

# GOD'S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

ROLF J. FURULI PH.D



The picture shows a priest blowing the *shōfār* (a ram's horn) on the Day of Atonement (*yōm kippūr*) in the Jubilee, proclaiming freedom for all the people.

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## THE ISSUE:

*The requirement for receiving everlasting life is to believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and do the will of God (1 John 2:17). More than 90 % of all humans who have lived on earth have never had the chance to believe in Jesus Christ or do the will of God.*

*They cannot get everlasting life because they do not fulfill the requirement. But neither can they get everlasting death. Because of God's righteousness and love for those he has created, he has made the arrangement that each one of these will get a fair personal chance to decide whether he or she will believe in Jesus Christ and do God's will.*

*This is the reason for his plan through the ages for the restoration of all things.*

## INTRODUCTION

After sin was introduced into the world by the snake, who represented Satan, the Devil, God uttered a prophecy, that we read in Genesis 3:15:

<sup>15</sup> And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel."

During the next four thousand years, the meaning of this prophecy was hidden. However, in the second half of the 1st century CE, the apostle Peter wrote some words that shed light on this prophecy. According to Acts 3:21, he spoke about

*"the restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time."*

God's original purpose was that the perfect humans, Adam and Eve, should have children, who again should have children until the whole earth was filled with their descendants. And all these humans should live forever in the earthly paradise.

This was temporarily thwarted by the introduction of sin. The restoration of all things means that the original purpose of God will be fulfilled. The earth will be filled with perfect humans who will live forever in the paradise. And the situation will be exactly the same as if the sin had not been introduced into the world.

The word "old time" is translated from the Greek word *aiōn*. This word can be translated as "a long indefinite time," "age," "period of existence," or "system of



things.” Each *aiōn* is characterized by different situations and different actions. Paul uses *aiōn* in the plural in 1 Corinthians 10:11, and there have been different ages. From a modern point of view, we can speak of the “Feudal Age,” the “Dark Ages,” the “Victorian Age,” and the “Space Age. From a biblical point of view, we can speak of “the age before the great flood,” “the Jewish age,” “the Christian age,” the “present wicked age,” and “the coming age”

The verses in the Bible from which the title of this book is taken are Acts 3:21 and Ephesians 3:11. Later, I will discuss Acts 3:21 in detail. Here I analyze Ephesians 3:8-11:

<sup>8</sup> To me, a man less than the least of all holy ones, this undeserved kindness was given, that I should declare to the nations the good news about the unfathomable riches of the Christ <sup>9</sup> and should make men see *how the sacred secret is administered which has from the indefinite past* [RJF: from the beginning of the ages] *been hidden in God*, who created all things. <sup>10</sup> [This was] to the end that now to the governments and the authorities in the heavenly places *there might be made known through the congregation the greatly diversified wisdom of God*, <sup>11</sup> according to *the eternal* (*aiōn*) *purpose* (*prothesis*) [RJF: the plan through the ages] *that he formed* in connection with the Christ, Jesus our Lord.

The NWT84 has the rendering “the eternal purpose,” which is also the rendering of most English translations. Alternative translations are:

“his eternal plan” (New Living Translation)

“God’s age-old purpose” (The Complete Jewish Bible)

“[the] purpose of the ages” (The Darby Translation)

“a purpose of the ages” (Young’s Literal Translation)

The alternatives are “plan” or “purpose” and “eternal” or “through the ages.” One meaning of the Greek word *aiōn* is a time whose length is unknown. The other meaning refers to a period of time characterized by certain things and actions, and it can be translated as “a system of things” or “age.” The Greek word *prothesis* means “planning in advance” or “purpose.”

There is no question that what Paul speaks about is the purpose of God. However, this purpose unfolds with different actions in different periods of time or at different ages. The word “plan” is defined as “a detailed proposal for doing or achieving something.” It may describe different parts of the purpose of the one making the plan. Because God’s purpose unfolds through the ages, I chose the rendering “plan” for *prothesis*.

The rendering “eternal” for *aiōn* is somewhat problematic. The purpose of God includes the death of Jesus as a ransom sacrifice, and if this was God’s “eternal” purpose, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he knew about the introduction of sin into the world and even was responsible for this because he was the creator. Because God’s purpose, as it is revealed in The Holy Scriptures, unfolds through different ages, I render the word *aiōn* as “age” and in the plural as “ages.”

*I render the forms of the Greek words **aiōn** and **prothesis** in verse 11 together with the subject “God” as “God’s plan through the ages.”*

There are three important points that Paul mentions in Ephesians 3:8-11:

**First:** He says in verse 9 that God’s plan through the ages has been hidden from (*apo*) the indefinite past (*aiōn*).

I will again use the translation “age” for *aiōn*. God’s purpose was hidden from humans. So, to introduce the temporal expression “indefinite past” does not seem to fit well. However, after the creation of humans and the introduction of sin, different systems of things or ages have existed. Therefore, I render the preposition *apo* and the plural definite form of *aiōn* as “from the beginning of the ages.”

**Second:** We note that the expression “the sacred secret” in connection with God’s purpose is mentioned several times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The contents of this sacred secret will therefore be explored.

**Third:** Paul says that the sacred secret will be revealed through the congregation. We must therefore identify the mentioned “congregation” and explore how the sacred secret will be revealed through this congregation.

*The conclusion of this introduction is that the plan of God for a restoration of all things have unfolded in different ways in different ages. Therefore, the title of this book is **GOD’S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS.***

Some nuances of key verses about God’s plan through the ages for the restoration of all things are not conveyed to readers in many modern Bible translations. Because of this, I have made new translations of some of these verses.

## Chapter 1

# GOD'S PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS BECOMES UNDERSTOOD

*Prophecies in the book of Daniel that illuminate different sides of God's plan for the restoration of all things would be sealed until the time of the end. In the time of the end, God's people will understand these prophecies.*

*The time of the end began in the year 1914 and will last until the great tribulation. And the people of God will understand these prophecies in the time of the end. Inspiration from God ceased when the Bible was complete. But God would use direction to let his people understand his plan. The difference between inspiration and direction is discussed.*

*The reasons why the group of Bible Students was directed to understand the prophecies of Daniel and God's plan were the following:*

- 1) They rejected creeds and dogmas and united their forces to determine what the whole Bible said about each subject.*
- 2) They used God's principal attributes, his wisdom, his love, his righteousness, and his might as the basis for their study. Any faith or belief contradicting one of these attributes was rejected.*
- 3) They saw the Hebrew Scriptures as just as valuable as the Christian Greek Scriptures. They compared all passages discussing the same subject in the whole Bible. Therefore, they were directed to understand God's plan for a restoration of all things.*

I have stressed that God's plan has been revealed and developed differently in different ages. In the Jewish age, when Israel was God's people, only glimpses of God's plan were seen, and the sacred secret about Jesus and the congregation was not understood. In the Christian era, during the 1st century CE, the sacred secret was understood by members of the congregation with a heavenly calling. However, they did not fully understand the scope of God's plan for the restoration of all things.

It is essential to recognize that God, in different ages, has revealed various aspects of his plan while concealing others. The way Jesus preached is a good example. Most people believe that Jesus used numerous illustrations in his teaching so that the people would understand his message. But the opposite was often the case: He used illustrations so that the people would not understand his message. Does this sound strange? Let us read Matthew 13:10-16:

<sup>10</sup> So the disciples came up and said to him: “Why is it you speak to them by the use of illustrations?” <sup>11</sup> In reply he said: “To YOU it is granted to understand *the sacred secrets (mysterion) of the kingdom of the heavens*, but to those people it is not granted.<sup>12</sup> For whoever has, more will be given him and he will be made to abound; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

<sup>13</sup> *This is why I speak to them by the use of illustrations, because, looking, they look in vain, and hearing, they hear in vain, neither do they get the sense of it;*<sup>14</sup> and toward them the prophecy of Isaiah is having fulfillment, which says, ‘By hearing, YOU will hear but by no means get the sense of it; and, looking, YOU will look but by no means see.’<sup>15</sup> For the heart of this people has grown unreceptive, and with their ears they have heard without response, and they have shut their eyes; that they might never see with their eyes and hear with their ears and get the sense of it with their hearts and turn back, and I heal them.’

<sup>16</sup> “However, happy are YOUR eyes because they behold, and YOUR ears because they hear.” <sup>17</sup> For I truly say to YOU, Many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things YOU are beholding and did not see them, and to hear the things YOU are hearing and did not hear them.

Jesus spoke about one aspect of God’s plan, namely, *the sacred secrets of the kingdom of the heavens*. His use of illustrations went over the heads of the people. They would not understand his message because their hearts had grown unreceptive, as Isaiah prophesied. His disciples neither understood his illustrations. But they had receptive hearts, and they asked about the meaning of his illustrations, as Matthew 13:36 shows. When Jesus explained the illustration, they were able to understand his message, and they were happy, as verses 16 and 17 say.

## **GOD’S PLAN WOULD FIRST BE FULLY UNDERSTOOD IN THE TIME OF THE END**

During the second part of the 1st century, all the 27 books of the Christian Greek Scriptures were completed, and together with the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Bible was now complete. This means that the entire plan of God for the restoration of all things was now written down. But its full scope was not understood. First, in a future age, would God’s plan for a restoration of all things be fully understood. One of the illustrations of Jesus, which also serves as a prophecy, outlines this.

I quote Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43:

<sup>24</sup> Another illustration he set before them, saying: “The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man that sowed fine seed in his field.” <sup>25</sup> While men were sleeping, his enemy

came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat, and left. <sup>26</sup> When the blade sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds appeared also. <sup>27</sup> So the slaves of the householder came up and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow fine seed in your field? How, then, does it come to have weeds?' <sup>28</sup> He said to them, 'An enemy, a man, did this.' They said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go out and collect them?' <sup>29</sup> He said, 'No; that by no chance, while collecting the weeds, YOU uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> **Let both grow together until the harvest**; and in the harvest season I will tell the reapers, First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up, then go to gathering the wheat into my storehouse.'"

<sup>36</sup> Then after dismissing the crowds he went into the house. And his disciples came to him and said: "Explain to us the illustration of the weeds in the field." <sup>37</sup> In response he said: "The sower of the fine seed is the Son of man; <sup>38</sup> the field is the world; as for the fine seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy that sowed them is the Devil. **The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things**, (*synteleia aionos*) and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore, just as the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be in the conclusion of the system of things. <sup>41</sup> The Son of man will send forth his angels, and they will collect out from his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be. <sup>43</sup> At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let him that has ears listen.

In the 1st century, fine seed (the sons of the kingdom) were sown. The Devil sowed weeds (sons of the wicked one) in the Christian congregations, particularly in the last part of the 1st century. This is described in the letters of John and Peter, and in the Epistle of Judas. History shows that from the 2nd century onward, the true religion that was based on the Holy Scriptures was diluted by false teachings. Throughout all the centuries until the 19th century, no true religion, as illustrated by Jesus, existed. But then the wheat, representing true Christians, would be gathered together. It is obvious that through the centuries, God's plan for the restoration of all things could not be understood because there were few true Christians.

In connection with the time when the true religion would again flourish, Jesus used the word *aiōn*, meaning "age" or "system of things." Several different ages (*aiōn*) have existed since the human family was created, as Hebrews 1:2 says:

Hebrews 1:2: he [the Son of God] made the ages ("systems of things").

Galatians 1:4: the present wicked age ("system of things").

Ephesians 1:21: not only in this age ("system of things"), but also in that to come.

Luke 20:34, 35: this age ("system of things")...that age ("system of things") and the resurrection of the dead.

Matthew 13:39: the harvest is the age ("system of things").

In these five examples, the Greek word *aiōn* is used. Hebrews 1:2 shows there are several ages. Galatians 1:4 refers to the wicked time period in which the Galatians lived. Ephesians indicates the existence of a present age, which likely refers to the same wicked age mentioned in Galatians 1:4. Luke 20:34, 35 refers to the present

age, and “that age” refers to Judgment Day when the resurrection will occur. The words “that age” are clearly the same as “that age to come” according to Ephesians 1:21.

Matthew 13:39 uses the words “*The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things (or, the conclusion of the age,) syntelesia aiōn*”. We can find the time reference of this expression by referring to Matthew 24:3:

<sup>3</sup> While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: “Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence (*parousia*) and of *the conclusion of the system of things (syntelesia aiōn)?*”

The harvest is in Matthew 13:39 described with the Greek word *syntelesia aiōn*, and the second presence of Jesus, which begins his invisible coming, is also described with the word *syntelesia aiōn*. We can connect two Hebrew words with *syntelesia aiōn*, and that is *‘et qēts*. We find these two Hebrew words in Daniel 12:4, and they are translated in the Greek Septuagint as *kairos syntelesia* (“the time of the end”). Thus, “the harvest” is identical with “the conclusion of the age,” which is identical with “Jesus’ presence,” which is identical with “the time of the end.”

*Table 1.1 Different designations of the same time period*

Matt 11:39	the harvest	<i>therismos</i>
Matt 11:39	conclusion of the age	<i>syntelesia aiōn</i>
Matt 24:3	conclusion of the age	<i>syntelesia aiōn</i>
Matt 24:3	the presence of Jesus	<i>parousia</i>
Daniel 12	the time of the end	<i>‘et qēts, kairos syntelesia</i>

In chapter 12, I will demonstrate that the second coming of Jesus and his presence began in the year 1914 and will last until the great tribulation. This means that “the harvest,” “the conclusion of the age,” and “the time of the end” last from 1914 until the great tribulation.

I will now connect these periods with the book of Daniel, and a quote Daniel 12:8-10:

<sup>8</sup> Now as for me, I heard, but I could not understand; so that I said: “O my lord, what will be the final part of these things?”

<sup>9</sup> And he went on to say: “Go, Daniel, because the words are made secret and sealed up until *the time of [the] end*.<sup>10</sup> Many will cleanse themselves and whiten themselves and will be refined. And the wicked ones will certainly act wickedly, and no wicked ones at all will understand; but the ones having insight will understand.

The prophecies of Daniel describe parts of God’s plan for the restoration of all things, and they should remain sealed until the time of the end, when they would be understood. It is fitting that throughout the centuries, there was no people of God. But the people of God should be formed in “the harvest,” in “the conclusion of the age” (*syntelesia aiōn*), during the “presence” (*parousia*) of Jesus. And the prophecies included in God’s plan should first be understood at this time.



## GOD WOULD COMMUNICATE HIS PLAN TO HIS SERVANTS IN THE TIME OF THE END BY DIRECTION AND NOT BY INSPIRATION

All the 27 books in the Christian Greek Scriptures were completed before the end of the 1st century CE. Catalogues of canonical books existed in some early Christian congregations, and we have good reasons to believe that the 66 books in the Bible we have today are the only ones inspired by God.

Parts of these books should be sealed until the time of the end, as Daniel 12:4, 9 says. But verse 10 says that in the time of the end, “the ones having insight will understand.” The important question is how this understanding would come about.

Many people in our day have claimed to have received messages from God, and that he has given them a special understanding. Such claims are problematic because they imply that we have something inspired in addition to the Bible. These claims are also problematic because no proof can be given that these persons have received messages from God. According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is “the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.” So, we cannot just accept claims that people today are inspired by God.

To ascertain how God’s plan for the restoration of all things has been understood in the time of the end, we need to understand the difference between God’s *inspiration* and his *direction*. The act of *inspiration* means that the holy spirit directly gives specific information to a servant of God, whereas the act of *direction* means that the spirit maneuvers a situation in a particular direction, and the spiritually minded servant of God who sees this situation will draw the specific conclusion God wants him to draw.

Very good examples of this difference are seen in Acts chapter 10. Until this time, only Jews and Samaritans had become a part of God’s people. But now, it was Jehovah’s time for people of the nations to also become a part. Peter was meant to be the tool to help people of the nations become a part of God’s congregation. Let us now study Acts chapter 10 and learn how Jehovah used both *inspiration* and *direction* to reveal truths and advance his purpose for the people of the nations.

An angel spoke to the army officer in a vision and told him to send some men to Joppa to Simon Peter (vv. 1–6). This was an example of divine *inspiration*—direct and specific information from God. The next day, Peter fell into a trance and saw a vessel with unclean animals coming down to the earth three times. Peter was asked to eat the “unclean” animals. But he refused because this was against the law of Moses (vv. 9–16). This vision was also conveyed through divine *inspiration*.

While Peter was contemplating the meaning of the vision, three men of the nations approached him. This was a strange situation for Peter because no person from the nations had yet become a part of the Christian community. There was no cooperation between the Jews and the nations, so naturally, Peter would have refused to have anything to do with these men.

However, the spirit, which could refer to an angel, told Peter to go with the men (vv. 19, 20). This was another case of *inspiration*, which was necessary because Peter would not have had anything to do with people of the nations (v. 28). He only went with these men because he was directly told to do so. Then he came to the house of Cornelius, and because of the vision of the vessel with the “unclean” animals, Peter drew the only conclusion a spiritually minded Christian could draw: Clearly, God wanted him to enter the house of these people of the nations (vv. 23–28). However, this was not a case of *inspiration* directly telling Peter what to do; rather, it was a matter of *direction*, as the spirit had maneuvered the situation to help Peter draw the right conclusion.

But now an embarrassing situation arose. Cornelius told Peter about the angel and his vision, and then he said: “And now all of us are in front of God who is present, to hear all the things you have been instructed by Jehovah to say” (v. 33). And yet, Peter had not received any instructions from Jehovah as to what he should say when this moment arrived. But because of the whole situation, the visions that both he and Cornelius had seen, and the angels who had spoken to both of them, he drew the only conclusion a spiritually minded servant of God could draw: ‘Jehovah has directed me to preach the good news about the kingdom to these people of the nations,’ and so he did (vv. 34–43). This was *direction* because the spirit had maneuvered the situation in a way that would help Peter draw the right conclusion.

We must remember that what Peter did—entering a house of persons of the nations and preaching to them—was unprecedented because it had never been done before. Then, while Peter was speaking, the holy spirit fell upon those hearing Peter’s speech, and they were speaking in tongues (vv. 44–46). This was *inspiration*. And how did Peter react? He drew the only conclusion a spiritually minded servant of God could draw: Because these people had received the holy spirit, they should be baptized (vv. 47, 48). This was *direction*, and the baptism of people of the nations was also unprecedented.

We see in this account that the spirit, by five examples of *inspiration*, maneuvered the situation, so Peter was three times was *directed* to draw a particular conclusion. By this, people of the nations for the first time became members of “the people of God.”

## **GOD’S DIRECTION IN MODERN TIMES CAUSED HIS SERVANTS UNDERSTAND HIS PLAN**

The religious situation in the USA was fluid in the 19th century. In addition to the more widely recognized denominations, there were many small groups that particularly expected the second coming of Jesus soon and offered different interpretations of the Bible’s prophecies.

With this in mind, I will examine the religious situation in modern times, particularly in the 19th century. In the chapters on chronology, I show that the time of the end, when parts of God’s prophetic word that had been sealed would be



understood, began in the year 1914 CE. Daniel 12:10 says regarding God's plan that it had been sealed until the time of the end: "the ones having insight will understand." So, the important question is:

*Who would follow God's **direction** and understand his plan for the restoration of all things now, when the time of the end was approaching?*

The Catholic Church had existed for several hundred years, and the Lutheran churches and Calvinism had also existed for more than three hundred years. There were also several smaller religious denominations. The common denominator for all these was that they had different dogmas and creeds, which in many respects contradicted the Bible.

In the early 1870s, there was a group of young men led by Charles Taze Russell who formed a group for Bible study, and they were called Bible Students. These young men belonged to different religious denominations, and they had discovered that several doctrines of their respective religions contradicted the Bible. Their motive by forming a Bible study group was to discover what the Bible truly taught about various subjects.

In hindsight, we see that God **directed** this small group of Bible Students to understand his plan for the restoration of all things. How did this happen?

***No authority in addition to the Bible***

We must assume that most active members of the religious groups, including the clergy in the 1870s, had a sincere desire to serve God and know his will. In this respect, there was no difference between the Bible Students and the other groups. The view of that time among religious people was that the whole Bible was inspired by God; Bible criticism was in its infancy.

However, most religious people had an authority in addition to the Bible, namely, the creeds and dogmas of their religions. The fellowship inside the religious group with church services, religious symbols, and music, would also influence the members of the religious denomination emotionally. Therefore, the members accepted the creeds and dogmas of their religion and defended their religion.

This was, in reality, an authority in addition to the Bible. And this was exactly what the Bible Students had separated themselves from. They wanted to study the Bible in its own right without creeds and dogmas, to find what the Bible really taught.

