rev.22:17).

There is absolutely no doubt that the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church will still be remembered and identified in the new heaven and earth, and that there will be well-ordered activity. We read: "his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face" (Rev.22:3-4).

Eternal Relationships

Some relationships will change. All three synoptic Gospels recall the hypothetical case which the Sadduces put to the Lord about a woman who married seven brothers. They asked,

"In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife" (Mark 12:23).

Jesus replied:

"When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 12:25).

An Eternal Environment

Many questions have been asked. Will the present earth be totally removed and replaced by another planet? Or will the planet earth be renovated by fire?
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Peter compares the destruction of the earth in Noah’s day with the earth’s destruction by fire at the end of the millennial kingdom:

“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2Peter 3:6-7).

The world of Noah’s day did not disappear but was cleansed by water, and the new heaven and earth will likewise be renewed. The oceans will disappear and all of the former things will pass away. There will be no animals in the new earth. All natural life forms will perish in the conflagration. If we can believe that the entire world was once covered by water, we should have no problem believing that the day will come when there will be no more sea!

Scripture states:

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Eccles.1:4).

Will we eat in the eternal city? Jesus said He would not “drink of the fruit of the vine, UNTIL the kingdom of God shall come” (Luke22:18), and He ate after He rose from the dead. It would therefore not be inconsistent for those who have been raised in His likeness to partake of food.

“And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:42-43).

In the new earth there will be the tree of life which will “bare twelve manner of fruits...every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev.22:2).

If there is no more death and no more pain, one wonders why the leaves would be necessary for the “healing of the nations”. The Greek word translated healing is “therapia” and may imply “well being” or “health” rather than a cure for sickness. They will be for the benefit of the nations.

The blessedness of the eternal state will be enhanced by the absence of all the consequences of sin; no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, and no more curse. There shall “in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” (Rev.21:27).

The sun and the moon will continue to shine on the new Jerusalem, but there will be no need of them because “the glory of God “ will lighten it and “the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev.21:23).
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Where are the Angels?

The new earth will be the dwelling place of the redeemed from all ages, but what of the vast number of angels? These number countless millions; “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands” (Rev.5:11).

It would appear that heaven, where God dwells, will continue to be the dwelling place of the angelic hosts. If the new Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven, we can assume that heaven continues to exist. It seems that the throne of God is relocated to the earth, for “the throne of God and of the Lamb” will be in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:3). We are reminded:

“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” (Rev.21:3).

Some details are revealed about the new Jerusalem that leave us wondering in amazement. The magnitude of the new Jerusalem staggers our imagination. The city is 1,500 miles square and is bounded by a wall which is 6,000 miles in circumference. The city is a square and the four sides each have three gates.

The height of the city is as great as its breadth; 1,500 miles. Scientists tell us that the earth’s Ionosphere reaches to 250 miles (400km km), so the new Jerusalem will stretch far into the space of the new heavens. Earth’s diameter is 7,600 miles, so the new Jerusalem will be one fifth of the diameter of the earth.

Comparing the new Jerusalem with the earth’s surface, it would be bounded by Greece on the west, the Persian Gulf on the east, the southern border of Egypt to the south, and the Black Sea to the north. Since there will be “no more sea”, that will not be a problem.

Maybe the angels of God will occupy heaven, the Church the new Jerusalem, Israel around the new Jerusalem, and the saved Gentiles of
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other ages the new earth. Those unseen angels who silently ministered to us in the days of our earthly pilgrimage will no doubt be known to us in that day.

With all the limitations imposed by sinful humanity, we can only gain a mere glimpse of all that God has prepared for them that love Him, but in that day the mysteries that puzzled us in this life will be perfectly understood as we stand in the light of His glorious presence, where the Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel’s land.
Chapter 6
The New Covenant

The radical changes that took place when Christ rose from the grave introduced a new experience under the new covenant which was not possible under the old covenant, and it is therefore necessary to understand the new covenant in order to appreciate why these changes took place.

Israel is the God-chosen conduit for blessing to the Gentiles. There is no other channel through which the blessing of God can flow, and when this is understood from Scripture, then it becomes clear why there is anti-Semitism in the world. It is also clear why Christendom has tried to obliterate Israel from God’s plan theologically with Replacement Theology. Salvation is a covenant relationship between repentant believers and God based on sacrifice; the sacrifice of Christ.

God told Abraham:
“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: AND IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED” (Gen.12:2-3).