***The right principles as the basis for Bible study***

Members of different religious groups read the Bible in the light of the creeds and dogmas of their denominations. The Bible Students realized that this would lead to the wrong faith. In contrast, they recognized four basic truths that served as a foundation for all their Bible study.

A.H. Macmillan was one of the mentioned Bible Students, and in his book *Faith on the March*, page 22, he shows that the basic principles followed in their Bible study were God's four principal attributes, his love, his wisdom, his righteousness, and his

might. The practical application of these principles in their Bible study was that when they found a doctrine of a denomination that contradicted one of God's basic attributes, it was suspect and had to be scrutinized carefully.

One of the first suspect subjects they scrutinized was the concept of everlasting torment in hell for sinners. It is clear that this doctrine contradicts God's righteousness. No human being has committed such great sins that he or she deserves to be tormented forever, not even for a short time. It also contradicts God's love for each human he has created. No sane human being will torment any other human being for minutes or hours, but the belief was that God would torment humans continually without stop.

By reading the Bible in the light of God's principal attributes, the Bible Students rejected several popular doctrines of the denominations of their time, such as that we all have an immortal soul, torment in hell for sinners, and that God is a trinity. The Bible Students were now on the way to understanding the plan of God for a restoration of all things.

### *A false doctrine preventing the understanding of God's plan*

There is one characteristic of most Christian denominations that contradicts God's plan for the restoration of all things. This is the weight they put on the Christian Greek Scriptures and the corresponding downgrading of the Hebrew Scriptures. The result of this is the universal doctrine that all who believe in Jesus Christ come to heaven when they die. This means that the basic part of God's plan, the restoration of the situation in Eden before the rebellion of Satan, is wiped out and discarded.

In Chapter 4, I show that the Christian Greek Scriptures teach that a small group of humans has a heavenly calling and will be used by God in the restoration of all things from their position in heaven. The Bible Students understood this based on their Bible study. But they also realized that the basic part of God's plan for the restoration of all things was that billions of Adam's descendants would live forever on the earth when it becomes a paradise.

### *Ascertaining how God directed the Bible Students to understand his plan*

I have stressed that God no longer uses *inspiration* to teach his servants. But he uses *direction*. I will now compare Peter's situation, as described in Acts chapter 10, with the situation of the Bible Students in the 1870s.

In the situation of Peter, God used inspiration to direct Peter to draw the right conclusions. This was necessary because Peter did not have any written word by which to draw the right conclusion regarding the people of the nations. Today, we have the whole Bible, God's inspired Word. I will illustrate how this inspired Word *directs* sincere people to draw the right conclusions, just as the Bible Students in the 1870s did, and as Peter did.

I use the book of Daniel as an example, and we read 12:9, 10:

<sup>9</sup> And he went on to say: “Go, Daniel, because *the words are made secret and sealed up until the time of [the] end.*”<sup>10</sup> Many will cleanse themselves and whiten themselves and will be refined. And the wicked ones will certainly act wickedly, and no wicked ones at all will understand; but *the ones having insight will understand.*

When the words are there, written with letters on the page, how can it be that at one time the words are not understood, but at a later time they will be understood? There are two sides to this question, and I illustrate one side with Daniel 12:7:

<sup>7</sup> And I began to hear the man clothed with the linen, who was up above the waters of the stream, as he proceeded to raise his right [hand] and his left [hand] to the heavens and to swear by the One who is alive for time indefinite: “*It will be for an appointed time, appointed times and a half.* And as soon as there will have been a finishing of the *dashing of the power of the holy people to pieces,* all these things will come to their finish.”

The words are clearly written, and each word has a clear meaning that any reader can understand. However, their fulfillment will occur in the time of the end. To understand this fulfillment, we must know when the time of the end starts and ends. The text shows that God will have a people in the time of the end that is identifiable and distinct from other peoples. To understand the prophecy, we must identify this people, and to understand the time prophecy in 12:7, we must know the history of this people. This information was not available in the 6th century BCE, when the book of Daniel was written. But it would be available in the time of the end.

I will illustrate the other side of the issue of how texts whose linguistic meaning is clear, first can be understood hundreds of years after their writing. Different parts of God's plan will be accomplished in different ways in different ages. One important event that happens at the beginning of the time of the end is the second coming of Jesus Christ and his following presence. I quote Matthew 24:3 and 30:

<sup>3</sup> While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: “Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your *presence* (*parousia*) [*“coming”* NIV] and of the conclusion of the system of things?”

<sup>30</sup> And then the sign of the Son of man *will appear* (*jainō*) in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they *will see* (*borao*) the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The New International Version uses the noun “coming” where NWT84 uses “presence.” Both translations use “see” in verse 30. The two verses indicate that people on earth will see Jesus on the clouds of heaven when he comes for the second time. However, readers who know the Bible see the problem that 1 Timothy 6:15, 16 poses in connection with this view:

<sup>15</sup> This [manifestation] the happy and only Potentate will show in its own appointed times, [he] the King of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords,<sup>16</sup> the one alone having immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom not one of men has seen (*borao*) or can see (*borao*). To him be honor and might everlasting. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The reference is to Jesus and not to God. It is not correct that God “*alone* having immortality” because Jesus had received immortality, and so do the 144,000 members of the

A spirit cannot be seen by human eyes, and Paul says that Jesus, who has a spirit body, has not been seen and cannot be seen. In view of this, how can it be that humans will “see” Jesus at his second coming? The Bible Students in the 1870s followed Peter’s example. Both passages are God’s inspired word, so what would they understand?

The key is the meaning of the Greek word *horaō*. It can refer to what we see with our two eyes. But it can also refer to what we “see” or understand with our mind. One example of this is Romans 1:19, 20.

<sup>19</sup> because *what may be known about God is manifest* (*faneros*) among them, for God *made it manifest* (*faneroō*) to them. <sup>20</sup> For *his invisible [qualities] are clearly seen* (*katoriaō*) from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.

Matthew 24:30 says that «the son of man *will appear*” (*fainō*) and “they *will see* (*horaō*) the Son of man.” Romans 1:19 shows that “what is made manifest” is abstract, namely, “what is known about God.” And verse 20 says that “what is clearly *seen* (a strengthened form of *horaō*) is abstract, namely, “his *invisible* qualities.” This shows that the words “will appear” and “will see” in Matthew 24:30 need not refer to seeing with our literal eyes, but the meaning can be “to understand.”

This aligns with 1 Timothy 6:16, which states that after the resurrection of Jesus with his spirit body, no one has seen him or can see him.

The Bible Students sought *guidance* from God by combining their knowledge of different Bible passages to find everything the Bible said about each subject. In connection with the coming of Jesus, they used the passages mentioned above as well as other passages. And their conclusion was that the second coming of Jesus would be invisible, but it would be “seen,” meaning “understood” through events that would happen on the earth.

However, to have a harmonious picture of the second coming of Jesus Christ, the Bible Students faced a problem. None of them knew Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, the original languages of the Bible. If the second coming of Jesus were to be invisible, his coming could not happen in an instant, which was the common belief among Christian denominations.

The Bible Students used the King James Version of 1611, and this translation renders Matthew 24:3 in the following way:

<sup>3</sup> And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of *thy coming*, (*parousia*) and of the end of the world?

What did the words “thy coming” refer to? One of the Bible Students got his hands on a recently made translation of the New Testament, The Emphatic Diaglott, which was translated by Benjamin Wilson in 1864. This version translated the Greek word *parousia* by “presence.” The Bible Students researched this issue and found that

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kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). Paul contrasts Jesus with others of mankind and, compared to all kings and lords, he states that Jesus “alone having immortality.”

this rendering of *parousia* was correct. On this basis, they concluded that the second coming of Jesus Christ meant that he would be invisibly present over a period of time.<sup>2</sup>

**Direction** from God, as we saw in the case of Peter, means that God maneuvers particular situations to materialize, so his spiritually minded servants can draw the right conclusions. It is very likely that God was behind Wilson's work as the only translation with the correct rendering "presence" for *parousia*, that this translation was published less than a decade before the Bible Students started their Bible studies, and that one of the Bible Students got his hands on a copy of this translation.

The Bible Students saw this **direction** from God, and as far as I know, this group was the only religious group to correctly conclude that Jesus would have an invisible presence. This suggests that God can use his **direction** toward his servants by the help of the text of the Bible, as well as in connection with situations that occur outside of the Bible.

The discussion above has shown the reason why God entrusted the Bible Students with C.T. Russell as their leader, with the understanding of his plan. Each Bible Student had a particular understanding of the Bible, which was based on his or her previous religion and on his or her life experience. This could, of course, lead them astray and cause them to draw wrong conclusions. Because they sincerely wanted to understand the Bible and worked together, with each one contributing to the study, they were able to set aside their preconceived viewpoints and grasp the plan of God.

We should also keep in mind that the Bible Students began their Bible studies at a time when the time of the end was approaching, and at the time when the texts in the Bible that had been sealed, should be understood. Like all other Christian denominations at that time, they believed that the Bible in its entirety was inspired by God. They differed from the other Christian denominations in the following ways:

- 1) The Bible Students only viewed the Bible as their authority. Other denominations had their creeds and dogmas as authorities.
- 2) The Bible Students studied the Bible in the light of God's principal attributes, his righteousness, his wisdom, his love, and his might. Other denominations studied the Bible in the light of their traditions and dogmas.
- 3) The Bible Students viewed the Hebrew Scriptures as just as important as the Christian Greek Scriptures. They studied each subject and found what the whole Bible said about it. The other denominations put too much stress on the Christian Greek Scriptures at the expense of the Hebrew Scriptures. This led

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2. Regarding the meaning of the Greek word *parousia*, I have considered nine different Greek-English Lexicons. They contain different examples of the use of *parousia* in Classical Greek writings. None of these lexicons gives one single clear-cut example of the use of *parousia* in the instantaneous sense of "coming." But all the examples support the view that the word refers to the presence of someone over a period of time. All the examples of *parousia* in the Christian Greek Scriptures have the meaning "presence."



to the wrong view that all those who believe in Jesus Christ will come to heaven when they die.

As the basis for the understanding of God's plan for the restoration of all things, the Bible Students took Ephesians 3:11 and Acts 3:19-21. There were many details of God's plan that the Bible Students did not understand. But they were the only group among all the Christian denominations that understood the fundamental aspects of God's plan for the restoration of all things.

## AN OUTLINE OF GOD'S PLAN FOR RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS THAT THE BIBLE STUDENTS UNDERSTOOD

*God's purpose was that Adam and Eve should procreate children, who should procreate children, until the earth was filled with billions of their descendants. The paradise in Eden should be expanded to encompass the whole earth, and humans should live forever on the earth.*

*Because of the rebellion of the Devil and the introduction of sin, God's purpose was temporarily thwarted.*

*God's purpose is still the same, and he has made a plan for the restoration of all things, and this plan has unfolded gradually through the ages. This means that the wicked human society introduced by the Devil will be destroyed. And God will restore the situation as it was before Adam's rebellion, when there was peace in heaven and peace on earth, and all creatures served Jehovah God.*

*The situation in the restored paradise will be the same as it would have been if Satan had not rebelled and sin had not been introduced.*

*Imperfect humans with inherited sin are not competent to make decisions regarding their eternal future. Their inherited sin prevents them from having a fair chance.*

*Because of this, God will set aside a period of 1,000 years where all humans will receive a resurrection. During this period, they will become perfect and without sin. They are now in the same situation as Adam and are competent to decide their eternal destiny.*

*Those who decide to serve Jehovah will get everlasting life in the restored paradise, which was God's original purpose.*

## ANALYZING PASSAGES DEALING WITH THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

*The apostle Peter says in Acts 3:19-21 that there will be a restoration of all things that the prophets spoke about. These verses are analyzed in detail. Quotations from the prophets show that the situation that was in Eden before the sin was introduced will be fully restored. This means that billions of Adam's descendants will live forever in the earthly paradise, and the situation will be the same as if the sin had never been introduced.*

*I analyze the words of Paul in Ephesians 1:10 and show that gathering all things together again in the Christ, those in heaven and those on earth, is the same as speaking about the restoration of all things. The parallels between Acts 3:19-21 and Ephesians 1:10 are analyzed.*

*Jesus spoke about the sabbath, over which he is lord. This sabbath refers to the thousand-year reign of Jesus, which is Judgment Day. I demonstrate that the “refreshing rest,” mentioned in Acts 3:19, and “the sabbath resting” mentioned in Hebrews 4:9 are identical with the sabbath over which Jesus is lord.*

*Important nuances of the Greek text of Acts 3:19-21 and Ephesians 1:10 are lacking in many modern Bible translations. These nuances are discussed.*

Peter healed a lame man, and the people gathered around Peter and John. Peter spoke to the crowd. Peter's words are particularly important because they point to the very core of God's purpose with humans and the earth. His words in Acts 3:19-21 are not easy to translate, and I have made a new translation of this text, with NWT84 above and my translation below:

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *so that seasons* (*kairos*) of *refreshing* (*anapsyxis*) may come from Jehovah himself <sup>20</sup> and he may send the Christ *appointed* for you, Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must hold this one within itself until *the times* (*kebronos*) of restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets *of old time*.

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times* (*kairos*) *for the refreshing rest* (*anapsyxis*) may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one *chosen beforehand* for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold

of this one *until* (akhrī) *the times* (khrōnos) *for the restoration* (apokatastasis) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets *through the ages*.

Important differences between the translations are marked in different colors, and I have the following comments. The word *that* instead of *so that* shows that the coming of the appointed times does not depend on repentance and turning around. The Greek word *kairos* basically means “an appointed time, a specific time.” I use the words *appointed times* rather than *seasons*, to show that Peter speaks of particular time periods that can be counted.

The adjective *refreshing* (anapsyxis), standing alone without another word or phrase that can specify the kind of refreshing that is meant, has no meaning. The word *anapsyxis* includes both the idea of rest and of refreshing, and therefore I render it as *refreshing rest*. The kind of refreshing rest is not specified by Peter. But it is specified in the bigger context, as I will show below. The words *chosen beforehand* is not very different from *appointed*.

I use *through the ages* instead of *of old time*. The Greek word *aiōn* often refers to time with the meaning “time with an unknown end — time indefinite.” It can also refer to an age where the focus is on the characteristics of the age — a system of things. Or the focus can be on the age rather than its characteristics — age. In this case, I find that *age* is the best rendering.

The basic meaning of the Greek word *khrōnos* is time in general. But in several situations, the context shows that it means “appointed times” that can be counted, similarly to the meaning of *kairos*. In verse 21, *khrōnos* is plural, and it parallels *kairos* in verse 19. Therefore, I render *khrōnos* in verse 21 as *times*, because this is its basic meaning, but in this context, it means *appointed times*.

The basic problem with the NWT84 rendering is “seasons of refreshing” or the NIV rendering “times of refreshing.” In the Greek text, “seasons/times” are translated from *kairos* (“appointed times”) and *anapsyxis* (“refreshing rest”). And both translations take *kairos* and *anapsyxis* as one single unit rendered as “seasons of refreshing” (NWT84) or “times of refreshing” (NIV)."

This is grammatically impossible because *kairos* is masculine plural nominative and *anapsyxis* is feminine singular genitive. So, these two Greek words represent two different syntactical units.

In order to show this, I put the clause in verse 20 (below) that is parallel with the clause in verse 21 (above) side by side:

21 *until* (akhrī) *the times* (khrōnos) *for the restoration* (apokatastasis) *of all things* (*pas*) [may come]

20 *that* (hopōs an) *the appointed times* (kairos) *for the refreshing rest* (anapsyxis) may come.

As mentioned, the important syntactical point is that *khrōnos* (“time”) is masculine plural nominative while *apokatastasis* (“restoration”) is feminine singular genitive. Therefore, these two Greek words must have different syntactical positions in the clause. My analysis is:



21 **Predicate:** [may come], **subject:** the times (*khronos*), **adverbial:** for the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things.

20 **Predicate:** may come, **subject:** the appointed times (*kairos*), **adverbial:** for the refreshing rest (*apokatastasis*).

There is no Greek preposition before *apokatastasis* (“restoration”) in verse 21 or before *anapsyxis* (“refreshing rest”) in verse 20. But because both Greek words are adverbials, a preposition must be added in an English translation. The most fitting preposition is “for.”

Now I will make a detailed study of the different Greek words in the verses.

## THE APPOINTED TIMES FOR THE REFRESHING REST AND THE RESTORATION

Two words referring to time are found in verses 19 and 21. The word *kairos* in the plural refers to appointed times that can be counted. The word *khronos* in the singular refers to general time. But it can also refer to appointed times that can be counted. This is particularly the case when *khronos* is in the plural. I quote Luke 21:24 (above) and Galatians 4:4 (below):

<sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until **the appointed times** (*kairos*) of the nations are fulfilled.

<sup>4</sup> But when the full limit of **the time** (*khronos*) arrived, God sent forth his Son, who came to be out of a woman and who came to be under law.

The words in Luke 21:24 show that *kairos*, in the plural, refers to a specific number of time periods that will end when Jerusalem is no longer trampled upon. The time referred to by *khronos* in the singular ended when Jesus Christ started his preaching work. Here, *khronos* refers to units of time that can be counted, namely, to the 69 weeks of years mentioned in Daniel 9:25:26.

The Hebrew language often uses parallelisms, and the most common form is to place words, expressions, or two clauses side by side, conveying the same idea with different words. We also see this in the Christian Greek Scriptures. One example is Acts 1:7:

<sup>7</sup> He said to them: “It does not belong to YOU to get knowledge of the **times** (*khronos*) or **seasons** (“appointed times,” *kairos*) which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction (*exousia*).

Here, the words **times** (*khronos*) and **appointed times** (*kairos*), are parallel. Both words are in the plural, referring to time periods that can be counted, and which God has decided. Jesus said that God has placed these time periods in his own “jurisdiction.” The Greek word *exousia* has the meaning “power, ability, faculty, authority, rule, dominion, jurisdiction.” (Mounce) The purpose of God is connected with his authority and rule, which means that appointed times are a part of his “plan

of the ages.” Paul speaks about the existence of these appointed times in 1 Thessalonians 5:1.

I quote Acts 3:19-21 one time more:

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times* (*kairos*) *for the refreshing rest* (*anapsyxis*) may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one *chosen beforehand* for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one *until* the times (*khronos*) *for* the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets *through the ages*.

This is a typical example of Hebrew parallelism because “the appointed times (*kairos*) of refreshing” are parallel with “the times (*khronos*) of restoration of all things.” This parallelism means that the two expressions refer to exactly the same thing. When we look at the details, the parallel between *kairos* and *khronos* is clear: both refer to appointed times that can be counted. But what is the parallel between “refreshing rest” and “restoration”? These words seem to refer to different things.

## THE MEANING AND APPLICATION OF ANAPSYKSIS

The rendering “appointed times of refreshing,” in NWT84 and many other English translations, gives no meaning because “refreshing” is an adjective, and it needs something it can modify, such as:

A refreshing drink.

A refreshing breeze

A refreshing change

Few things are quite as refreshing as...

And the fresh air fragrance is refreshing.

The expression “appointed times of refreshing” has no meaning because we do not know what the refreshing refers to. In a similar way, the expression “appointed times of restoration” would have no meaning without a context because we do not know to what the restoration refers. However, the expression “times of restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old” shows the meaning of this expression.

## THE LEXICAL MEANING OF ANAPSYKSIS

That the rendering “refreshing” in Acts 3:20 lacks meaning suggests that this rendering for the Greek word *anapsykehsis* is unsatisfactory, and I refer to several definitions of the word in lexicons:

a refreshing coolness after heat; met. *refreshing*, recreation, *rest*, Acts 3:20.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Mounce Greek Dictionary (Gramcord).

*relief from distressful, burdensome circumstances*; a state of cheer and encouragement after a period of having been troubled or upset.<sup>4</sup>

Breathing space, *relaxation, relief* fig., of the Messianic age *kairois anapsyksesos*, *times of rest* Ac 3:20.<sup>5</sup>

The Greek word for *refreshing* admits of a twofold derivation (from *psyche* and *psykhō*), according to which it properly denotes either cooling and *relief from heat*, or the recovery of breath after exhaustion. In either case, the essential meaning is the same, although the first is the idea naturally suggested by the English word refreshing. What is here meant is *relief from toil or suffering*, not without an implication of more positive enjoyment.<sup>6</sup>

In Hellenistic Greek *anapsyxis* means *rest* or respite when not used literally of cooling.<sup>7</sup>

From these comments, we see that *anapsyxis* has the meaning “relief.” (blue text) This is not relief in the general sense, but relief from toil and suffering (green text). And such relief is connected with rest, which was the meaning of the word in Classical Greek. (red text)

## THE WORDS ANAPSYKSIS IS CONNECTED WITH THE SABBATH IN THE SEPTUAGINT

I quote two examples from the Septuagint, which can throw light on the meaning of the verb *anapsykhō*, which corresponds to the noun *anapsyxis*, I quote Exodus 23:12 and 34:21:

<sup>12</sup> “Six days you are to do your work; but on the seventh day you are *to desist* (*anapausis*, “rest”, in order that your bull and your ass may rest (*anapauō*) and the son of your slave girl and the alien resident may *refresh* (*anapsykhō*) *themselves*.

<sup>21</sup> “Six days you are to labor, but on the seventh day you will keep the sabbath (*katapauō*). In plowing time and in harvest you will *keep sabbath* (*katapauō*). (Footnote: “You will rest.”)

When God rested according to Genesis 2:2, the Septuagint uses the verb *katapauō* with the meaning “to desist from work,” and by implication “to rest.” We see the use of *katapauō* two times in Exodus 34:21. However, when laws regarding the sabbath are mentioned, the focus is not on desisting from work but on the positive result of resting on the sabbath. For this focus, the verb *anapauō* is used — the difference being the prefixes *ana-* and *kata-*. Please note that both verbs are used with reference to the sabbath.

The meaning of *katapauō* is, as mentioned, “to desist from work, to rest.” And the meaning of *anapauō* is “to cause to rest, soothe, refresh” (Mounce), “to continue to

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4. Louw and Nida Greek Lexicon (Gramcord)

5. *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* by F.W. Arndt, F. Gingrich.

6. *Acts of the Apostles* (Geneva Series Commentaries) by J.A. Alexander (1887, 1980)

7. *The Acts of the Apostles* Volume IV by F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (1979)

be in a state in or on someone, with the implication of a beneficent result.” (Louw and Nida) One example from the Greek Scriptures is Matthew 11:28:

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all YOU who are toiling and loaded down, and I will *refresh* (*anapauō*) *YOU* (“I will give you rest,” NIV). <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon YOU and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and *YOU will find refreshment* (*anapausis*) *for YOUR souls* (“you will find rest,” NIV).

This verse shows that the verb *anapauō* and the noun *anapausis* both mean rest and refreshment. If we look back on the quotation from Exodus 23:12 above, we see that *anapauō* and *anapausis* are applied to the sabbath law, meaning that the focus is not on desisting from work but on the great benefits of keeping the sabbath. We note that *anapsykhō* is used as synonym for *anapauō*. Both verbs stress the rest on the sabbath and the refreshment and benefits of keeping the sabbath.

*The application of anapsykhō to the sabbath day, both stressing the rest and the benefits and refreshment from the rest, justifies my rendering “refreshing rest” for the noun anapsyxis.*

## THE “REFRESHING REST” IN ACTS 3:19 IS IDENTICAL WITH “THE SABBATH RESTING” IN HEBREWS 4:8

I have demonstrated above that the noun *anapsyxis* and the verb *anapsykhō* in the Septuagint are connected with the sabbath. They both focus on the rest and the benefits and the refreshment it brings. Another verb connected with the sabbath is *katapauō*, which emphasizes desisting from work rather than focusing on the benefits of the sabbath.

When we look for the reference to “the appointed times for the refreshing rest,” we need to consider the use of both *anapauō* and *katapauō* in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The verb *anapauō* is never connected with time or with future prophecies in the Christian Greek Scriptures. But the verb *katapauō* is connected with prophetic time. It occurs four times in Hebrews Chapter 4, and the corresponding noun *katapausis* occurs seven times in Hebrews 3 and 4.

Grasping the meaning of Hebrews 4:1-13 is not easy. The important point is to understand the relationship between the expressions “*the day of entering the promised land*, *a certain day*, and *another day*.” I will elucidate these expressions.

After the writer pointed out that the Jews who wandered in the desert did not enter God’s rest because of a lack of faith and obedience, he directs his attention toward the Christian Hebrews in Hebrews 4:1, 2:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise is left of entering into his rest (*katapausis*), let us fear that sometime someone of YOU may seem to have fallen short of it. <sup>2</sup> For we have had the *good news* declared to us also, even as they also had; but *the word* which was heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who did hear.

What was the good news (*euaggelizō*) that was declared to “them” (“the Jewish nation in the desert)? It was the words of Exodus 33:1-3, 14 that they would enter the promised land and God would give them rest. Confirming this, Hebrews 4:6 says, “and those to whom the good news (the Jews in the desert) was first declared did not enter in because of disobedience.”

What is the good news declared to “us” (the Hebrew Christians)? That was the possibility for the Hebrew Christians to enter God’s rest. Where do we find this good news? Joshua led the people into the promised land in the 14th century BCE, but he did not lead them into God’s rest. (Hebrews 4:8). The argument of the writer is that the opportunity of entering God’s rest did not end at that time, when the Jews entered the promised land in the 14th century BCE. David lived in the 11th century, and in Psalm 95:7, he used the expression “today” in connection with entering the rest of Jehovah.

In Hebrews 3:13, we read:

<sup>13</sup> but keep on exhorting one another each day, *as long as it may be called “Today,”* for fear any one of YOU should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin.

The writer argues that the word “today,” which was written in the 11th century BCE as an invitation to enter God’s rest, was still holding in the 1st century CE. His point is that the Christian Hebrews had entered God’s rest because of their faith and obedience, so it was essential not to become hardened by the power of sin and thus fall out of God’s rest. And if anyone had not entered God’s rest because of a lack of faith and obedience, it was important to change that, as we read in 4:11:

<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore do our utmost to enter into that rest, for fear anyone should fall in the same pattern of disobedience.

Let us keep the timeline in mind. The nation was invited to enter God’s rest when Joshua had led them into the promised land (14th century BCE). However, they did not achieve this due to a lack of faith and obedience. In Psalm 95, David showed that entering God’s rest was still possible (11th century BCE). David used the word “today,” and the writer of Hebrews says that this “today” still holds (1st century CE), and he exhorts the Hebrew Christians to enter God’s rest by showing faith and obedience. Then the writer shows there is “another day,” another future opportunity to enter God’s rest. I quote Hebrews 4:6-8 (my translation)

<sup>6</sup> Since, therefore, it remains for some to enter into it and those to whom the *good news was first declared* did not enter in because of disobedience,<sup>7</sup> he again destines *a certain day: today;* saying through David after a long time, as *he had foretold* (*prolegō*). “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had put them to rest, he would not *after these things* (*meta tauta*) have been speaking of *another day*.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, a sabbath resting (*sabbatismos*) remains for the people of God.

## THE TIMELINE:

### THE DAY WHEN THE GOOD NEWS WAS FIRST DECLARED



## A CERTAIN DAY (TODAY)

### ANOTHER DAY

(**Verse 6**) **The 14th century BCE.** The Jewish nation, which received the good news of entering the promised land and participating in Jehovah's rest, did not enter this rest because of disobedience.

(**Verse 7**) **The 11th century BCE.** A long time after the Jewish people entered the promised land, Jehovah pointed to "*a certain day*," another opportunity to enter God's rest. The reference is to Psalm 95:7,11 ("*Today* if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...They will not enter my rest")

Marking *a certain day*, the new possibility of entering God's rest was something God had foretold ("*as he had foretold*")<sup>8</sup> Where did God foretell this possibility? In Genesis 22:16-18 Jehovah swore that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through the seed of Abraham. Thus, in the 11th century BCE, there was an opportunity for the nations of the earth to enter God's rest as a part of the promise to Abraham to bless the nations. Did this opportunity end?

(**Verse 7**) **The 1st century CE.** God's oath that all nations would be blessed remained in effect. It was *a prophecy* according to verse 7, and in Hebrews 3:13 we read: "but keep on exhorting one another each day, as long as it may be called *Today*, for fear any one of YOU should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin."

The text shows that the word "*today*" that was written in the 11th century BCE still remained in effect in the 1st century CE.

(**Verse 8**) **The sabbath resting for (*sabbatismos*) God's people.** I use the words "after *these things*" instead of "afterward" in verse 8.<sup>9</sup> The use of "afterward" would naturally be a reference to the fact that Joshua had not put them to rest. But the rendering "after *these things*" would naturally include the failure of entering God's rest in the promised land and the situation described by David in Psalm 95:7-11, which are described in Hebrews 4:7.

There is a contrast between the temporal words in verses 7 and 8 in chapter 4. Verse 7 speaks about *a certain day*, a certain opportunity to enter God's rest, which David calls it *Today*. This *a certain day* referred to the time in the 11th century BCE when it was possible to enter God's rest. But it also referred to the time in the 1st century CE. In contrast to *the certain day* there is "*another day*" that is mentioned in verse 8. The word "another" shows that this must be a day or an opportunity to

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8. The Greek word *prolegō* has the meaning, "to tell beforehand, foretell." (Mounce) One example from the Septuagint is Isaiah 41:26 (my literal translation): "Who told this from the beginning, so we could know, and so we could say, 'He is right'? No one *foretold* (*prolegō*) it, and no one heard any words from you."

9. The Greek pronoun *tauta* is neuter plural accusative of the demonstrative pronoun *houtos* ("this, this one, he"). The basic meaning of the form *tauta* is "these things." But together with the preposition *meta* ("after"), the meaning can also be "afterward," which is a shortened form of "after these things. I use the basic meaning in my translation.

enter God’s rest, distinct from the day in the 11th century BCE and the 1st century CE. This “*another day*” is called “a sabbath resting for the people of God”

**(Verse 9) The thousand-year reign of Jesus**

This *another day* which is the “sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*), must refer to a time after the 1st century CE to which *a certain day* referred.

Table 2:1 Entering God’s rest according to Hebrews chapter 4

v. 6	14th century	The Jewish nation received <i>the good news of entering the promised land</i> . But they did not enter God’s rest.
v. 7	11th century	There was <i>a certain day</i> with the possibility of entering God’s rest. This <i>certain day</i> is called <i>Today</i> .
v. 7	1st century	This <i>certain day</i> called <i>Today</i> was still holding with the possibility of entering God’s rest.
v. 8	The thousand-year reign	There is <i>another day</i> that is “the sabbath resting of the people of God.”

According to verse 7, this situation with the sabbath resting was foretold. Where can we find a prophecy about this sabbath resting in addition to Hebrews 4:8? I have quoted the words about all the nations of the earth that will be blessed by the seed of Abraham. However, this prophecy does not refer to a specific sabbath. Isaiah 66:23 is the only place in the Hebrew Scriptures where a prophetic sabbath is mentioned.

<sup>23</sup> “And it will certainly occur that from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath all flesh will come in to bow down before me,” Jehovah has said.

The setting here is that God’s enemies are destroyed. And then the people of God who remain will keep the sabbath. This must be the “another day” that God spoke about. This must be the “sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*) mentioned in Hebrews 4:9, which Jehovah spoke about after delivering the words presented in Psalm 95:8-11.

Isaiah 66:22 speaks of new heavens and a new earth after God’s enemies are destroyed. The new earth starts with the thousand-year reign of Jesus, and verse 23 is connected with keeping the sabbath. Therefore, “the sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*) must be identical with these thousand years. This is also the antitypical sabbath over which Jesus is Lord, according to Matthew 12:8.

Matthew 12:8	the sabbath over which Jesus is lord	= the thousand-year reign of Jesus
Hebrews 4:9	“a sabbath resting” ( <i>sabbatismos</i> )	= the thousand-year reign of Jesus

In the discussion about the future Jubilee in Chapter 13, I show that the thousand-year reign of Jesus is the last thousand years of Jehovah’s day of rest of 7,000 years. Now we can draw a parallel between “the sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*) in Hebrews 4:9 and the “the refreshing rest” in Acts 3:19. Both are connected with the appointed times connected with Jehovah’s 7,000 year-long sabbath, and both are connected

with the 1,000 year-long sabbath of which Jesus is lord. Therefore, the “refreshing rest” (*anapsyxis*) in Acts 3:19 is identical with a “sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*) in Hebrews 4:9. Both refer to the last 1,000 years of Jehovah’s 7,000-year-long day of rest, of which Jesus is lord.

Matthew 12:8	the sabbath over which Jesus is lord	= the thousand-year reign of Jesus
Hebrews 4:9	“a sabbath resting” ( <i>sabbatismos</i> )	= the thousand-year reign of Jesus
Acts 3:19	“a refreshing rest” ( <i>anapsyxis</i> )	= the thousand-year reign of Jesus

## THE MEANING AND APPLICATION OF APOKATASTASIS

The key word *apokatastasis* has the meaning, “a restitution or restoration of a thing to its former state; hence, the renovation of a new and better era.” (Mounce)

A verb describes an action or a state, and a noun describes the result of the action of the verb, or, in some cases, it describes the action itself. The verb *apokathistēmi* describes the action of restoring, and the corresponding noun *apokatastasis* describes the result of this action, namely, restoration.

The noun occurs only once in Acts 3:21 and not in the Septuagint, while the verb occurs eight times in The Christian Greek Scriptures and 30 times in the Septuagint. A study of the verb *apokathistēmi* will help us understand how biblical writers treated the idea of the restoration of all things. I quote one example from the Christian Greek Scriptures and four examples from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Acts 1:6:

<sup>6</sup> When, now, they had assembled, they went asking him: “Lord, are you *restoring* (*apokathistēmi*) *the kingdom to Israel* at this time?”

Hosea 11:11

<sup>11</sup> And they shall be amazed like a bird from Egypt and like a dove from the land of the Assyrians, and *I will restore* (*apokathistēmi*) *them to their homes*, says the Lord.

Isaiah 23:17

<sup>17</sup> And it shall be that after seventy years God will pay a visit to Tyre, *and she will be restored* (*apokathistēmi*) *again to her ancient condition* and will be a market center for all the kingdoms of the world.

Jeremiah 23:8

<sup>8</sup> but “The Lord lives who gathered all the offspring of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries, there where he had driven them, and *restored* (*apokathistēmi*) *them to their land*.”

<sup>55</sup> Ezekiel 16:55

*And your sister Sodoma and her daughters shall be restored* (*apokathistēmi*), *just as they were from the beginning, and Samaria and her daughters shall be restored* (*apokathistēmi*), *just as they were from the beginning,*



The verb *apokathistēmi* and the noun *apotatasis* both mean restoring something to its original state. This is particularly evident in the two instances where the verb is used in Ezekiel 16:55 and the clause “just as they were from the beginning.”

When we consider God’s purpose in creating the earth and the humans, we observe the following scenario: God created the paradise in Eden and placed two perfect human beings within it. Adam had his unborn progeny in his loins, and God’s purpose was that his perfect descendants should fill the earth and expand the paradise to the whole earth.

This was temporarily thwarted by Satan’s rebellion. But the purpose of God is that this will be restored “as it were from the beginning” — to borrow the words of Ezekiel. The words of Peter in Acts 3:19-21 mean that in the future, the whole earth will be a paradise filled with billions of perfect descendants of Adam. This means that the situation will be exactly what it would have been if the first humans had not sinned and violated God’s law.

## THE PROPHETS SPOKE ABOUT THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

A prophet is a person who speaks or writes inspired words from God, regardless of whether he speaks about the past, the present, or the future. Moses was a prophet, and he tells what God said to Adam, as we read in Genesis 1:27, 28:

<sup>27</sup> And God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God’s image he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> Further, God blessed them and God said to them: “Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth.”

The requirement for Adam and Eve to fulfill God’s purpose was that they obeyed the laws of God. If they did not do that, they would die. I quote Genesis 2:16, 17:

<sup>16</sup> And Jehovah God also laid this command upon the man: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. <sup>17</sup> But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die.”

The account shows that Adam followed Satan in his rebellion, and he was sentenced to death. When God pronounced his judgment, his words also presented a ray of hope, as we see in Genesis 3:15:

<sup>15</sup> And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.”

The seed of the woman should bruise the head of the snake, who represented the rebel Satan. Enoch was a descendant of Adam, and he expanded on the words about the seed of the woman, according to Jude 14:

<sup>14</sup> Yes, the seventh one [in line] from Adam, E’noch, prophesied also regarding them, when he said: “Look! Jehovah came with his holy myriads. <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an

ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him.”

This was a prophecy about how those who followed Satan would be sentenced. But I will point to positive prophecies. When Peter used the Greek noun *apokatastasis* (“restoration”), he referred to what the prophets had said. I will now quote four passages from Hebrew and Christian prophets, each one representing rays of hope in connection with the restoration:

#### Isaiah 65:17-25

<sup>17</sup> “*For here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.*” <sup>18</sup> But exult, YOU people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating. For here I am creating Jerusalem a cause for joyfulness and her people a cause for exultation. <sup>19</sup> And I will be joyful in Jerusalem and exult in my people; and no more will there be heard in her the sound of weeping or the sound of a plaintive cry.”

<sup>20</sup> “No more will there come to be a suckling a few days old from that place, neither an old man that does not fulfill his days; for one will die as a mere boy, although a hundred years of age; and as for the sinner, although a hundred years of age he will have evil called down upon him. <sup>21</sup> And they will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat [their] fruitage. <sup>22</sup> They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full. <sup>23</sup> They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them. <sup>24</sup> And it will actually occur that before they call out I myself shall answer; while they are yet speaking, I myself shall hear.

<sup>25</sup> “The wolf and the lamb themselves will feed as one, and the lion will eat straw just like the bull; and as for the serpent, his food will be dust. They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain,” Jehovah has said.

#### 2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-13

<sup>5</sup> For, according to their wish, this fact escapes their notice, that there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; <sup>6</sup> and by those [means] the world (*kosmos*) of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word *the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire* and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men.

<sup>10</sup> Yet Jehovah’s day will come as a thief, in which *the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise*, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered.

<sup>11</sup> Since *all these things are thus to be dissolved*, what sort of persons ought YOU to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, <sup>12</sup> awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which [the] heavens being on fire will be dissolved and [the] elements being intensely hot will melt! <sup>13</sup> But *there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise*, and in these righteousness is to dwell.

## Revelation 21:1-4

And I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*; for *the former heaven and the former earth had passed away*, and the sea is no more.<sup>2</sup> I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them.<sup>4</sup> And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. *The former things have passed away.*”

## Luk 23:43

<sup>42</sup> And he went on to say: “Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> And he said to him: “Truly I tell you today, *You will be with me in Paradise.*”

I will discuss the details of these passages later. But we should note that several passages prophesying about the restoration or discussing the restoration itself are expressed in a figurative language, such as Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

Isaiah speaks about “new heavens and a new earth,” and Peter quotes these words. The context of 2 Peter chapter 3 shows that “new heavens and a new earth” do not refer to literal heavens and earth. According to verse 5, Peter refers to literal heavens and a literal earth. The worldwide flood, that he refers to in verse 6, did not destroy the literal heavens and the literal earth. But the water destroyed the *kosmos*, all the humans who lived in the days of Noah.

When Peter refers to “the heavens and the earth *that are now*” (verse 7), he cannot refer to the literal heavens and the literal earth that were not destroyed in the flood, but that are still standing. Therefore, he must refer to figurative heavens and a figurative earth, a new heavenly government and a new state of affairs on earth. John also refers to new heavens and a new earth in Revelation 21:1, and the context shows that these words are figurative as well.

The new heavens and the new earth are directly connected with the restoration of all things, as the words in blue indicate:

*the former things will not be called to mind.* (Isaiah 65:17)

*the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise.* (2 Peter 3:10)

*all these things are thus to be dissolved.* (2 Peter 3:11)

*the former heaven and the former earth had passed away.* (Revelation 21:1)

*The former things have passed away.* (Revelation 21:4)

The situation will be the same as the situation of Samaria, which is mentioned in Ezekiel 16:55 “*and Samaria and her daughters shall be restored (apokathistēmi), just as they were from the beginning.*”

Is it possible to connect “*beginning*” in the phrase “*as they were from the beginning*” with other accounts and words in the Scriptures? The words of Jesus in Matthew 19:3-8 can help us:

<sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him, intent on tempting him and saying: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on every sort of ground?”<sup>4</sup> In reply he said: “Did YOU not read that he *who created them from [the] beginning* (*arēhē*) *made them male and female*”<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh?’<sup>6</sup> So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart.”<sup>7</sup> They said to him: “Why, then, did Moses prescribe giving a certificate of dismissal and divorcing her?”<sup>8</sup> He said to them: “Moses, out of regard for YOUR hardheartedness, made the concession to YOU of divorcing YOUR wives, *but such has not been the case from [the] beginning* (*arēhē*).