After Abraham offered Isaac on one of the mountains of Moriah, we read:
“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not witheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee... AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen.22:16-18).

God worked through Israel in Old Testament times under the old covenant, and He promised to make a new covenant with “the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” in the last days (Jer.31:31).

The Old Covenant was a Shadow of the New

The old covenant with Israel was made at Sinai and was “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (Heb.10:1). It could never “with those sacrifices...make the comers thereunto perfect”.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb.10:4). “The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb.7:19).

The old covenant was temporary, and was to be replaced by the new covenant:
“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second” (Heb.10:9).
The New Covenant

The old covenant was deficient for very good reasons. It was inaugurated before Christ came to die as the Lamb of God. The Epistle to the Hebrews establishes that the new covenant is based on better promises, a better hope, a better sacrifice, better blood, a better high priest, and is altogether a better covenant.

While the old covenant was temporary and was to be replaced, the new covenant is an everlasting covenant (Heb.13:20).

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb.13:20-21).

Both Covenants were with the nation of Israel. This is clearly stated by Jeremiah (Jer.31:31) and quoted in the New Testament (Heb.8:8 and 10:16). There are at least eight references to the new covenant or everlasting covenant in the Old Testament, and eleven in the New Testament. They are:


*Aspects of the Old Covenants which Continue*

In the Old Testament, the new covenant is called an everlasting covenant (Isa.55:3; 61:8; Jer.32:40; Ezek.16:60; 37:26), a new covenant (Jer.31:31), and a covenant of peace (Ezek.34:25; 37:26). However, there were certain aspects of the old covenant that were everlasting ordinances between God and Israel.

God’s covenant with Abraham was an everlasting covenant (Gen.17:7; 1Chron.16:16-17), and circumcision was an everlasting token of that covenant (Gen.17:13). The sabbaths and feasts were an everlasting covenant with the nation of Israel (Lev.24:8).

This is why, even after God makes a new covenant with Israel in the last days, the nation will still observe the sabbath (Ezek.46:3,12), circumcise their male children (Ezek.44:9), and sacrifice during the feasts of the LORD (Ezek.45:17-25).

God’s covenant with David which established his throne, was an everlasting covenant (2Sam.7:16; 23:5). After Christ returns the throne of David will be restored (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:16). Christ will reign forever from the throne of David in the millennial kingdom and on into the new heaven and new earth (Luke 1:31-33). The Bible concludes with the Lord Jesus proclaiming Himself to be the “Alpha and Omega” (Rev.22:13), and the “root and the offspring of David” (Rev.22:16).
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*The New Covenant Produces a New Experience*

The new covenant promised to Israel would produce a new experience of salvation which was not possible until the perfect sacrifice was offered and the Holy Spirit was sent. This explains the difference between the experience of Old Testament saints and New Testament saints. The Old Testament established an **earthly kingdom of Israel**. When Gentiles were saved, they turned away from the gods of the nations and worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel).

Saved Gentiles in the Old Testament era were known as “strangers in Israel”, and in Solomon’s time there were 153,600 (2Chron.2:17). Under the old covenant they were required to be circumcised and to keep the sabbath and feasts just as the Jews did.

Since Christ died, when a sinner, either Jew or Gentile, is saved, he **becomes a member of the kingdom of God**. The kingdom of God is based on the new covenant.

In the New Testament we read a great deal about the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. Matthew is the only Gospel that speaks of the kingdom of heaven. However, both refer to the same thing and relate to God’s kingdom established under the new covenant.

Jesus said of John the Baptist:

*Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*” (Matt.11:11).

The experience of a New Testament saint is **quite different from that of an Old Testament saint**, so that the most feeble believer under the new covenant has an experience greater than John the Baptist who was equal with the best of Old Testament saints! Why was this? What is it about the New Testament experience of salvation that is so much better?

*The Kingdom could not be Established under the Old Covenant because the Kingdom of Heaven = the New Covenant*

The kingdom of heaven on earth was seen as FUTURE during the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

John the Baptist preached at the end of the old covenant dispensation, and he prepared the way of the Lord. He called Israel to repentance and announced that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand (is near)” (Matt.3:2).

Jesus preached that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand (near)” (Matt.4:17), and he instructed the disciples to preach, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand (near)” (Matt.10:7). Had Israel repented after Calvary, it would have come then.
The leaders of the nation had already hardened their hearts and were determined to kill Christ. In God’s foreknowledge this rejection was used to fulfil the prophecies such as Isaiah 53 which was essential for the New Covenant to be established. However, after atonement had been made, another offer would be made to Israel by the Apostles as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts3:19-21; 15:14-18). Sadly this offer was also rejected by the leaders of the nation.