The Greek word *arēhē*, meaning “beginning,” can refer to the start of many time periods, which can be identified based on the context. Jesus quoted the words in Genesis 1:27, 28, and 2:21-25 about marriage between one man and one woman, and he applied the situation where God expressed these words as “*the beginning*” (*arēhē*).

Revelation 21:4 translates the word *prōtos* («first in time; first in meaning») as «former (things)». The word *prōtos* is an adjective that can refer to something that was first in time, i.e, the time before sin was introduced. The word *arēhē* is a noun, which refers to the beginning of something. Thus, the adjective *prōtos* and the noun *arēhē* refer to the same period of time, *to the time before Adam and Eve violated God’s law and sinned*.

In this “beginning,” God’s laws were followed, and there was peace and harmony in heaven and on the earth. After this “beginning,” Satan caused the humans to rebel and break God’s laws, and Satan became the god of the world of humans. (Luke 4:6) Satan introduced the wicked heaven and the wicked earth, and these are “the former heaven and the former earth” or “the former things” that will pass away. (Revelation 21:1, 4)

Jesus said that “such (a man having more than one wife) had not been the case from the beginning.” And by his words, as quoted in Mathew 19:3-8, Jesus restored the original law of God regarding marriage. However, Jesus not only restored this law, but he also showed that everything that existed in the garden of Eden before the rebellion should be restored. We see this in Luke 23:43:

<sup>42</sup> And he went on to say: “Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> And he said to him: “Truly I tell you today, *You will be with me in Paradise.*”

The words of Jesus indicate that when at least one part of the earth has become a paradise, the criminal who was also fastened to a pole will receive a resurrection. The situation described in Isaiah 65:17-25, regarding the condition on the new earth, where the wolf and the lamb will feed together, is also a reference to the paradise in the garden of Eden.

Peter wrote about “the times (*khrōnos*) of *restoration* (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old.”

*The discussion above has shown that the prophets spoke about a full restoration of the paradise in Eden, as it was “in the beginning” before Adam and Eve violated God’s law.*

## TO GATHER ALL THINGS TOGETHER AGAIN IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH

I have shown that the Greek noun *apokatastasis* (“restoration”) appears only once in the Christian Greek Scriptures, in Acts 3:21. Nevertheless, the concept of restoration can also be conveyed by other words. One example of this is Ephesians 1:10

### THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ACCURATE TRANSLATION

Paul speaks about the role of Jesus Christ in the restoration, and we read, according to Ephesians 1:10:

<sup>10</sup> for an administration at the full limit of the appointed times (*kairos*, plural), namely, to gather (*anakefalaioō*) all things (*pas*) together *again* in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. [Yes,] in him.

The correct meaning of the verb *anakefalaioō* in this verse is crucial, because NWT84 renders it as “to gather all things together *again*” while NWT13 renders it “to gather all things together.” Most translations render similarly to NWT13. But the Latin Vulgate (above), the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible (middle), and Jubilee Bible 2000 (below) have a rendering like NWT84:

<sup>10</sup> in dispensationem plenitudinis temporum *instaurare* (“*restore*”) omnia in Christo quae in caelis et quae in terra sunt in ipso (translation)

(translation)<sup>10</sup> in the management of the fullness of time *to restore* all things in Christ that are in the heavens and that are on the earth in him.

<sup>10</sup> In the dispensation of the fulness of times, to *re-establish* all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in him.

<sup>10</sup> that in the dispensation of the fulfillment of the times he might *restore* all things by the Christ, both those which are in heaven and those which are on earth,

The question is what the real meaning of the verb *anakefalaioō* is. Applying the principles of lexical semantics, we find that the use of “again” has a solid basis. Prepositions are often added as prefixes to Greek nouns and verbs to strengthen their meaning or stress a particular side of this meaning. The preposition *ana*, which is the prefix of *anakefalaioō*, often has a distributive or repetitive meaning, as in:

*anakainizō* (“renew”).

*anakainoō* (“renew, change”).

*anakainōsis* (“renewal”).

*anakamptō* (“return”).

*ananeoō* (“renew”).

*ananefō* (“to regain senses”).



*anastauroō* (“fasten to a pole again”)

This repetitive meaning of *anakefalaioō* has long been known by scholars. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist movement. In 1765, he published his verse-by-verse comments on the Old Testament and the New Testament. I quote from Wesley’s notes on Ephesians 1:10:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times - In this last administration of God's fullest grace, which took place when the time appointed was fully come. **He might gather together into one in Christ - Might recapitulate, re - unite, and place in order again under Christ, their common Head.** All things which are in heaven, and on earth - All angels and men, whether living or dead, in the Lord.

Following are three recent quotations. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. III, page 682, has the following comments on the verb *anakefalaioō*:

Iren. [Irenaeus, c. 130 — c. 200 CE, Church father] used *anakafalaioō* in the sense of gathering together, summation. **Since every summation implies a kind of repetition, the word may sometimes have the direct sense of “to repeat.” The ana- thus assumes an iterative sense which it does not have elsewhere...** Apsines [a Greek philosopher in the 3rd century CE] used *anakafalaioō* with reference to the repetition of an event. The *recapitulare* in Iren. [Irenaeus] is also to be understood in the first instance as repetition, though it is to be noted that it sums up the original and is thus qualitative...In this summation, however, the prominent element may be, not that of repetition, but that of the affirmation and confirmation implied in repetition.

We note the comment on the preposition **ana-** (“up, upon, on”), which often is used in an iterative sense (= expressing repetition of the verbal action). The use of this preposition with an iterative meaning at the beginning of the verb *anakefalaioō* could signal the repetitive meaning of doing again, the argument goes.

One example is Romans 13:9 where the commandments have been expressed before, and now they are summed up again (*anakefalaioō*) in the saying, “You must love your neighbor as yourself.” The commentator A.S. Wood in *Ephesians* in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (1978) Vol. 11, page 26, also stresses the repetitive nature of the verb:

The verb *anakefalaioō* (“to bring together”) **means to sum up together again** (Rom 13:9). It is derived not from *kefalē* (“a head”) but from *kephalaion* (a summary, or sum total). When a column of figures was added up, the total was placed at the top.

Several commentators of Ephesians also argue in favor of the repetitive meaning of 1:10. *Galatians and Ephesians* in Meyer’s *Commentary on the New Testament* (1883, 1979), page 322, says in comments on Ephesians 1:10:

Consequently *anakefalaioō*, *summatim recolligere*, “recapitulate summarily,” which is said in Rom xiii 9 of that which has been previously expressed *singulatim*, “individually,” in separate parts, but now is again gathered up in one main point, so that at Rom. *le en touto to logo* denotes that main point in which the gathering up is contained. And **here this main point of gathering up again, unifying all the parts**, lies in Christ.

The four quotations above show that the use of the adverbial “again” in NWT84 has a solid linguistic basis. I do not know why the Governing Body deleted this important word from NWT13. However, a characteristic of this translation is that the subtleties and nuances in the original text are often overlooked and not effectively rendered in English.

The words of Paul in Ephesians 1:10, “to gather all things together *again* in the Christ” must refer to the situation before Satan’s rebellion, to the “beginning” that Jesus referred to. There was peace in heaven because all spirit creatures served Jehovah. And it was peace in the garden of Eden because the two humans obeyed the laws of God.

*This situation of gathering all things together will again be performed through the Christ — and this is the same as the restoration of all things*

### THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ACTS 3:19-21 AND EPHESIANS 1:10

As we have seen in the discussion above, the concept of “restoration” can be expressed in different words. In addition, the two examples I discussed also share several words. I will now compare Acts 3:19-21 with Ephesians 1:10:

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times (kairos) for the refreshing rest (anapsyxis)* may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one chosen beforehand for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one *until the times (khronos) for the restoration (apokatastasis) of all things (pas)* of which God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets through the ages.

<sup>10</sup> for an administration at the full limit of *the appointed times (kairos, plural)*, namely, to *gather all things (pas) together again (anakefalaioō)* in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. [Yes,] in him.

The object in both cases is *all things*, expressed by the adjective *pas*. The expression *all things* is modified by the noun “*restoration*” in Acts 3:21 and by the verb phrase “*gather together again*” in Ephesians 1:10.

There is also a time element in both cases. The Greek word *kairos* means “appointed time,” and it often refers to consecutive time periods that can be counted. The word *khronos* refers to time generally. But in some contexts, it can also refer to appointed times. In Acts 3:21, *khronos* is in the plural, and it parallels *kairos* in verse 19. Therefore, the word *khronos* in this verse has the meaning “appointed times,” as is the case in verse 19. There are *appointed times* for the refreshing rest, and there are *appointed times* for the gathering together again of all things.

The conclusion of the comparison between Acts 3:19-21 and Ephesians 1:10 is that both passages refer to the restoration of the paradise in Eden with perfect humans before Adam and Eve sinned. Both events show that there are appointed times marking the beginning of this restoration.

Table 2.2 A comparison of Acts 3:19-21 and Ephesians 1:10

Acts 3:19-21	Ephesians 1:10
<i>all things</i>	<i>all things</i>
<i>restoration</i>	<i>gather together again</i>
<i>appointed times, times</i>	<i>appointed times</i>



## ALL WHO DIE BECAUSE OF INHERITED SIN WILL GET A RESURRECTION

*Jesus gave his life as a ransom sacrifice, and he bought Adam and all his descendants. This means that the ransom sacrifice was applied to Adam and all his descendants without requiring faith and obedience. All Adam's descendants who sin and later die because of their inherited sin will get a resurrection during the thousand-year Judgment Day. Another smaller group, which includes Adam, will not get a resurrection even though they were bought by Jesus. They have not sinned because of inherited sin, but because of their own wickedness, and for this sin against the holy spirit, there is no sacrifice.*

*This chapter discusses passages saying that Jesus died for **all** men. The members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus died for **all** men, and they say that he only died for those who show faith and obedience. They use the translation saying that Jesus died for "**all sorts of men**" and not for "**all men**." Detailed analyses are made of these renderings, and I demonstrate that the translation "**all sorts of men**" is a deliberate distortion of the biblical text.*

*Several scriptures showing that **all** who die because of inherited sin will receive a resurrection are analyzed.*

One of the theme verses in Russell's six volumes of *The Divine Plan of the Ages* is Acts 3:19-21(my translation):

<sup>19</sup> "Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, **that the appointed times** (*kairos*) **for the refreshing rest** (*anapsyxis*) may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one **chosen beforehand** for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one **until** the times (*khronos*) **for** the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (**pas**) of which God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets **through the ages**.

The "restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets through the ages" refers to the purpose of God in having the whole earth populated with perfect descendants of Adam living in a paradise. The basis for this restoration is the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as we read in 1 Timothy 2:4-6. The translation above is from NWT84, and below is my translation of the same verses.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This is fine and acceptable in the sight of our Savior, God, <sup>4</sup>whose will is that *all sorts of (pas) men should* be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and *one mediator* (*mesitēs*) between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself a corresponding ransom (*antilytron*) *for all (pas)*—[this is] what is to be witnessed to at its own *particular times* (*kairos*).

<sup>3</sup>This is good and acceptable in the presence of God, our savior. <sup>4</sup>who wants that *all (pas) men shall be saved* and come to an accurate knowledge of truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and there is *one who acts to bring about reconciliation* (*mesitēs*) between God and human beings, the human being Jesus Christ, <sup>6</sup>who have given himself as a corresponding ransom (*antilytron*) *for all (pas)* — a testimony in the *particular appointed times* (*kairos*).

The basic linguistic differences in the NWT84 translation and my translation are: The rendering “*all sorts of men*” in verse 4 is misleading because it has no support in the context. I use the literal rendering “*all men*.” The Greek word *mesitēs* in verse 5 has the meaning “one that acts between two parties; a mediator, one who interposes to reconcile two adverse parties.” (Mounce) I use the descriptive rendering “*one who acts to bring about reconciliation*” instead of “*mediator*.” Everything God wants will happen. The word “should” in the expression “*should be saved*” is modal and expresses uncertainty. I use the indicative rendering. “*shall be saved*” to show that there is no uncertainty: “all men” will be saved, but “all men” will not get everlasting life.

One aspect of Paul’s words that is often overlooked, but was stressed by the Bible Students, is the meaning of the Greek word *kairos* in verse 6. The rendering “*particular times*” of NWT84 is too weak because *kairos* has the meaning “*appointed time*,” as is the case in Acts 3:19, that is quoted above, and Luke 21:24. The point of Paul evidently is that the role of Jesus as “one who acts to bring reconciliation between God and men” should only be understood at the appointed times for this. This is a part of God’s plan through the ages for the restoration of all things, and could first be understood at the appointed time for this understanding, as God had decided. *These specific appointed times for the full understanding of the ransom sacrifice is the time of the end, which began in 1914 CE.*

## DENYING THAT THE RANSOM SACRIFICE INCLUDES ALL ADAM’S DESCENDANTS

The ransom sacrifice is the most significant event that has happened in my life. Because of this sacrifice, I have the hope of a resurrection and to reunite with my dear wife. I thank Jehovah many times every day for the ransom sacrifice. But I am very sad to see that the present members of the Governing Body reject the most basic side of the ransom sacrifice, that *all* Adam’s descendants are included in it. The truth is that *all* humans will get the benefits of the ransom sacrifice without any conditions, such as faith in God!

The leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the late 1930s attempted to explain away the phrase “a corresponding ransom *for all*” in 1 Timothy 2:6 by using the expression “*in behalf of all*,” rather than “*for all*.” They interpreted “in behalf of all” as

indicating that all humans had the possibility of benefitting from the sacrifice, but “all humans” were not included in the sacrifice, and they would not benefit from it — and Jesus did not die for *all* Adam’s descendants.

The leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses today try to explain away the words that Jesus was “a corresponding ransom *for all*” by using the expression “*for all sorts of men*” in 1 Timothy 2:4 and applying this rendering in a footnote to 2:6 as well. In the present Watchtower literature, it is said that the ransom sacrifice includes “all sorts of men” but not “all men — all descendants of Adam.” And “all sorts of men” are those who will be saved, according to the members of the Governing Body.

Both of these attempts represent a manipulation of the Bible’s text, reading something into it that is not there. This is, in reality, the same as forging the text of the Bible, and readers must decide whether it falls under the “destructive heresies” mentioned in 2 Peter 2:1.

Just before the ransom sacrifice was again rejected by the members of the Governing Body (in the 21st century), the real meaning of the ransom sacrifice was expressed in a beautiful way in The Watchtower of March 15, 2000, page 3:

When Adam sinned and was sentenced to death, his as yet unborn offspring were still in his loins and therefore died with him. The perfect man Jesus, “the last Adam,” willingly did not produce a family. (1 Corinthians 15:45) He had unborn offspring in his loins when he died as a perfect human sacrifice. Therefore, it might be said that the potential human race within his loins died with him. *Jesus took Adam’s sinful, dying family as his own. He gave up the right to have a family of his own. By sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus repurchased all mankind descended from Adam so that they could become His family, making Him their “Eternal Father.”—Isaiah 9:6, 7.*

This is an excellent description of the ransom sacrifice. This sacrifice is the body and blood of Jesus, and the mention of “a potential human race” is an illustration of the principle like-for-like.

## THE FALSE TRANSLATION OF “ALL SORTS OF MEN”

The New International Version and 30 other English translations render the last part of 1 Timothy 2:4 as “wants *all (pas) men* to be saved” or similar words. But NWT84 has the words “that *all sorts of (pas) men* should be saved.” First Timothy 2:6 NWT84 has the rendering “a corresponding ransom *for all (pas)*.” But the footnote has the alternative “or, ‘all sorts of people’.” When 1 Timothy 2:4-6 has been discussed in the Watchtower literature in the 21st century, it has consistently been stated that the ransom sacrifice of Jesus is for “*all sorts of people*” and not “*for all*” Adam’s descendants. This is a false teaching!

I will now discuss the different renderings of “all sorts of people” from a linguistic and contextual point of view.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:1 NWT84: “ALL SORTS OF MEN”

The issue is whether the Greek pronoun *pas* “all, every, the whole” should be rendered in the all-inclusive sense of “all,” or whether it should be rendered in the relative sense of “all sorts of.”

The word *pas* occurs 1,082 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and in most instances, *pas* is translated in the all-inclusive sense of “all, every, or, the whole.” However, it can also be used in the relative sense of “all other,” as in Luke 21:29 (above), of “all sorts of” in Acts 2:17 (below):

<sup>29</sup> With that he spoke an illustration to them: “Note the fig tree and *all the other (pas)* trees.

<sup>17</sup> “And in the last days,” God says, “I shall pour out some of my spirit upon *every sort (pas) of flesh*, and YOUR sons and YOUR daughters will prophesy and YOUR young men will see visions and YOUR old men will dream dreams.

Because the fig is a tree, the rendering “and *all other* trees” is correct. We know that the holy spirit will not be poured out on wicked people, and therefore, the rendering “*every sort* of flesh” is correct.

Translation principles say that words should be translated in their basic senses — here “all, every, the whole” —, and only when the context *clearly requires* a rare sense — such as “all other; all sorts of,” should this sense be used. There is nothing in the context that requires the relative rendering “all sorts of” in 1 Timothy 2:4, 6. I quote 1 Timothy 2:1 NWT84:

<sup>1</sup> I therefore exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, offerings of thanks, be made concerning *all sorts of men*. <sup>2</sup> concerning kings and all those who are in high station; in order that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with full godly devotion and seriousness.

There is no contextual reason for the rendering “all sorts of.” The Greek text in this verse suggests that one phrase is in apposition to another phrase. I put them side by side:

*hyper (for) pantōn (all) anthrōpōn (men)*  
*hyper (for) basileōn (kings) kai (and) pantōn (all) tōn (those) en (in) hyperokhē (authority) ontōn (being).*

Both clauses begin with *hyper* (for), and “kings and those with authority” is an explanation of “all men.” Thus, “all men” do not refer to all sorts of men in the world but to “all men” in high positions.

Moreover, the phrase “all sorts of men” does not fit, because Paul does not exhort his readers to pray for the fifty or hundred kinds of men in the world, but only for those in high positions. The purpose of the prayers supports this conclusion, namely, that Christians can lead a calm and quiet life. Those who can cause this situation are those with high authority, and not all the different kinds of men in the world.

Thus, the context does not require the rendering “all sorts of people.” The situation of verse 1 is similar to 2 Timothy 1:15:

<sup>15</sup> You know this, that *all the men in the [district of] Asia* have turned away from me. Phy·gel’us and Her·mog’e·nes are of that number.

Paul does not say that all the thousands of inhabitants in the province of Asia turned away from him. But “all the men” refers to all who were members of the Christian congregations in Asia. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 2:1, Paul does not ask Christians to pray for all sorts of men in the whole world, but only for “all men” who are in high positions.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:4 NWT84: “ALL SORTS OF MEN”

I quote 1 Timothy 2:3-6 NWT84:

<sup>3</sup> This is fine and acceptable in the sight of our Savior, God, <sup>4</sup> *whose will is that all sorts of men should be saved* (σῶζο) *and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.* <sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all—[this is] what is to be witnessed to at its own particular times.

The footnote to 1 Timothy 2:4 in the NWT84 says:

**all sorts of people:** *While the Greek expression used here may more literally be translated “all people,” the rendering “all sorts of people” is appropriate because of the context.* (For other examples, see study notes on Joh 12:32; Ac 2:17.) God wants all people “to attain to repentance” (2Pe 3:9), so he impartially offers salvation to everyone, regardless of their gender, ethnic background, financial status, or social position. (Mt 28:19, 20; Ac 10:34, 35; 17:30) However, the Scriptures clearly indicate that many people will reject God’s invitation and will not be saved. (Mt 7:13, 21; Joh 3:16, 36; 2Th 1:9) So the rendering “all sorts of people” is in harmony with those verses. A similar rendering is also appropriate in the preceding verses, where Paul urges fellow Christians to pray “concerning *all sorts of men*, concerning kings and all those who are in high positions.”—1Ti 2:1, 2.

The reason for the rendering “all sorts of men” is illuminated by a comment in *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1989), page 357, about a similar rendering in Titus 2:11:

*What about texts such as Titus 2:11, which refers to “the salvation of all men,” according to the rendering of RS? Other texts, such as John 12:32, Romans 5:18, and 1 Timothy 2:3, 4, convey a similar thought in RS, KJ, NE, TEV, etc. The Greek expressions rendered “all” and “everyone” in these verses are inflected forms of the word *pas*. As shown in Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London, 1962, Vol. I, p. 46), *pas* can also mean “every kind or variety.” So, in the above verses, instead of “all,” the expression “every kind of” could be used; or “all sorts of,” as is done in NW. **Which is correct—“all” or the thought conveyed by “all sorts of”? Well, which rendering is also harmonious with the rest of the Bible? The latter one is.** Consider Acts 10:34, 35; Revelation 7:9, 10; 2 Thessalonians 1:9. (Note: Other translators also recognize this sense of the Greek word, as is shown by their renderings of it at Matthew 5:11—“all kinds of,” RS, TEV; “every kind of,” NE; “all manner of,” KJ.*



We note that no linguistic reason is given for the rendering “all sorts of.” But the reason is that it “is harmonious with the rest of the Bible.” This means that because the leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses changed their minds in 1937 regarding the ransom sacrifice, and the translators of NWT that was made in the 1940s, believed that Jesus did not die for all men but only for some men, the translators deviated from the literal rendering “all men” and used “all sorts of men.”<sup>11</sup>

*The rendering “all sorts of men” is linguistically possible. But it is not what the text literally says, but the theological views of the translators are read into the text. This means that this rendering misleads the readers about the meaning of Paul’s words. Therefore, we must conclude that this is a deliberate distortion of the text of the Bible.*

Below is a list of all the instances where the word *pas* occur in 1 Timothy, illustrating that only when the context without question shows that the rendering “all” is not possible, should a rare alternative meaning be used:

**1:15** This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full (*pas*) acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these, I am foremost.

**2:1, 2** First of all (*pas*), then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made concerning all sorts of men (*pas*), <sup>2</sup>concerning kings and all those who are in high positions, so that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with complete godly devotion and seriousness (*pas*).

**2:4** whose will is that all sorts of people (*pas*) should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.

**2:6** who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all (*pas*) —this is what is to be witnessed to in its own due time.

**2:8** So I desire that in every (*pas*) place the men carry on prayer, lifting up loyal hands, without anger and debates.

**2:11** Let a woman learn in silence with full (*pas*) submissiveness.

**3:4** a man presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having his children in subjection with all (*pas*) seriousness.

**3:11** Women should likewise be serious, not slanderous, moderate in habits, faithful in all (*pas*) things.

**4:4** For every (*pas*) creation of God is fine, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

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11. The NWT1950 and NWT1984 are the best and most accurate English translations. The renderings, “all sorts of men” is one of the very rare examples when these translations deviate from the original text and read something into the text that is not there.



**4:8, 9** For physical training is beneficial for a little, but godly devotion is beneficial for all (*pas*) things, as it holds promise of the life now and the life that is to come. <sup>9</sup>That statement is trustworthy and deserves (*pas*) full acceptance.

**4:15** Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, so that your advancement may be plainly seen by all (*pas*) people.

**5:2** to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters, with all (*pas*) chasteness.

**5:10** having a reputation for fine works, if she raised children, if she practiced hospitality, if she washed the feet of holy ones, if she assisted the afflicted, if she devoted herself to every (*pas*) good work.

**5:20** Reprove before all (*pas*) onlookers those who practice sin, as a warning to the rest.

**6:1** Let those who are under the yoke of slavery keep on considering their owners worthy of full (*pas*) honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may never be spoken of injuriously.

**6:10** For the love of money is a root of *all* (*pas*) of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains.

**6:13** Before God, who preserves all things (*pas*) alive, and Christ Jesus, who as a witness made the fine public declaration before Pontius Pilate, I give you orders

**6:17** Instruct those who are rich in the present system of things not to be arrogant, and to place their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who richly provides us with all the things (*pas*) we enjoy.

I have shown that the words “all sorts of” in 2:2, 4 are a manipulation of the text. NWT84 and NWT13 have also “all sorts of” in 6:10. This is not a manipulation of the Greek text, because this rendering is possible. However, all translations I am aware of have the rendering “all.” It gives good meaning to say that “love of money is the root of all injurious things.” This means that all examples of *pas* in 1 Timothy can be translated by “all,” the literal meaning of *pas*.

But what can we say about the statement in 2:4 that God’s will is that “all men shall be saved”? Everything that God wills will happen. So, would it not be better to use “all sorts of men” instead of “all men” so the reader would not think that Paul speaks about universal everlasting life, which is contradicted by the words of Jesus in Luke 20:35?

No, *it is God’s will that all men shall be saved!* How so? The meaning of the Greek word *σῶζω* is “to save, rescue; to preserve safe and unharmed, to cure, heal, restore to health, to save, preserve from being lost, to deliver from, set free from, in NT to rescue from unbelief, convert.” (Mounce) The footnote of 2:4 confirms some of these meanings:

**be saved:** The terms “to save” and “salvation” are sometimes used by Bible writers to convey the idea of deliverance from danger or destruction. (Ex 14:13, 14; Ac 27:20) Often, though, these terms refer to deliverance from sin. (Mt 1:21) Since death is caused by sin, people who are saved from sin have the hope of living forever.—Joh 3:16, 17; see study note on 1Ti 1:1.

The different meanings of *sōzō* show that there is a big difference between “being saved” and “receiving everlasting life.” In which sense did Paul use “save” in 2:4? The answer is found in verse 6, which states that Jesus is “a corresponding ransom for *all*.” Verse 6 is an explanation of verse 4. I quote again the excellent explanation of the ransom sacrifice in The Watchtower of March 15, 2000, page 3:

When Adam sinned and was sentenced to death, his as yet unborn offspring were still in his loins and therefore died with him. The perfect man Jesus, “the last Adam,” willingly did not produce a family. (1 Corinthians 15:45) He had unborn offspring in his loins when he died as a perfect human sacrifice. Therefore, it might be said that the potential human race within his loins died with him. *Jesus took Adam’s sinful, dying family as his own. He gave up the right to have a family of his own. By sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus repurchased all mankind descended from Adam so that they could become His family, making Him their “Eternal Father.”*—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

God wills that all men shall be saved, and this happened when Jesus died and bought *all* Adam’s descendants. His ransom sacrifice includes “*all men*” in the literal sense of the word, including the few who have sinned against the holy spirit. The ransom sacrifice will also be applied to these. But they will not get everlasting life because they have committed serious sins that are not caused by their inherited sin. All men will be saved by a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. At the end of the thousand years, they will be perfect and without sin.

Volume I of *Studies in the Scriptures*, (1886, Study IX, A 149) expressed this in an excellent way:

The Restitution Guaranteed by the Ransom—Not Everlasting Life, but a Trial for it, Secured by the Ransom.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:6 NWT84: “A CORRESPONDING RANSOM FOR *ALL*” (*PAS*)”

Why have both NWT84 of NWT13 the rendering “for all” and not “for all kinds” in 2:6? The word *pas* is an adjective. In many instances, an adjective modifies a substantive, as in the expressions “all (*pas*) men” where “all” modifies “men,” and in the expression “a yellow house,” where “yellow” modifies “house.”

An adjective can also be substantivized, which means that while it still is an adjective, it functions as a substantive. The word “elder” is an example. It is the comparative form of the adjective “old.” It stands alone without modifying a substantive, and it refers to a man who has responsibility in a Christian congregation.

The adjective *pas* in 1 Timothy 2:6 stands alone without modifying a substantive. It is substantivized and functions as a substantive. It is linguistically and

grammatically impossible to translate *pas* in this case by anything but the all-inclusive sense “*all*.” This is done by both NWT84 and NWT13. But in order to try to persuade the readers that the ransom sacrifice does not include all Adam’s descendants, there is a footnote in both versions saying:

**For all:** Or “*all sorts of people*,” —Mt 20:28; Joh 3:16; see study note on 1Ti 2:4.

*This footnote is a falsification of the Bible’s text because what it says is linguistically impossible. I have already pointed out that “all sorts of men” in 2:4 is linguistically possible. But it misleads readers into thinking the text says the opposite of what it actually means. Therefore, it is a deliberate distortion of the Bible’s text. The rendering “all sorts of people” in the footnote of 2:6 is not even linguistically possible because the adjective does not modify a noun. Therefore, it clearly is a deliberate distortion of the text.*

### 1 TIMOTHY 4:10 NWT84: “ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE”

The correct rendering of 1 Timothy 4:10 supports the above conclusion that all Adam’s descendants who have died because of inherited sin will get a resurrection:

<sup>10</sup> For to this end we are working hard and exerting ourselves, because we have rested our hope on a living God, who is a Savior of *all sorts of men* (*pas anthropōs*), especially of faithful ones.

According to the footnote to 1 Timothy 2:4 in NWT13, the “all sorts of men” who will be saved are persons who have repented and are believers. However, Paul says in 4:1 that Jesus is not only a savior for the faithful ones but also for wicked people. The apostle John supports this in 1 John 2:1, 2:

<sup>1</sup> My little children, I am writing YOU these things that YOU may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. <sup>2</sup> And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, *yet not for ours only but also for the whole world’s*.

Based on the words of Peter and John, and several passages that I will quote below, which show that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam’s descendants, 1 Timothy 4:10 is a theological rendering having the motive of persuading the readers that the ransom sacrifice does not include all Adam’s descendants.

*The situation is the same in 4:10 as in the other places with the adjective *pas*. The rendering “all sorts of men” is linguistically possible. But it is not what the text literally says; the translators’ theological views are imposed on it. This means that this rendering misleads the readers about the meaning of Paul’s words. Therefore, we must conclude that this is also a deliberate distortion of the text.*

## TITUS 2:11 “ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE” (NWT13) “ALL SORTS OF MEN” (NWT84)

I quote Titus 2:11-14 NWT84:

<sup>11</sup> For the undeserved kindness of God *which brings salvation to all sorts of men* (*pas anthropos*) has been manifested, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> *who gave himself for us that he might deliver us from every sort of lawlessness and cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own*, zealous for fine works.

Paul wrote to Titus, an anointed servant of God, who would be among the 144,000 ruling with Jesus Christ in heaven. The pronoun “us” in verse 14 must refer to Paul, Titus, and the other living anointed Christians. These were cleansed to become “a people peculiarly his [God’s] own.”

This people will experience salvation when they receive a heavenly resurrection. However, there are others who will also receive salvation, as expressed by the Greek words *pas anthropos* (“all men”). The contrast to “a people peculiarly his own” is not “all sorts of people” but “all people.” The anointed ones will experience salvation, but this will also “all men.”

What does it mean that God’s undeserved kindness “brings salvation to all men”? The same words are found in 1 Timothy 2:4, and because of the explanation of these words in 1 Timothy 2:6, that Jesus is “a corresponding ransom to all men,” the meaning is that Jesus bought *all* Adam’s descendants, and they have been saved as a part of his family, and all those who die because of Adam’s sin will be saved from death by a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus. (Hosea 13:14; Hebrews 5:7).

The conclusion of this section is that Jesus bought all Adam’s descendants when he died, and his corresponding ransom will be applied to all those who have died because of Adam’s sin, both righteous and unrighteous persons.

## TEXTS SHOWING THAT THE RANSOM SACRIFICE INCLUDES ALL ADAM’S DESCENDANTS

We have seen that the attempts by members of the Governing Body to demonstrate that the ransom sacrifice does not encompass all of Adam’s descendants have failed. I will now quote some scriptures in addition to 1 Timothy 2:4, 6, and 4:1, showing that the ransom sacrifice includes all of Adam’s descendants.

### HEBREWS 2:9 “HE MIGHT TASTE DEATH FOR EVERYONE”

I quote Hebrews 2:9 NWT13:

<sup>9</sup> But we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than angels, now crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, so that by God’s undeserved kindness he might taste death *for everyone* (*pas*).

The adjective *pas* functions as a substantive, just as in 1 Timothy 2:6. This means that the rendering “all sorts of people” is linguistically and grammatically impossible. Yet NWT84 has the footnote “or, ‘every kind of.’”

*This footnote is a falsification of the Bible’s text, as I have shown in connection with the footnote to 1 Timothy 2:6. Because the adjective *pas* stands alone and is substantivized, the rendering in the footnote of “every kind of” is linguistically impossible. Therefore, we must conclude that this is also a deliberate distortion of the text.*

To whom does “everyone” refer? I quote Hebrews 2:15, 2:5, and 3:1

<sup>15</sup> and [that] he might emancipate *all those* who for fear of death were subject to slavery all through their lives.

<sup>5</sup> For it is not to angels that he has subjected *the inhabited earth to come*, about which we are speaking.

<sup>1</sup> Consequently, holy brothers, partakers of the *heavenly calling*, consider the apostle and high priest whom we confess—Jesus.

The words of 2:15 show that Jesus tasted death for all descendants of Adam. These consist of two groups: those who will live on the coming inhabited earth, according to 2:5, and those who have the heavenly hope, according to 3:1. These scriptures also show that the ransom sacrifice includes all of Adam’s descendants. These are exactly the same statements as in 1 Timothy 2:4, 6.

## JOHN 1:29; 3:17, AND 1 JOHN 2:1, 2 “THE SIN OF THE WORLD”

I quote John 1:29 (above), 3:16, 17 (middle), and 1 John 2:1-2 (below):

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and he said: “See, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of *the world*!

<sup>16</sup> “For God loved *the world* so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have *everlasting life*. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world for him to judge *the world*, but for *the world* to be saved through him.

<sup>1</sup> My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. <sup>2</sup> And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for *the whole world’s*.

The catchword in these verses is “world” (*kosmos*). John 1:29 says that Jesus takes away the sin of the world, 3:17 says that the world will be saved through Jesus, and



1 John 2:2 says that Jesus is a propitiatory sacrifice for the whole world. What does this mean?

According to John 3:16-17, there is a distinction between salvation and eternal life. To attain everlasting life, one must exercise faith in Jesus Christ. But the world will be saved without any conditions.

Let us see what “the world” encompasses. I quote 1 John 2:15-17 (above), 3:13 (middle), and 5:19 (below):

<sup>15</sup> Do not be loving either *the world* or the things in *the world*. If anyone loves *the world*, the love of the Father is not in him; <sup>16</sup> because everything in *the world*—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one’s means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with *the world*. <sup>17</sup> Furthermore, *the world* is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.

<sup>13</sup> Do not marvel, brothers, that *the world* hates YOU.

<sup>19</sup> We know we originate with God, but *the whole world* is lying in the [power of the] wicked one.

The word “world” (*kosmos*) *refers to all the humans who are living on the earth*. The Devil rules the world, humans in the world do the actions of the Devil, and many humans in the world hate Christians. Yet, God loves all these humans, Jesus came to save all these humans, and he is a propitiatory sacrifice (*hilasmos*, “atoning sacrifice”) for each human being in the world.

*All humans will be saved, but only humans who exercise faith in Jesus Christ will get everlasting life.*

Only if we understand God’s plan through the ages for the restoration of all things can we see that this situation is not contradictory.

God’s purpose is to gather 144,000 persons who exercise faith in Jesus Christ as a heavenly government. These anointed Christians will rule together with Jesus during the thousand years when the earthly resurrection will take place. These persons must be gathered from the human family while they are imperfect sinners. However, God knows that these persons have a good heart condition, even though they are sinners. Therefore, he has called them and baptized them with holy spirit.

The eternal destiny of these 144,000 anointed descendants of Adam will be decided by God in the situation when they are imperfect sinners. The only other group whose destinies will be decided when they are imperfect humans are those who are permeated by wickedness, who practice sins that are not caused by their imperfection, which they inherited from Adam, but are caused by their own wickedness. There is no sacrifice for these sins against the holy spirit, and these people will be everlastingly annihilated.

All other humans, who are the great majority of Adam’s descendants, are loved by God, even though they do the actions of the Devil and hate Christians. God knows that these people of “the world” do bad actions because of their inherited sin.



Therefore, God does not count their sins against them as a basis for their eternal judgment.

Here, the ransom sacrifice comes into play. Jesus died as a propitiatory sacrifice for all these humans, and he bought them all. Therefore, all those who die because of Adam's sin will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, and they will gradually be led to perfection without inherited sin. And now, when they are in the same position as Adam, perfect and without sin, each one will get a personal chance to decide his or her eternal destiny. This will be based on the final test after the thousand years.

Now we can understand the verses about the world in the gospel of John and in his first letter. All the descendants of Adam who, without their decision, became a part of Satan's world, are loved by God. And because of the ransom sacrifice, they will be saved, which means that they are bought by Jesus and will receive a resurrection during the thousand years. But they will first get everlasting life when they exercise faith in Jesus Christ and pass the final test.

*Table 3.1 Expressions showing that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam's descendants*

<b>1 Timothy 2:4</b>	<b>all men will be saved.</b>
<b>1 Timothy 2:6</b>	<b>who gave himself as a corresponding ransom for all.</b>
<b>1 Timothy 4:10</b>	<b>God who is a savior of all men, especially the faithful ones.</b>
<b>Titus 2:11</b>	<b>which brings salvation to all men.</b>
<b>Hebrews 2:9</b>	<b>he might taste death for everyone.</b>
<b>John 1:29</b>	<b>who takes away the sin of the world.</b>
<b>John 3:17</b>	<b>for the world to be saved through him.</b>
<b>1 John 2:2</b>	<b>he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's.</b>

## THE RESURRECTION OF ALL THAT DIED BECAUSE OF INHERITED SIN

Jesus showed that the resurrection from the dead was taught in the law of Moses, as we see in Luke 20:37:

<sup>37</sup> But that the dead are raised up even Moses disclosed, in the account about the thornbush, when he calls Jehovah 'the God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob.'<sup>38</sup> He is a God, not of the dead, but of the living, for they are all living to him."

The point here is that the words of Moses that Jehovah *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, imply that they will be resurrected. In verse 38, the Greek word "him" is in the dative case, which expresses the idea that, from his point of view, the dead are living because they will receive a resurrection. The Hebrew Scriptures speak directly about a resurrection. I quote Isaiah 26:19 (above), Hosea 13:14 (top middle), Daniel 12:13 (bottom middle), and John 11:24 (below):

<sup>19</sup> “Your dead ones will live. A corpse of mine—they will rise up. Awake and cry out joyfully, YOU residents in the dust! For your dew is as the dew of mallows, and the earth itself will let even those impotent in death drop [in birth].

<sup>14</sup> “From the hand of She'ol I shall redeem them; from death I shall recover them. Where are your stings, O Death? Where is your destructiveness, O She'ol? Compassion itself will be concealed from my eyes.

<sup>13</sup> “And as for you yourself, go toward the end; and you will rest, but you will stand up for your lot at the end of the days.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him: “I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.”

All these passages demonstrate that the Jews before Jesus' time on earth believed in the resurrection from the dead. The words of Martha demonstrate that sincere Jews in the days of Jesus believed in a future “day” when the dead will be resurrected. This is the great Jubilee sabbath of a thousand years, as we later will see.

## DYING IN ADAM AND NOT DYING IN ADAM

Paul uses the words of “dying in Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15:22. According to the law of God, the penalty for sin is death. (Romans 6:23) The expression “dying in Adam” means that because humans have inherited sin from Adam, they die as a penalty for their sins. I have stressed, and I will stress, that every single individual who “die in Adam” will, because of the ransom sacrifice, receive a resurrection, become free from sin during a period of a thousand years, and get his or her final test as a perfect human without sin after the thousand years.

But there are some humans who have not “died in Adam.” To understand this, we must comprehend what the ransom sacrifice truly entails. In my book, *The Atonement Between God And Man*, pages 38-64, there is a detailed discussion of the different aspects of the ransom sacrifice.

The important point that the present members of the Governing Body do not understand is that to be a corresponding ransom, *Jesus bought both Adam and all his unborn descendants*. If Adam was not bought and included in the sacrifice, there was no *corresponding* sacrifice (*antilytron*) — like-for-like. But will Adam have the possibility of a resurrection? No. Why is this?

I use the following illustration: Every human being has, because of inherited sin, a debt of \$1,000,000. This was also the case of Adam. When Jesus died, he paid \$1,000,000 for Adam and for each one of his descendants. This means that Adam and all his descendants were debt-free.

However, Adam had incurred another debt of \$500,000 in addition to \$1,000,000. This debt stemmed from the fact that, although he was perfect, he violated Jehovah's law by exercising his free will. So, even though Jesus paid \$1,000,000 for Adam, he is not debt-free, and he will not receive a resurrection.

Jesus paid \$1,000,000 for each of Adam's descendants. However, some of them, probably only a few, have also incurred an additional debt of \$500,000. And even when Jesus has paid the price of \$1,000,000 for each of these persons, they are not

debt-free, and they cannot receive a resurrection. Jesus confirmed this with his words in Luke 20:35:

<sup>35</sup> but those who have been counted worthy of gaining that system of things and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Some will not be worthy of having a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus. But how have these descendants of Adam incurred this debt of \$500,000? In the Christian Greek Scriptures, this is referred to as sin against the holy spirit.