Peter said to the leaders of Israel: “**UNTO YOU FIRST** God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26).

Paul and Barnabas told the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia: “**It was NECESSARY** that the word of God should **FIRST HAVE BEEN SPOKEN TO YOU:** but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts13:46).

At the last supper, Jesus said: “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine **UNTIL the kingdom of God SHALL COME**” (Luke 22:18), and to Pilate, Jesus replied, “**NOW is my kingdom not from hence**” (John18:36).

Israel rejected their King, and the kingdom was deferred until the Lord returns “after the wedding” of the Lord and His Church (Luke 12:36). In Acts 1:6 the disciples asked if the Lord would “at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus indicated that there would be an interval during which the Gospel would go to the world. When the Holy Spirit came, ten days later, the Old Testament saints were transformed into New Testament saints by the Holy Spirit, and the Church was born.

During the Lord’s ministry Jesus indicated that the Church was still future, when He told Peter, “**Thou art Peter** (a small stone), **and upon this rock** (that Jesus was the Son of God) **I WILL build my Church**”(Matt.16:18).

The Church is comprised of all who have believed in Christ and are born of the Spirit of God, sealed with the Spirit of God, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and placed by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ, His Church. **This could not happen under the old covenant.**

**Israel’s Blessings under the New Covenant**

Let us compare the experience of Old Testament saints with that of New Testament saints. The disciples were Old Testament saints UNTIL the day of Pentecost, and just before Jesus went to the cross He told them that after He returned to heaven He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell them. He said:

“**He dwelleth WITH you, and shall be IN YOU**” (John14:17).
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Jesus also said:

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I IN YOU” (John 14:20).

Old Testament references to the new covenant repeatedly affirm that it involves the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer.

“The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, THIS IS MY COVENANT with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee; and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth, and for ever” (Isa.59:20-21).

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell the Church. This experience is unique under the new covenant and produces a much higher standard of conduct. Under the old covenant, God’s law was written on tablets of stone, but under the new covenant in the kingdom of heaven God’s law is written on the “fleshy tablets of the heart”. Believers now become a new creation, and God gives us a “new heart” with new desires so that we desire to do God’s will. Ezekiel wrote:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek.36:26-27).

Material and Spiritual Blessings under the New Covenant

Not only will ISRAEL be blessed with the indwelling Spirit in the day that God makes with them a new covenant (Jer.31:31-34), but they will ALSO receive material blessings.

1) During the millennium God will dwell in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem (Ezek.37:26-28): “I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.”

Ezekiel describes the millennial temple and sees the glory of God return. He then hears the Lord say:

“Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile” (Ezek.43:7).

2) Israel will dwell in the land which God gave to Abraham as an everlasting possession (Jer.32:40-41).

3) The rains will return and the land will
be fertile and abundantly fruitful (Ezek.34:25-27). “The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed” (Amos 9:13).

3) Israel will enjoy security and be exalted above the nations (Isa.60:18, Hos.2:18). God has promised:
   “I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely” (Jer.32:37).

4) Israel’s cities will be rebuilt, together with a marvellous temple, and Jews will become the “Priests of the Lord” and the “Ministers of our God” (Isa.61:6). “Out of Zion shall go forth the law” (Isa.2:3).

5) All nations will serve Israel (Isa.55:4-5; 59:21 and 60:1-12).

6) Israel will become an incredibly wealthy nation (Isa.60:16-17).

These material blessings will never be the portion of the Church, for the Church is not an earthly people. “Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven” (Phil.3:20). We are blessed with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph.1:3). Only the spiritual blessings of the new covenant can be experienced by the Church.

The Holy Spirit was WITH Old Testament saints, but He is IN New Testament saints. It was not possible for the new covenant to be enacted until Christ had died and ascended. John writes:
   “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive (at Pentecost): for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; BECAUSE that Jesus was NOT YET GLORIFIED” (John 7:39).

Jesus ascended ten days before the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 1:1-11), and said the disciples would be “baptized with the Holy Ghost NOT MANY DAYS hence” (Acts1:5). This indicates THE TIME when the Old Testament saints became New Testament saints and the Church was established.