## THOSE WHO ARE NOT DYING IN ADAM

The debt of \$500,000 is incurred when a person is not sinning because he or she is imperfect and has inherited sin from Adam. But he or she is sinning because of his or her own pure wickedness that is practiced. Jesus spoke about this sin in Matthew 12:31, 32:

<sup>31</sup> “On this account I say to YOU, Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come.

**Any sin** will be forgiven except sin against the holy spirit. What is this sin? When we violate God’s law and do wrong actions, we are responsible for this. But the deepest reason for our sins is that we have inherited sin from Adam. The ransom sacrifice covers all the sins we commit due to our imperfection, because we have inherited sin.

Sins against the holy spirit are sins that a person commits because he, based on his personality, chooses to act in a wicked way and not because he has inherited sin. Essentially, these are sins people commit over time despite knowing they are wicked.<sup>12</sup> For sins that are not inherited from Adam, there is no ransom sacrifice.

Jesus gave an example of sin against the holy spirit in the verses before he spoke about this kind of sin, in Matthew 12:25-28:

<sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself comes to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> In the same way, if Satan expels Satan, he has become divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> Moreover, if I expel the demons by means of Be·el’ze·bub, by means of whom do YOUR sons expel them? This is why they will be judges of YOU.

Why were these Pharisees (not all Pharisees) guilty of the unforgivable sin? The sons (disciples) of these Pharisees were able to expel demons — evidently because the Devil wanted to show that these Pharisees were good people who served God.

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12. If you have sinned gravely, and you wonder if you have sinned against the holy spirit, you have not done this unforgivable sin. Just your consideration whether you have done this kind of sin is evidence that you have not sinned against the holy spirit. If you have done that, you had been hardened in your conscience, and you would not have cared to ask whether you have done an unforgivable sin.

When the disciples of the Pharisees expelled demons, the Pharisees magnified it and argued that it proved God supported them.

But when Jesus did miracles and expelled demons to a much higher degree, the Pharisees said that this was from Satan. Because their own servants expelled demons on a smaller scale than Jesus, these Pharisees knew that when they accused Jesus of standing in league with the Devil, this was a false accusation. The Pharisees were not tempted to say this because of their imperfection and inherited sin. But they said this because they were wicked, and Jesus threatened their position as leaders of the people. Their sins were not covered by the ransom sacrifice and were unforgivable.

In contrast with this, Jesus pointed to a situation of grave sin — of someone speaking against the Son of man — that would be covered by the ransom sacrifice. We read Matthew 11:21-24:

<sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Cho·ra'zin! Woe to you, Beth·sa'i·dal because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Si'don that took place in YOU, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> Consequently I say to YOU, It will be more endurable for Tyre and Si'don on Judgment Day than for YOU. <sup>23</sup> And you, Ca·per'na·um, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Ha'des you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sod'om, it would have remained until this very day. <sup>24</sup> Consequently I say to YOU people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sod'om on Judgment Day than for you.”

For long periods, Jesus had stayed in each of the three cities: Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. He had preached extensively about the kingdom of God and performed many miracles. Yet, the inhabitants spoke against him and did not believe in him. Nevertheless, Jesus said that they would receive a resurrection on Judgment Day—they had not sinned against the holy spirit and “they have been counted worthy of gaining that system of things.” (Luke 20:35)

When he died, Jesus paid \$1,000,000 for each one of Adam's descendants. All these who sin because of their inherited sin will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, the great Jubilee sabbath, except those who have incurred an extra debt of \$500,000 by sinning against the holy spirit.

A more detailed discussion can be found in my book, *The Atonement Between God and Man*, which is available for free download at [mybelovedreligion.no](http://mybelovedreligion.no).

## THOSE WHO ARE DYING IN ADAM

It is very important to distinguish between those who die in Adam and those who do not die in Adam. This is the key to understanding a great number of passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The resurrection of the dead is often associated with the ransom sacrifice. This is the case in the Hebrew Scriptures, in Hosea 13:14:

<sup>14</sup> “From the hand of She'ol I shall redeem (H: *pādā*, G: *ryomai*) them; from death I shall recover (H: *gā'al*, G: *lytrōsomai*) them. Where are your stings, O Death? Where is your destructiveness, O She'ol?

The Hebrew word *pā'dā* has the meaning “redeem, ransom, deliver,” and *gā'al* has the meaning “redeem, deliver.” (Kohlenberger/Mounce) The Greek word *ryomai* has the meaning “drag out of danger, rescue, save,” and *lytrosomai* has the meaning “to ransom, redeem, deliver.” (Mounce)

The two Greek words and the two Hebrew words refer to salvation or redemption. The Greek verb *lytrōsomai* (“to ransom”) is related to the Greek noun *antilytron* (“corresponding ransom”) in 1 Timothy 2:6. From what should people be saved or redeemed, according to Hosea 13:14? From *sheol* or from “death.” The same idea is found in the Christian Greek Scriptures, as we see in Hebrews 5:7:

<sup>7</sup> In the days of his flesh [Christ] offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able **to save** (σῶζο) **him out of death**, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear.

Jesus was saved from death by a resurrection. This is an important point, as I have already stressed. As I have mentioned several times, there is a difference between everlasting life and salvation. When the word “salvation” is used, it often refers to salvation from death by a resurrection. But the words “everlasting life” are either used with reference to the 144,000 who receive a heavenly resurrection or to those who pass the final test after the thousand years.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 15:21, 22: ALL WHO ARE DYING IN ADAM WILL BE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST**

Paul provides a detailed account of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. I will now discuss verses 21 and 22:

<sup>21</sup> For since death is through a man, resurrection of the dead is also through a man. <sup>22</sup> **For just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive.**

*In the 20th century, the Watchtower literature made some fine and correct comments on these verses. In the 21st century, the members of the Governing Body have rejected what the text really says, and they have attempted to lead readers to believe that the text says the opposite of what it really says.*

The Watchtower of March 15, 1965, page 167, made some fine points:

<sup>13</sup> Pointing further to that resemblance between Adam and Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul writes in his matchless chapter on the resurrection: “It is even so written: ‘The first man Adam became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. For since death is through a man, resurrection of the dead is also through a man. For just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive.”—1 Cor. 15:45, 21, 22.

<sup>14</sup> So, just as **all** of us humans had to depend upon the first man Adam for the earthly life that we enjoy today, **so now all of us who are dying have to depend, one and all of us, upon Jesus Christ**, “the last Adam.” There will not be another person on earth like Adam; so, if we desire to gain everlasting life on earth, we shall have to gain it through this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ.



The point here is that the words “will be made alive” refer to every single one of us who are dying because of Adam’s sin. The book *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1989), page 357, also makes a completely correct statement:

*Does 1 Corinthians 15:22 prove that all humans will eventually be saved?* It says: “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (RS) As shown in the surrounding verses, what is under discussion here is resurrection. **Who will be resurrected? All whose death is attributable to Adamic sin (vsee verse 21) but who have not also personally committed the willful transgressions set forth in Hebrews 10:26-29.** As Jesus was raised from Hades (Acts 2:31), so all others who are in Hades will be “made alive” by means of the resurrection. (Rev. 1:18; 20:13) Will all of these gain eternal salvation? That opportunity will be open to them, but not everyone will take hold of it, as is indicated at John 5:28, 29

**CORRECT STATEMENT:** *All humans whose death is attributable to Adam’s sin will get a resurrection. Only those who have sinned against the holy spirit will not get a resurrection.* (*Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1989)

The persons who wrote the words about the resurrection in The Watchtower of March 15, 1965, and in *Reasoning from the Scriptures* had a correct understanding of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But in the 21st century, false teachings regarding the ransom sacrifice and the resurrection have been introduced.

The Watchtower of December 2020, page 5, introduced a completely new interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22:

#### **THOSE WHO “WILL BE MADE ALIVE”**

<sup>13</sup> How could the death of one man bring life to millions? Paul gives a logical answer to that question. He draws a contrast between what Adam brought on mankind and what is possible through Christ. With regard to Adam, Paul wrote: “Death came through a man.” When Adam sinned, he brought disaster on himself and his descendants. We still feel the tragic effects of his disobedience. How different is the outcome made possible because God raised his Son! “Resurrection of the dead also comes through a man,” Jesus. “For just as in Adam all are dying,” Paul reasoned, “so also in the Christ all will be made alive.” —1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

<sup>14</sup> What did Paul mean when he said that “in Adam **all** are dying”? Paul had in mind Adam’s descendants, who inherited sin and imperfection from Adam and thus are in a dying condition. (Rom. 5:12) Adam is not among those who “will be made alive.” Christ’s ransom does not cover him, for Adam was a perfect man who willfully disobeyed God. The outcome for Adam is the same as what is ahead for those whom “the Son of man” will judge as “goats,” namely, “everlasting cutting-off.” —Matt. 25:31-33, 46; Heb. 5:9.

<sup>15</sup> Note that Paul said that “**in the Christ all** will be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15:22) Paul’s letter was written to anointed Christians in Corinth, who would be resurrected to life in heaven. Those Christians were “sanctified in union with Christ Jesus, called to be holy ones.” And Paul mentioned “those who have fallen asleep in **death in union with Christ.**” (1 Cor. 1:2; 15:18; 2 Cor. 5:17) In another inspired letter, Paul wrote that those “united with [Jesus] in the likeness of his death” will “be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.” (Rom. 6:3-5) **Jesus was raised as a spirit and went to heaven. So that**



*will be the outcome for all “in union with Christ,” that is, all spirit-anointed Christians.*  
(bold letters in the original.)

According to these comments, the words “in the Christ *all* will be made alive” do not refer to *all* who die in Adam, because of Adam’s sin, but to *all* the 144,000 with a heavenly hope. However, the anointed Christians have been born again and are new creations. Therefore, they do not “die in Adam,” i.e., they do not die because of inherited sin. But they die because they are sacrificing their lives in order to receive a heavenly resurrection.

Applying verse 22 to the anointed Christians clearly contradicts the meaning of the text and leads the readers astray. However, the interpretation of “all” would deteriorate even further, as we read the following in “Bible questions answered,” page 105:

**Misconception:** First Corinthians 15:22 teaches universal salvation by saying that “in the Christ all will be made alive.”

**Fact:** The context of this verse discusses the resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:12, 13, 20, 21, 35) *So the phrase “in the Christ all will be made alive” simply means that all who are resurrected receive this blessing through Jesus Christ.*—John 11:25<sup>13</sup>

The basic error in the Fact comments is the use of the relative pronoun “*who*.” Its use contradicts the assertion of the scripture. The words “all *who* are resurrected” show that not all who die in Adam will receive a resurrection. The correct rendering would be “all are resurrected and receive the blessing through Jesus Christ.” As we see in the parallels in Table 3.2 below, this is exactly what the text says.

*Here we see an example of the members of the Governing Body deliberately trying to mislead the readers into believing that the text says exactly the opposite of what it says. This was also the case with the previous comment that all refers the 144,000 who will rule with Jesus Christ in heaven.*

From the parallels in Table 3.2, we see clearly that all who die in Adam. will receive a resurrection.

Table 3.2 A comparison of the clauses in 1 Corinthians 15:22

<i>hōsper</i> (just as) <i>gar</i> (for) <i>en</i> (in) <i>tō Adam</i> (Adam) <i>pantes</i> (all ) <i>apothnēskousin</i> (will die)
<i>houtos</i> (so) <i>kai</i> (also) <i>en</i> (in) <i>tō Khristou</i> (Christ) <i>pantes</i> (all ) <i>zōopoiēthēsontai</i> (will be made alive)

We see there is a perfect parallel between the two clauses. In contrast to the claim of the members of the Governing Body, the text undisputably says that every person who dies because of inherited sin from Adam will get a resurrection. This accords

13. Quoted on July 23, 2025. <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/502016130#h=13:0-15:249>

with the words quoted from volume I of *Studies in the Scriptures*, (1886, Study IX, A 149)

The Restitution Guaranteed by the Ransom—Not Everlasting Life, but a Trial for it, Secured by the Ransom.

The resurrection of all who die in Adam does not give them everlasting life. But they will be resurrected and given life during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. They will gradually become perfect, and after the thousand years, they will undergo a final test to determine whether they are worthy of everlasting life.

The important point is that, as imperfect humans with inherited sin, they do not have a personal just and fair chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not in this world. Their inherited sin prevents them from such a personal chance. The ransom sacrifice will give them all the opportunity to quit their inherited sin, so they can, as perfect humans, have their just and fair chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not.

There are several passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures that support Paul's words, stating that all who die in Adam will have a resurrection.

## REVELATION 20:12, 13: ALL WHO ARE IN *HADĒS* AND THE SEA WILL GET A RESURRECTION

The Hebrew Scriptures state that those who die due to inherited sin go to *sheōl*, while the Christian Greek Scriptures indicate that those who die in Adam go to *hadēs*, the Greek word corresponding to *sheōl*. So, *hadēs* is the place where all those who die in Adam go, and all those who are in *hadēs* will receive a resurrection, as we read in Revelation 20:4, 12, 13:

<sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and there were those who sat down on them, and power of judging was given them. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed with the ax for the witness they bore to Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had worshiped neither the wild beast nor its image and who had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand. ***And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years.***

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds.<sup>13</sup> ***And the sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Ha'des gave up those dead in them,*** and they were judged individually according to their deeds.

Verse 4 shows that the 144,000 who will reign with Jesus in heaven experience the first resurrection and rule as kings for a thousand years. During these thousand years, the earthly resurrection will occur. Verse 13 shows that *hadēs* “will give up” the dead, which means that it will be emptied of dead ones. Because those who die in Adam come to *hadēs*, these words convey the same meaning as 1 Corinthians 15:22, “all who die in Adam will be made alive in Christ.”

In order to show how comprehensive the resurrection will be, verse 13 also says that “the sea” gave up those dead in it.” This includes all who died in the great flood in the days of Noah.

## JOHN 5:28, 29: ALL WHO ARE IN THE MEMORIAL TOMBS WILL GET A RESURRECTION

Revelation was given to John by Jesus, so Jesus is the source of the words that all the dead in *hadēs* will get a resurrection. Jesus also expressed this truth when he was on earth, as we read in John 5:28, 29:

<sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which *all (pas) those in the memorial tombs (mnemeion) will hear his voice<sup>29</sup> and come out*, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.

Jesus says that *all (pas)* the dead in the memorial tombs (*mnemeion*) will come out. The Greek word *mnemeion* contains an element of memory. However, Jesus spoke Hebrew and evidently used the word *qabār*, which is the normal word for “grave.” In a similar way, *mnemeion* is the normal Greek word for “grave.”

All those who are in the memorial tombs are those who have died because of Adam’s sin. And Jesus says the same as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:22 and John said in Revelation 20:13. *All (pas)* who have died because of Adam’s sin will get a resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

Table 3.3 Passages speaking about the resurrection for all

1 Timothy 2:4	all men will be saved.
1 Timothy 2:6	who gave himself as a corresponding ransom for all.
1 Timothy 4:10	God who is a savior of all men, especially the faithful ones.
Titus 2:11	which brings salvation to all men.
Hebrews 2:9	he might taste death for everyone.
John 1:29	who takes away the sin of the world.
John 3:17	For the world to be saved through him.
1 John 2:2	he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world’s.
1 Corinthians 15:22	All who die because of Adam’s sin will be resurrected,
Revelation 20:13	All who die because of Adam’s sin come to <i>hadēs</i> . All the dead in <i>hadēs</i> will get a resurrection.
John 5:28, 29	All who die because of Adam are put in memorial tombs, and Jesus says that all who are in the memorial tombs will get a resurrection.

*In view of all the passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures saying that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam’s descendants, and that all who die because of Adam’s sin will be resurrected, it is completely unbelievable*

14. The words «a resurrection of life» and «a resurrection of judgment» refer to the final destiny of those who will be resurrected. A detailed discussion of this is found in my article, “The Governing Body’s new view of the resurrection is contradicted by the Scriptures.” <https://mybelovedreligion.no/2022/08/26/the-governing-body-s-new-view-of-the-resurrection-is-contradicted-by-the-scriptures/>

*that the present members of the Governing Body deny this. Therefore, they can be viewed as false teachers.*

## UNDERSTANDING THE SACRED SECRET OF GOD

*The sacred secret has three aspects: 1) that all things as they were before the introduction of sin will be restored, 2) that Jesus bought Adam and all his descendants with his ransom sacrifice, and 3) that some Christians will be anointed with holy spirit and receive heavenly life.*

*Giving 144,000 humans the heavenly calling and letting them serve as priests is an important part of God's plan through the ages for a restoration of all things. Among these are individuals who have committed various sins and faced numerous problems. Therefore, they can fully understand each person's problems on Judgment Day and provide the right help.*

I start this discussion with the quotation of the first prophecy, in Genesis 3:15:

<sup>15</sup> And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.”

I have already demonstrated that God's purpose or plan will be carried out in stages through the ages. Glimpses of God's plan were given by the prophets. However, throughout the four thousand years that followed God's first prophecy, his plan remained hidden, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:9:

<sup>9</sup> and should make men see how the sacred secret is administered which has from the indefinite past been hidden in God, who created all things.

In what follows, I will discuss different places where the Greek word *mysterion* (“sacred secret”) occurs in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

### THE FIRST ASPECT OF THE SACRED SECRET: THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

The apostle Peter was aware of the fact that the sacred secret had been hidden for a long time. First Peter 1:3, 4 speaks about “a living hope through the resurrection” and about an inheritance “in the heavens for you.” On this background, we read verses 10-12:

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this very salvation a diligent inquiry and a careful search were made by the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for YOU. <sup>11</sup> They kept on investigating what *particular season* (*kairos*, “*appointed time*”) or what sort of [season] [RJF: they were searching into which or what kind of appointed time] *the spirit in them*

*was indicating concerning Christ when it was bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these.*<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that, not to themselves, but to YOU, they were ministering the things that have now been announced to YOU through those who have declared the good news to YOU with holy spirit sent forth from heaven. *Into these very things angels are desiring to peer.*

The prophets knew that, within God's plan through the ages, which pointed to a restoration of all things, there were particular appointed times (*kairos*). And they sought to learn more about these appointed times, including what would happen during them. Even the angels in heaven did not understand the stages of God's plan. However, they desired to learn more about God's purpose.

Peter's words align with Paul's words in Ephesians 3:9, which state that the plan of God had been hidden from "the beginning of the ages." But it had now been revealed through the congregation.

God's plan for a restoration of all things was one aspect of the sacred secret, as we see in Ephesians 1:9-10:

<sup>9</sup> in that he made known to us *the sacred secret* of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself<sup>10</sup> for an administration at the full limit of the appointed times, namely, *to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.* [Yes,] in him.

I demonstrated in chapter 2 that the restoration of all things means to gather again all things in heaven and on earth in the Christ. And according to verse 9, this is one aspect of the sacred secret.

## THE SECOND ASPECT OF THE SACRED SECRET: THE RANSOM SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

God's purpose of populating the earth with perfect descendants of Adam who will live forever was no secret. This was expressed by God's words to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28:

<sup>28</sup> Further, God blessed them and God said to them: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth."

When we study the use of the word *mysterion* ("sacred secret") in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we see that this sacred secret had never been revealed before and that it has three distinct aspects.

It was impossible to know who the seed on the woman was without a revelation from God. However, God-fearing humans who knew of this prophecy would understand that this seed would provide some form of salvation for the human family by crushing the snake's head. But who the seed of the woman was, how the snake's head would be crushed, and when this would happen was a secret.

The prophets, and even the angels, were interested in understanding this situation, and I quote 1 Peter 1:11 once more:



<sup>11</sup> They kept on *investigating what particular season* (*kairos*, “*appointed time*”) or what sort of [season] [R]JF: they were searching into which or what kind of appointed time] the spirit in them was indicating concerning Christ when it was bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are some glimpses of God’s plan of salvation. The verse above states that the prophet sought to understand the time when the savior would come, the suffering of the savior, and the blessings that would follow. One example related to suffering is Isaiah 53:1-12 about the servant of Jehovah:

<sup>1</sup> Who has put faith in the thing heard by us? And as for the arm of Jehovah, to whom has it been revealed? <sup>2</sup> And he will come up like a twig before one, and like a root out of waterless land. No stately form does he have, nor any splendor; and when we shall see him, there is not the appearance so that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and was avoided by men, a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness. And there was as if the concealing of one’s face from us. He was despised, and we held him as of no account. <sup>4</sup> Truly our sicknesses were what he himself carried; and as for our pains, he bore them. But we ourselves accounted him as plagued, stricken by God and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was being pierced for our transgression; he was being crushed for our errors. The chastisement meant for our peace was upon him, and because of his wounds there has been a healing for us. <sup>6</sup> Like sheep we have all of us wandered about; it was each one to his own way that we have turned; and Jehovah himself has caused the error of us all to meet up with that one. <sup>7</sup> He was hard pressed, and he was letting himself be afflicted; yet he would not open his mouth. He was being brought just like a sheep to the slaughtering; and like a ewe that before her shearers has become mute, he also would not open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> Because of restraint and of judgment he was taken away; and who will concern himself even with [the details of] his generation? For he was severed from the land of the living ones. Because of the transgression of my people he had the stroke. <sup>9</sup> And he will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death, despite the fact that he had done no violence and there was no deception in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup> But Jehovah himself took delight in crushing him; he made him sick. If you will set his soul as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong [his] days, and in his hand what is the delight of Jehovah will succeed. <sup>11</sup> Because of the trouble of his soul he will see, he will be satisfied. By means of his knowledge the righteous one, my servant, will bring a righteous standing to many people; and their errors he himself will bear. <sup>12</sup> For that reason I shall deal him a portion among the many, and it will be with the mighty ones that he will apportion the spoil, due to the fact that he poured out his soul to the very death, and it was with the transgressors that he was counted in; and he himself carried the very sin of many people, and for the transgressors he proceeded to interpose.

Prophets and angels read these words and wanted to understand how they would be fulfilled. But it was not possible in the age of the prophets. However, the Christian age started in 29 CE, when Jesus began to preach the good news of the kingdom, and Paul wrote in Romans 16:25 (above) and Colossians 2:2 (below):

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who can make YOU firm in accord with the good news I declare and the preaching of *Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation of *the sacred secret* which has been kept in silence for long-lasting times (*aiōn*) [R]JF: through the appointed times of the ages].

<sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be comforted, that they may be harmoniously joined together in love and with a view to all the riches of the full assurance of [their] understanding, with a view to *an accurate knowledge of the sacred secret of God, namely, Christ.*

The sacred secret is identified as Jesus Christ. The noun *aiōn* (“age”) is used in Romans 16:25, and Paul says that the sacred secret that turned out to be Jesus Christ had been “kept in silence” and had not been known “through the appointed times of the ages.” This supports the view that God’s plan for a restoration of all things gradually unfolds and is revealed in different ages.

The sacred secret that the seed of the woman was the perfect man Jesus Christ, and that he gave his life as a ransom sacrifice and bought Adam and all his descendants, was now revealed.

## THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE SACRED SECRET: THE HEAVENLY CALLING FOR ANOINTED CHRISTIANS

The third aspect of the sacred secret is written in Ephesians 1:9-11 (above), 3:2-6 (middle), and 5:32 (below):

<sup>9</sup> in that *he made known to us the sacred secret* of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself <sup>10</sup> *for an administration* at the full limit of the appointed times, namely, *to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.* [Yes,] in him, <sup>11</sup> in union with whom we were also assigned as heirs, in that *we were foreordained according to the purpose* (*pothesis*, RJB: “plan”) of him who operates all things according to the way his will counsels.

<sup>2</sup> if, really, YOU have heard about the stewardship of the undeserved kindness of God that was given me with YOU in view, <sup>3</sup> that by way of a revelation *the sacred secret* was made known to me, just as I wrote previously in brief. <sup>4</sup> In the face of this YOU, when YOU read this, can realize the comprehension I have in *the sacred secret* of the Christ. <sup>5</sup> *In other generations this [secret] was not made known to the sons of men* as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by spirit, <sup>6</sup> namely, *that people of the nations should be joint heirs and fellow members of the body and partakers with us of the promise in union with Christ Jesus through the good news.*

<sup>32</sup> *This sacred secret* is great. Now I am speaking with respect to *Christ and the congregation.*

What did Paul mean when he said that the sacred secret was “an administration... to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth?” The ancient Jews believed in a resurrection from the dead. This is written in Hosea 13:14, Isaiah 26:19, and Daniel 12:13. When Lazarus, the brother of Martha died, she expressed that he would rise “in the resurrection on the last day.”

The Jews expected that they would receive their lives back as humans on the earth. The idea that some humans would receive spirit bodies in the resurrection and be taken up to heaven is not written anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures. And this was not a view that God-fearing Jews who lived before our common era had.

It is true that Isaiah 65:17 speaks about new heavens and a new earth. But what this meant was a secret. And what is mentioned in Isaiah 65:18-25, after the words

about new heavens and a new earth, refers to the earth and the paradise in Eden, and not to heaven.

According to the quotation in Ephesians 1:9-11, the sacred secret to gather all things together in heaven meant that the Ephesians were heirs of the heavenly kingdom. They were as a group foreordained to become a part of the new heavens as a part of God's plan. But this had previously been hidden. The words of 3:5 show that the Ephesians were "joint heirs and fellow members of the body and partakers with us of the promise in union with Christ Jesus," and 5:32 has the words "the congregation." And "the congregation" was all Christians in this Christian age with a heavenly calling.

*One side of the sacred secret that had been hidden but was now revealed was that a group of Christians had the hope of a resurrection to heaven, not a resurrection on the new earth.*<sup>15</sup>

## THE DIVERSIFIED WISDOM OF GOD MADE KNOWN THROUGH THE CONGREGATION

In order to understand the background of God's sacred secret, I quote Ephesians 3:8-11 one time more:

<sup>8</sup> To me, a man less than the least of all holy ones, this undeserved kindness was given, that I should declare to the nations the good news about the unfathomable riches of the Christ <sup>9</sup> and should make men see *how the sacred secret is administered which has from the indefinite past* [RJF: from the beginning of the ages] *been hidden in God*, who created all things. <sup>10</sup> [This was] to the end that now to the governments and the authorities in the heavenly places *there might be made known through the congregation the greatly diversified wisdom of God*, <sup>11</sup> according to *the eternal (aiōn) purpose (prothesis)* [RJF: the plan throughout the ages] *that he formed* in connection with the Christ, Jesus our Lord.

There are two ways God's diversified wisdom can be made known through the congregation:

- 1) The very existence of the congregation (all the anointed Christians) as an important part of God's plan reveals his wisdom.
- 2) How the plan of God has unfolded, and some parts of how it will unfold have been revealed to the congregation. The members of the congregation have revealed this knowledge to others.

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15. A detailed discussion of the sacred secret is found on the article "The sacred secret and God's administration." (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/10/02/the-sacred-secret-and-gods-administration-2/>)

## THE CONGREGATION PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

God's purpose in creating the earth was to make it a paradise filled with perfect humans who would never die. This purpose was temporarily thwarted by the rebellion of Satan, the Devil. But in time, the purpose of God will be fulfilled. Because God's purpose was related to humans on earth, one may wonder why God would grant some human beings life in heaven.

When we are considering this question, I will demonstrate that giving some humans life in heaven was not an exception to God's plan. But it was an important part of God's plan. We see this in Ephesians 1:3, 4 (above) and 1:11 (below):

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in union with Christ, <sup>3</sup> just as *he chose us in union with him before the founding of the world*, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love.

<sup>11</sup> in union with whom we were also assigned as heirs, in that *we were foreordained* (*proorizō*) *according to the purpose* (*prothesis*, RJF: "plan") of him who operates all things according to the way his will counsels.

Let us analyze these verses. What does "the founding of the world" refer to? We find an answer in Luke 11:49-51:

<sup>49</sup> On this account the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send forth to them prophets and apostles, and they will kill and persecute some of them, <sup>50</sup> so that the blood of all the prophets spilled *from the founding* (*katabolē*) *of the world* may be required from this generation, <sup>51</sup> *from the blood of Abel* down to the blood of Zech'ar'iah, who was slain between the altar and the house.' Yes, I tell YOU, it will be required from this generation.

The Greek word *katabolē* has the meaning "a casting down; laying the foundation, foundation; beginning, commencement; conception in the womb." (Mounce) In Hebrews 11:11, the word is used of Sarah conceiving a child. Thus, "the founding of the world" does not refer to the creation of the earth and the universe. But it refers to the first time Eve conceived a child who could be ransomed and would become the foundation of the human family, which was destined for restoration. This person was Abel.

This means that after Adam and Eve sinned, but before Abel was born, God "chose" or "foreordained" a group of persons with a heavenly calling whom Paul addressed as "we" and "us." A common misunderstanding here is that the destiny of every human is predetermined by God before they are born. But Revelation 22:17 says:

<sup>17</sup> And the spirit and the bride keep on saying: "Come!" And let anyone hearing say: "Come!" And let anyone thirsting come; let *anyone that wishes* (*thelō*) take life's water free.

The verb *thelō* has the meaning "to exercise the will, properly by an unimpassioned operation; to be willing." (Mounce) The use of this verb indicates that each human being has free will and can decide whether to serve God or not.

But what is the meaning of the words “he chose us” and “we were foreordained”? The simple answer is that, after Adam and Eve sinned, God decided that a particular group of humans would receive heavenly life and play an important role in the restoration of all things. So, God had decided that there should be a group who would receive heavenly life. However, he had not decided which individuals should be part of this group.

## THE ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION IN GOD’S PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

In the next chapter, I will demonstrate that Judgment Day is one thousand years long. Some will survive the great tribulation immediately before the start of Judgment Day, and others will be resurrected during Judgment Day.

The penalty for sin is death. This means that when a person dies because of inherited sin, he or she has paid for all his or her sins. Therefore, no human being will on Judgment Day be judged for any sin he or she committed before his or her death.

The purpose of Judgment Day is that everyone will gradually improve physically and mentally during the thousand years, to the point where all humans living at the end of the thousand years will be perfect, just as Adam was before he sinned.

However, those who survive the great tribulation and those who are resurrected are still imperfect and have inherited sin. They have the same personality as they had before their death. Some have been criminals, others have been drug addicts, and others have been homosexuals. Jesus showed that, due to their background, it will be much harder for some people than for others to change their personality on Judgment Day.

Just as a drug addict today needs the help of a number of professionals and of family and friends for a successful withdrawal, those who will be present on judgment day also need the help of “professionals.” These “professionals” are the members of “the congregation,” those with the heavenly calling. How so?

A significant part of God’s plan was revealed to Paul and other early Christian elders in the first century. This revelation was that all who desired to serve God at that time would receive eternal life in heaven. The individual members were taught these things by the Christian elders. Different aspects of God’s purpose, including why he chose a group with the heavenly calling, were also revealed.

But it was first at the close of the 1st century CE that the full purpose of God in calling individuals to heavenly life was revealed — in the book of Revelation. I quote Revelation 7:4 (above) and 20:4, 6 (below):

<sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel:

<sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and there were those who sat down on them, *and power of judging was given them.* Yes, I saw the souls of those executed with the ax for the witness they bore to Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had worshiped neither the wild



beast nor its image and who had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand. And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years.

<sup>6</sup> Happy and holy is *anyone having part in the first resurrection*; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be *priests* of God and of the Christ, and will *rule as kings* with him for the thousand years.

The exact number of persons with the heavenly calling was now revealed to be 144,000. They were said to be “of every tribe of the sons of Israel.” This means that they were members of spiritual Israel (Romans 9:6-8). The Christians in the 1st century CE, with the collective designation “the congregation,” were spiritual Israel.

Those who would have a part in the first resurrection would be kings, judges, and priests. I will concentrate on the last term, namely, “priests.” The duty of the priests in Israel was to teach the people the law of God. The priests were also considered to be “doctors”; they were responsible for diagnosing illnesses and prescribing medicine.

The members of the heavenly government who are “priests” are “the professionals” who can help all the imperfect humans, some with really bad personalities, to progress toward physical and spiritual perfection at the end of the thousand years.

I use 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 as an example:

<sup>9</sup> What! Do YOU not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God’s kingdom.<sup>11</sup> *And yet that is what some of YOU were. But YOU have been washed clean*, but YOU have been sanctified, but YOU have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God.

If a woman asks me to help her with a mental health issue, I will try to understand the underlying problem and offer her sound advice. However, I was born male, and I have spent many years living as a man. Therefore, I cannot fully understand what it means to be a woman and to think like a woman.

If a friend of mine loses a child in death, I can comfort him and show him love and empathy. But I cannot fully understand how it feels to lose a child of your own flesh and blood, because I have never experienced that.

I understand that it is extremely difficult for a drug addict to quit his or her addiction. But I cannot fully understand what he or she is going through on the road to becoming clean, because I have never been addicted to drugs. And similarly with homosexuality. I was attracted to my wife, and I find it completely impossible to understand how a man can be attracted to other men.

And here we see the important point that a person who has struggled with quitting his drug addiction and succeeded can be of much better help to a drug addict than I can. And a man who has been attracted to men and has practiced homosexual actions, but has changed his behavior, can be of much better help for a person who wants to quit his homosexuality than I can be.



We note the importance of the quotation above. Paul wrote his letter to anointed Christians with the heavenly calling. He mentions several serious sins, including homosexual actions. Then he says: “And yet that is what some of YOU were. But YOU have been washed clean.” The members of the heavenly government who are priests have all kinds of sinful experiences as human beings. Some were women and others are men. Some have been criminals, and others have always followed the law. Some have been homosexuals, and others have practiced sexual immorality with persons of the opposite sex. Some have been rich, and others have been poor.

Do we now understand the plan of God to gather 144,000 persons who have been humans but who are now serving as priests in the heavenly government? Some persons who are present on Judgment Day are so degenerated that they need “professionals” to help them change their personalities, just as drug addicts need “professional” to help them quit their habit.

Such “professionals” will not be present on earth during the thousand-year-long Judgment Day because all humans are imperfect. But such “professionals” exist in the heavenly government, because some members of the heavenly government will have experienced the same situations as the humans on earth, and they can fully understand the situation of each one of the imperfect humans on earth and give the needed help.

The members of the heavenly government who serve as priests, i.e., as teachers and doctors, will not return to earth. However, they will help humans on earth to gradually progress toward perfection in the way Jehovah has taught them. This is expressed in Revelation 21:1-4:

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. <sup>2</sup> I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”

New Jerusalem is the bride of Jesus Christ, and it consists of 144,000 spirit persons. This city will “come down” to the earth, which means that the members of New Jerusalem will act for the benefit of those who live on the earth. God will act through each member of New Jerusalem. And the help the humans on earth will receive is expressed by the words that “he will wipe out every tear from their eyes.”

Now we understand the reason why God, as an important part of his plan for the restoration of all things, will give 144,000 humans heavenly life.

*The diversified wisdom of God is revealed through the congregation because:*

*1) Parts of God's plan for the restoration of all things were revealed to the congregation in the 1st century CE, and its members preached this plan to others.*

- 2) *The congregation comprises 144,000 members with diverse backgrounds and experiences. During the thousand-year-long Judgment Day, they will, from their position in heaven, help persons on earth who struggle with their imperfection in a similar way as some of this congregation previously struggled when they were human beings on earth.*

## EVENTS OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR LONG JUDGMENT DAY

*When we consider all the information in the Bible regarding the restoration of all things, we see the following scenario of the thousand-year reign of Jesus: The great crowd will survive the great tribulation, and God will use them to cultivate the earth and prepare everything for the resurrection.*

*All who have died because of inherited sin will be resurrected.*

*A great work of educating those who have survived and those who are resurrected will occur.*

*The ransom sacrifice will be applied to everyone, and during the thousand years, all those living will gradually proceed toward physical and spiritual perfection.*

*At the end of the thousand years, the restoration will be completed. All humans are perfect, and they will decide whether to follow the Devil or to serve Jehovah.*

*The important question is whether there are passages in the Bible that support each of these points. The answer is yes, and these passages will be discussed below.*

## THE GREAT CROWD WILL SURVIVE THE GREAT TRIBULATION

In his prophecy about his presence, Jesus mentions the great tribulation and says that some flesh will be saved from this tribulation. (Matthew 24:22) Those who will be saved are mentioned in Revelation chapter 7, and I quote verses 9, 10, 13, 14:

<sup>9</sup>After these things I saw, and, look! *a great crowd, which no man was able to number*, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands.<sup>10</sup> And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: “Salvation [we owe] to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

<sup>13</sup> And in response one of the elders said to me: “These who are dressed in the white robes, who are they and where did they come from?”<sup>14</sup> So right away I said to him: “My lord,

you are the one that knows.” And he said to me: “*These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation*, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Regarding Josef, Acts 7:9, 10, says that God “delivered him out of all his tribulations,” which means that he survived his tribulations. This shows that the expression that “the great crowd *comes out of the great tribulation* means that they will survive the tribulation.

The great crowd is the only group of people who have dedicated their lives to God according to the instructions in the Bible. If other persons who have not changed their lives according to the Bible were to survive, they would create great problems for the servants of God. Therefore, they must die in the great tribulation and receive a resurrection during the thousand years. The members of the great crowd are the only ones who will survive the great tribulation.

## ALL WHO DIE BECAUSE OF INHERITED SIN WILL RECEIVE A RESURRECTION

With his ransom sacrifice, Jesus bought Adam and all his descendants. This means that the ransom sacrifice will be applied to all Adam’s descendants without any conditions, such as faith and obedience. The ransom sacrifice will be applied to the 144,000 members of the heavenly government as well. On the basis of this sacrifice, they will be declared righteous. Then they will be baptized with holy spirit to become new creations. When they die, they will get a heavenly resurrection.

The ransom sacrifice will be applied to all other Adam’s descendants. But some of them have sinned against the holy spirit, and there is no sacrifice for such sins. This means that even though Jesus also bought those who sin against the holy spirit, they will not get a resurrection. All other Adam’s descendants will come out of their graves by a resurrection because of the ransom sacrifice. The following scriptures confirm this: John 5:28, 29 (above) and 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22 (middle), and Acts 24:15 (below):

<sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which *all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice* <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.

<sup>21</sup> For since death is through a man, resurrection of the dead is also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For just as in Adam all are dying, so also *in the Christ all will be made alive*.

<sup>15</sup> and I have hope toward God, which hope these [men] themselves also entertain, that there is going to be *a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous*.

All who “die in Adam” are all Adam’s descendants who die because of inherited sin. These do not include those who die because they have sinned against the holy spirit. From these scriptures, it is clear that all Adam’s descendants, both righteous and unrighteous, will be resurrected, except those who have sinned against the holy spirit.

## THE PUNISHMENT FOR ANY KIND OF SIN IS DEATH

Judgment Day is identical with the thousand-year reign of Jesus. A common view is that God has “written down” all the sins that each human has committed, and when they are resurrected, they are sentenced on the basis of all the sins they have committed.

This viewpoint is patently absurd. Humans have inherited sin, and to give them an adverse sentence for something they have inherited and are not fully responsible for violates the righteousness of God. Moreover, resurrecting people just to give them adverse sentences is not reasonable, and it violates God’s love and God’s wisdom.

God said that Adam and Eve should have children, and their descendants would populate the whole earth, making it into a paradise. (Genesis 1:28) The only condition was that they followed the laws of God. If they violated God’s law, the result would be as we read in Genesis 2:16, 17:

<sup>16</sup> And Jehovah God also laid this command upon the man: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. <sup>17</sup> But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die.

As a result of his sin Adam died when he was 930 years old. (Genesis 5:5) Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures, the only punishment for sin that is mentioned is death. This is confirmed by Paul in Romans 6:7:

<sup>7</sup> **For** he who has died has been acquitted (*dikaioō*) from [his] sin.

In order to understand these words, I make the following comparison of five clauses:

**For** until the Law sin was in the world (Romans 5:13)

**For** [the death] that he died, he died with reference to sin once for all time. (Romans 6:10)

**For** he who has died has been acquitted (*dikaioō*) from [his] sin. (Romans 6:7)

**For** sin must not be master over YOU. (Romans 6:14)

**For** the wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Each of these sentences begins with the Greek word *gar*, meaning “for.” Paul’s style is that when he starts a clause with *gar*, he is making a statement of fact. The important facts he expresses in our context are that “the wages sin pays is death” (6:23) and “For he who has died has been acquitted (*dikaioō*) from [his] sin.” (6:7)

We have the same expressions as in the situation with Adam; the punishment for sin is death. We note that the word “sin” in both verses is indefinite. Therefore, the reference is not to one or several particular sins but to sin in general, to any sin.

(Matthew 12:31) Thus, the pay for any sin is death, and death acquits a person from all his or her sins.