**The Church was a Mystery**

Further evidence that the Church and the new covenant could not begin until the day of Pentecost is given by Paul in his epistles. To the
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Ephesians, he states:
“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages was NOT MADE KNOWN UNTO THE SONS OF MEN, AS IT IS NOW REVEALED UNTO HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS BY THE SPIRIT; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ (of the Spirit) by the gospel” (Eph.3: 3-6).

Similar statements are recorded in Romans 16:25-26 and Col.1:24-27.

Dispensational Aspects of the New Covenant

Israel is described as the “olive tree” in Romans 11. Because she rejected her King, she is seen in this present Church age as a “natural branch” that has been broken off. The nation has been blinded and temporarily put aside (Rom.11:7; 2Cor.3:14-16). One day the mystery of the Church will be complete and the “fulness of the Gentiles” will have come in. The Rapture will take place, and in the following seven-year Tribulation “ALL Israel shall be saved...for THIS IS MY COVENANT UNTO THEM, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom.11:25-27).

Gentile believers in this age are described as a “wild olive branch” that has been grafted into the olive tree in place of the natural branches. The Gentiles are thus able to partake “of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom.11:17). The root and the sap (fatness) are the unseen elements of the olive tree; the spiritual elements of the new covenant.

However, the Church, comprised of saved Jews and Gentiles in this present age, has something which Israel as a nation does not enjoy. Not only is the Church indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but she is baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (1Cor.12:13). The Church is therefore the “body of Christ” (Eph.1:22-23) and the bride of Christ (Eph.5:32).

Throughout the New Testament, Christians are addressed as those who are “in Christ Jesus”, and we read:
“If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature...” (2Cor.5:17).

Hence, when the Rapture takes place, only the “dead IN CHRIST”, the Church, will be raised. Old Testament saints have already been raised with Christ (Matt.27:50-53).

Since the Church consists of all who are indwelt by the Spirit of God and ALSO baptized by the Spirit (placed into) into the Body of Christ, the Church could not exist before the day of Pentecost. The watershed
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of the old and new covenant experience is found in Acts 2, when the living Old Testament saints were not only baptized WITH the Holy Spirit, but also baptized BY the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ which is the Church.

A Material AND Spiritual Kingdom

When God makes His new covenant with Israel, it will be a spiritual experience with material blessings in an earthly kingdom.

Before Christ ascended, the disciples asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

Jesus’ answer indicated that the kingdom and the new covenant with Israel were deferred, and that the disciples should preach the Gospel to all the world after the Holy Spirit came. The Church has tapped into the spiritual blessings and enjoys the presence of the indwelling Spirit in this Church age.

Paul referred to himself as a minister of the new covenant: “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart ...but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2Cor.3:3-6).

The new covenant was always foreshadowed in the Abrahamic covenant, and so we read: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal.3:13-14).

Summary

The new covenant is with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, and will be established in the first half of the Tribulation when Israel turns to the Lord. It brings a far better experience of salvation than could be enjoyed by Old Testament saints, because the perfect sacrifice has now been offered. The Church has simply tapped into the “spiritual elements” of the new covenant.

After death, Old Testament saints went to the paradise section of sheol to await the first advent of Christ as the Lamb of God. Since Christ died and rose, paradise has been taken into heaven, and now the souls of New Testament saints are immediately ushered into the presence of Christ at the moment of death to await the Rapture.
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What lies beyond the grave is vitally connected with the plan of God under the old and new covenants. The centre-piece of God’s dealings with this world is the cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It divides all history, and displays the wisdom of God. It is no wonder that after Paul described the change-over from the dispensation of Law to the dispensation of the Church in Romans chapter 11, he exclaimed:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom.11:33).

Do you have a New Covenant Relationship with God?

Salvation is a personal matter between the individual and God, and the new covenant is the basis of that relationship. Under the new covenant God has provided a perfect atonement for our sin in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. In addition the Holy Spirit is active bringing a consciousness of our sinfulness in God’s sight. He convicts us of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, so that we will understand our great need of salvation from sin.

When we are thus made aware of our sinfulness, the Holy Spirit draws us to Christ, and then we must choose either to accept or reject the salvation purchased at Calvary through the shedding of Christ’s precious blood.

Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace. It cannot be obtained by our good works, and must be received by faith.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...” (Eph.2:8-10).

Every gift must be received with thanks, and unless we receive Christ into the heart we will never be saved. None are too sinful, for “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom.5:8).

The question that confronts us is, Have you turned from sin and received Christ into your heart?

“As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

At this moment you can take that step of faith by simply praying and asking the Lord to save you, believe His promise, and then begin to live for Him.

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom.10:13).