The Greek word *dikaioō* has the meaning “to hold as guiltless, to accept as righteous, to justify.” (Mounce) We can illustrate its meaning by reading Acts 13:39

<sup>39</sup> and that from all the things from which YOU could not be **declared guiltless** (*dikaioō*) by means of the law of Moses, everyone who believes is **declared guiltless** (*dikaioō*) by means of this One.

The verse shows that by the word of God a person can be declared guiltless in this life. From God’s point of view, this person has no sin. So, by way of comparison:

*By God’s word, a person will be declared guiltless (dikaioō) — Jesus has atoned for his or her sins.*

*By experiencing death, a person has received the payment for sin and is declared guiltless (dikaioō) — he or she has atoned for his or her sins by death.*

Please note that the death of a person atones for all the sins he or she committed before his or her death. If Adam had a resurrection after his death, he could not be sentenced a second time for his sins. And in a similar way, when a person dies and receives a resurrection, he or she cannot be sentenced a second time for his or her sins before his or her death.

However, while a person who experiences a resurrection is acquitted of their past sins and, at that moment, is guiltless, they retain the same personality as before their death. This means that after a short time, he or she will sin again. Therefore, there is still a need for the ransom sacrifice. And this sacrifice will be applied to all those who get a resurrection, until all have become perfect and without sin at the end of the thousand years of Judgement Day.

## THEIR PREVIOUS SINS WILL INFLUENCE THE RESURRECTED ONES ON JUDGEMENT DAY

This heading may seem to contradict the conclusion of the previous section. But this is not the case. If dying as a punishment for sin and atoning for previous sins would lead to everlasting life, there would be no need for the ransom sacrifice and the thousand-year-long Judgment Day. The way one’s previous sins will influence a person on Judgment Day is very important. According to Matthew 12:36, 37, Jesus said:

<sup>36</sup> I tell YOU that every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day; <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be declared righteous, and by your words you will be condemned.”

These words indicate that people who live in this old system of things are responsible for their actions, though this does not determine their eternal destiny. How will those who get a resurrection on Judgment Day render an account for every unprofitable word they speak?



After Jesus had uttered the words about rendering an account for unprofitable words, he said, according to Matthew 12:41, 42:

<sup>41</sup> Men of Nin'e·veh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it; because they repented at what Jo'nah preached, but, look! something more than Jo'nah is here. <sup>42</sup> The queen of the south will be raised up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn (*katakrinō*) it; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Sol'o·mon, but, look! something more than Sol'o·mon is here.

The words «this generation» (this wicked and adulterous generation, verse 39) refer to the whole Jewish population in the days of Jesus. The people of this wicked and adulterous generation will be resurrected on Judgment Day together with the inhabitants of Nineveh. The Greek word *katakrinō* has the meaning, “condemn, pass judgment on” (UBS lexicon)

The inhabitants of Nineveh listened to Jonah and believed in Jehovah. The words they spoke in connection with this were positive. There were only 120 believers on the day of Pentecost in the year 33. So, this wicked and adulterous generation refused to believe in Jesus and the preaching about the kingdom of God. The words they spoke against Jesus and his followers were negative.

But in which sense will the inhabitants of Nineveh “condemn” this wicked and adulterous generation? The words Jesus spoke in a similar situation help us understand the meaning. I quote Matthew 11:20-24:

<sup>20</sup> Then he started to reproach (*oneidizō*) the cities in which most of his powerful works had taken place, because they did not repent: <sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Cho·ra·zin! Woe to you, Beth·sa·i·dal because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Si'don that took place in YOU, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> Consequently I say to YOU, *It will be more endurable (anektos) for Tyre and Si'don on Judgment Day than for YOU.* <sup>23</sup> And you, Ca·per·na·um, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Ha'des you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sod'om, it would have remained until this very day. <sup>24</sup> Consequently I say to YOU people, *It will be more endurable (anektos) for the land of Sod'om on Judgment Day than for you.*”

The inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida were a part of the “wicked and adulterous generation” that would have a resurrection on Judgment Day. Jesus started “to reproach (*oneidizō*) these cities.” The Greek word *oneidizō* has the meaning “reproach, denounce, insult.” (UBS lexicon) This means that *oneidizō* (reproach) has about the same meaning as *katakrinō* (“condemn”).

The issue is what it means that the inhabitants of Nineveh **condemned** the people of this wicked and adulterous generation. We find the answer in what it meant when Jesus **reproached** the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The condemnation or reproach is expressed by the words that *it will be more endurable for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom than for the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida on Judgment Day.*

Now we are approaching an understanding of the meaning of the saying that humans in this old system of things must render an account for every unprofitable

word on Judgment Day. The words we speak reveal our preferences, our attitudes, and our personalities. When we speak unprofitable words, whether we lie or support actions that violate the laws of God, we cannot be judged for these actions on Judgment Day, because our death will have cancelled all our sins. However, a person is resurrected with the same personality and conscience that he or she had before death, and this will influence the person in a good or bad way on Judgment Day.

To fully understand this, I quote Matthew 12:36, 37 one time more:

<sup>36</sup> I tell YOU that every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day; <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be declared righteous, and by your words you will be condemned.”

James 3:2 says: “If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man.” All of us have spoken “unprofitable words” on many occasions, but these are petty sins. So why are our unprofitable words so serious that we must render an account on Judgment Day?

The unprofitable words in themselves are not what is important, but rather what is behind these words. Jesus shows this, according to Matthew 15:18

<sup>18</sup> However, the things proceeding out of the mouth come out of the heart, and those things defile a man. <sup>19</sup> For example, out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies. <sup>20</sup> These are the things defiling a man; but to take a meal with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the heart represents a man’s conscience and personality. Paul speaks of “the motives in men’s hearts. (1 Corinthians 4:5) As Jesus showed, what a person says reveals what is in the heart. This also goes the opposite way; what a person speaks and does influences his or her heart.

During our lives in this old system of things, we develop a personality that is deeply connected to our hearts. Our words can show that we have “an unreceptive heart” (Acts 28:27), “a foolish heart” (Romans 1:21), “an unrepentant heart” (Romans 2:5), “a hardened heart” (Ephesians 4:18), “a heart that always goes astray” (Hebrews 3:10), “an unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12), and “a selfish ambitious heart” (James 3:14).

But our words can also show that we have “a sincere heart” (Acts 2:46), “a believing heart” (Romans 10:8), “a wide-open heart” (2 Corinthians 6:11), and “a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

What we have spoken about shows what is in our hearts. Why is this so important on Judgment Day? The words of Acts 16:14 illuminate the issue:

<sup>14</sup> And a certain woman named Lyd'i·a, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy·a·ti'ra and a worshiper of God, was listening, and *Jehovah opened her heart wide to pay attention to the things being spoken by Paul.*<sup>16</sup>

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16. When the Bible says that Jehovah does something, often this is in an indirect way. Jehovah did not force Lydia to accept the word of truth. But the whole situation that God had caused by sending out preachers appealed to Lydia, who had a receptive and believing heart.

What helped Lydia to accept God's truth was that he opened her heart wide. The point here is that our hearts, which represent our motives and personality, must be opened wide to accept the truth. This will be the same requirement on Judgment Day.

And now we can understand how we must render an account for our unprofitable words. The words we speak reveal what is in our hearts, and our words and actions also shape our hearts. Revelation 20:12 shows that scrolls will be opened during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. And "the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds."

It is obvious that whether we "will pay attention to the things" in the books, as Lydia did regarding the words of Paul, depends on which personality we have developed in this old system of things, what is in our hearts. It is clear that if we have a sincere heart, or a pure heart, or a believing heart, it will be much easier to follow the things written in the scrolls than if we have an unreceptive heart, an unrepentant heart, or a selfish, ambitious heart.

We are held responsible for our actions and words in this system of things on Judgment Day because our actions and words form our heart and personality. And our heart and personality will either help us to pay attention to the contents of the scrolls and follow their direction, as did Lydia, or our hearts and personality will prevent us from making spiritual progress on Judgment Day. This is what Paul had in mind, as we see in 1 Corinthians 4:5:

<sup>5</sup> Hence do not judge anything before the due time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring the secret things of darkness to light *and make the counsels of the hearts manifest*, and then each one will have his praise come to him from God.

The inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would have followed the laws of God if they had been revealed to them, according to Jesus. They evidently had sincere hearts and believing hearts. This will help them repent and follow God's laws during the thousand years. In spite of the preaching of Jesus and the miracles they saw he did, the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida refused to believe in him. Their words showed that they had "unreceptive hearts," "hardened hearts," and "unbelieving hearts." Because of this, it will be much more difficult for them to repent and follow the instructions in the scrolls than the Ninevites.

As Jesus said, *"It will be more endurable (anektos) for Tyre and Si'don on Judgment Day than for YOU"* (the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida).

To show how great the responsibility of the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida was, Jesus compared them with the inhabitants of Sodom. These inhabitants were guilty of serious sins, such as homosexual actions and even rape in connection with Lot and his family.

They lacked sincere, believing, and pure hearts. So, they would struggle to change their serious sins and repent on Judgment Day. But even if their sins were great, the sins of the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida were greater. Therefore, Jesus said

that, “*It will be more endurable for the land of Sod’om on Judgment Day than for you.*” (the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida).

The important points are: Imperfect humans with inherited sin are not qualified to make a fair and just decision regarding their own eternal destiny, but this will be done in the final test after the thousand years, when all who are living are perfect and without sin.

We can view our lives in this old system of things as our primary school, where we are continually taught and experience a variety of things. Our exam is not when we finish primary school and die as a penalty for our sin. But our high school continues after our resurrection. If we have been good students and learned good things in our primary school, it will be easier to make progress in high school.

At the end of the thousand years, the exam will take place, and if we have been good students in both primary and high school, we will have a solid foundation for passing it.

From this discussion, we understand that even though God will not decide our eternal destiny during this old system of things when we are imperfect sinners, we cannot just live debauched lives, because we feel that God will not hold us responsible for what we do. Everything we do and experience in our lives will have an impact on our eternal destiny. But God’s judgment regarding our eternal destiny will first occur after the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

## **THE DEAD ARE JUDGED ON THE BASIS OF WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE SCROLLS**

A judgment can have a favorable or an unfavorable outcome. This will also be the case on Judgment Day, because Jesus said that for some, their resurrection will lead to everlasting life, while for others, it will lead to everlasting death. (John 5:28, 29) The destiny of the resurrected ones will be determined by their actions after their resurrection. I quote Revelation 20:12:

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds.

Because all those who die due to Adam’s sin are acquitted from these sins by their death, the scrolls that will be opened do not have any reference to what happened in the old system of things. The resurrected ones are judged on what they do, and what they should do will be written in the scrolls that will be opened.

When Peter wrote about the restoration of all things, he referred to the prophecies that had been made about this restoration. Did the prophets write anything that can throw light on the situation in connection with the opening of the scrolls? Yes, and I will quote two prophecies from the book of Isaiah. However, I would like to emphasize that prophecies about restoration often employ figurative language. The reason may be to provide a broad, understandable description, rather than being

bogged down by many details that are difficult to understand. I quote Revelation 20:14 (above), 21:1-4 (middle), and 22:1-4 (below):

<sup>14</sup> And death and Ha'des were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death, the lake of fire.

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. <sup>2</sup> I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

<sup>1</sup> And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of its broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side [there were] trees of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits each month. And the leaves of the trees [were] for the curing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> And no more will there be any curse. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in [the city], and his slaves will render him sacred service; <sup>4</sup> and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

The language is figurative. But we understand that the Devil will be everlastingly annihilated. We also understand that God will govern human society, that there will be no more death or pain, and that God will support the lives of all humans to their full satisfaction.

I will now discuss the prophecy in Isaiah 65:17-25:

<sup>17</sup> "*For here I am creating new heavens and a new earth*; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. <sup>18</sup> But exult, YOU people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating. *For here I am creating Jerusalem a cause for joyfulness and her people a cause for exultation.* <sup>19</sup> *And I will be joyful in Jerusalem and exult in my people*; and no more will there be heard in her the sound of weeping or the sound of a plaintive cry."

<sup>20</sup> "No more will there come to be a suckling a few days old from that place, neither an old man that does not fulfill his days; for one will die as a mere boy, although a hundred years of age; and as for the sinner, although a hundred years of age he will have evil called down upon him. <sup>21</sup> And they will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat [their] fruitage.

<sup>22</sup> They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full. <sup>23</sup> They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them. <sup>24</sup> And it will actually occur that before they call out I myself shall answer; while they are yet speaking, I myself shall hear.

<sup>25</sup> "The wolf and the lamb themselves will feed as one, and the lion will eat straw just like the bull; and as for the serpent, his food will be dust. They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain," Jehovah has said.

This prophecy follows the same pattern as Jesus' prophecies. It got a miniature fulfillment in the Jewish nation. However, it will find its ultimate fulfillment in the new heavens and new earth. Isaiah prophesied more than 150 years before the Jews were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar II and they would return to their land. Verse 18 indicates that the words about the new heavens and the new earth mentioned in verse 17 were fulfilled in Jerusalem and among the Jewish nation. The new heavens were the leadership by the priest Joshua and the governor Serubabel, and the new earth was the people who returned and rebuilt Jerusalem.

It is important to note that the prophecy is figurative. Building houses and planting vineyards are literal. The statement that no suckling will die after a few days cannot be taken literally. The lion cannot digest straw, and the serpent cannot live by eating dust. That no one among those who returned from Babylon would do harm or cause ruin cannot be taken literally. The purpose of the prophecy for the Jews was to paint a picture taken from the paradise in Eden to illustrate all the blessings that those who returned from Babylon would receive.

There is a similar prophecy in Isaiah 11:1-9:

<sup>1</sup> And there must go forth a twig out of the stump of Jes'se; and out of his roots a sprout will be fruitful. <sup>2</sup> And upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; <sup>3</sup> and there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah.

And he will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears. <sup>4</sup> And with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth. And he must strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the spirit of his lips he will put the wicked one to death. <sup>5</sup> And righteousness must prove to be the belt of his hips, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

<sup>6</sup> And the wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones will lie down. And even the lion will eat straw just like the bull. <sup>8</sup> And the sucking child will certainly play upon the hole of the cobra; and upon the light aperture of a poisonous snake will a weaned child actually put his own hand. <sup>9</sup> They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea.

This prophecy is also figurative. Like the words of Chapter 65, this text suggests that there will be peace between wild and domesticated animals and humans. Verse 9 says that the reason why the wild animals will not do harm is that "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the very sea." This suggests that the animals represent humans with different personalities, as wild animals will not become tame due to the knowledge of Jehovah filling the earth.

I will now apply the figurative language of chapters 65 and 11 to the thousand-year reign of Jehovah.



According to 65:17, Jehovah will create new heavens and a new earth. This refers to God's kingdom, which will govern the new earthly society, also known as the new earth. The nature of the government of the new heavens is described in 11:1-5. Jesse was the father of David, and Jesus was the son of David. His way of governing is described. He will judge the lowly ones and the meek ones of the earth in righteousness.

Revelation 20:12 tells that scrolls were opened, and that the dead were judged according to their deeds, according to what was written in these scrolls. The reason why humans who have been like lions and wolves live in peace together with other humans who have been like bulls and lambs is that the whole earth is full of Jehovah's knowledge. This knowledge has changed the deeds of many humans.

This supports the view that the scrolls that were opened contain new instructions from Jehovah that those who are resurrected must follow. And these scrolls are the reason why the whole earth is filled with Jehovah's knowledge. On the basis of the words about the scrolls and the words about the knowledge that fills the earth, we expect that an enormous educational program will be instituted for the survivors of the great tribulation and for those who are resurrected. All humans must learn how to serve Jehovah.

When we understand that the prophecies employ figurative language, and the calf, the lion, the leopard, and the lamb are symbols of humans with different personalities, can we not use these prophecies to show that during the thousand years, wild animals will coexist with tame ones? The prophecies can also be used as evidence for this. The figurative language of the prophecies is borrowed from the situation in the Garden of Eden, and because Jesus said that the earth will become a paradise (Luke 23:43), the situation described by the figurative language will literally come to pass.

However, the prophecies also have some negative aspects. The words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 11 that it will be easier for the inhabitants of Nineveh and Sodom to follow the instructions in the scrolls than for the Jewish inhabitants of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida indicate that not everything will go smoothly during the thousand-year-long Judgment Day. Jesus also said that all those who are in the tombs will be resurrected. But for some, the resurrection will result in everlasting life and for others, the resurrection will result in everlasting death.

Isaiah may have referred to the final test when Satan is let loose from his prison. But evidently, he also refers to the situation during the thousand years. To show this, I quote Isaiah 11:4 (above) and 65:20

<sup>4</sup> And he must strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the spirit of his lips he will put the wicked one to death.

<sup>20</sup> and as for the sinner, although a hundred years of age he will have evil called down upon him.

The two quotations show that Jesus also will judge wicked actions during his reign. And it seems that a person who has difficulties in living in accordance with what is

written in the scrolls will get a period of one hundred years to repent. And if he will not repent, he will be executed into the second death.

## ALL HUMANS WILL BE PERFECT AND WITHOUT SIN AT THE END OF THE THOUSAND YEARS

Over the course of a thousand years, the contents of the scrolls will be taught until the knowledge of Jehovah fills the earth, and the ransom sacrifice will be applied to all humans. The result of this is seen in Revelation 20:5. I quote 20:5 (above) and 20:12, 13 (below):

<sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not *come to life* until the thousand years were ended.)

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the *dead*, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And *the dead* were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds.

<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Ha'des gave up those dead in them, and *they* were judged individually according to their deeds.

Let us take a closer look at the verb translated as “come to life” (*ζαο̄*, aorist active indicative). The Greek verb meaning “raise up” is *egeirō*, and it is not used in 20:5. And neither is the Greek substantive *anastasis* with the meaning “resurrection.” In 20:13 where the resurrection from the sea and from *hadēs* is mentioned, the verb *didomi* (“give; deliver”) is used. So, the word *ζαο̄* is not used with reference to the resurrection in Revelation or elsewhere in the Scriptures.

What is the meaning of this verb? According to Mounce, the Greek word *ζαο̄* has the meaning, “to live; to be possessed of vitality; to exercise the functions of life.” This means that we cannot, at the outset, take the verb *ζαο̄* in Revelation 20:5 as a reference to the resurrection from the dead. Instead, the meaning must be that at the end of the 1,000 years, those who have been resurrected have reached human perfection and have been freed from the sin they inherited from Adam. They possess vitality and exercise the functions of life to the fullest extent — they are perfect humans without sin. In this sense, they “have come to life.”<sup>17</sup>

Supporting this conclusion is the fact that the judgment of the dead will occur during the thousand years and not after the thousand years, as verse 4 says.

Another thing supporting the conclusion that “come to life” means that the sin is taken away and that humans will have become perfect, is the fact that those who have received a resurrection and who are being judged during the thousand years are not called “the resurrected ones” or “the living ones,” but they are called “the dead” in verses 12 and 13. As Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:6, “But the one that goes in for sensual gratification is dead though she is living.” But how shall we view the words of 20:4:

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17. A detailed discussion of Revelation 20:5 is found in my book *The Atonement Between God And Man*, pages 198--200.

<sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and there were those who sat down on them, and power of judging was given them. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed with the ax for the witness they bore to Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had worshiped neither the wild beast nor its image and who had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand. And *they came to life* and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years.

Those who received the power of judging are the group of 144,000. Before they died they were “dead” because they were sinners. But after they were a part of the first resurrection, *they have come to life*, which means that they “exercise the functions of life to the fullest extent,” which is the meaning of *ζαῶ*.

After the resurrection, humans still have inherited sin and do not have the right to everlasting life. So, they are “dead.” That all humans will be perfect and free from sin at the end of the thousand years is also supported by the account of what happens after Satan and those who supported him are thrown into the lake of fire. We read in Revelation 21:1-4:

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and *the former earth had passed away*, and the sea is no more. <sup>2</sup> I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and *death will be no more*, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. *The former things have passed away.*”

These words point to a fulfillment of Acts 3:19-21; now the restoration has been completed! The old heaven of governments led by the Devil and the old earth of wicked people are gone. Two times we read that “the former things have passed away.” This includes death, which is mentioned in verse 4. And this means that no human has inherited sin anymore.

All humans “have now come to life.” They are now perfect and without sin, and everything has been restored to what it was in the paradise in Eden before Adam and Eve sinned. Each human being can now, without the handicap of inherited sin, make an individual choice of serving and worshiping Jehovah or not.

## MOST OF ADAM’S DESCENDANTS WILL PASS THE FINAL TEST AND RECEIVE EVERLASTING LIFE

*The nations*, including their inhabitants, will be destroyed in the great tribulation according to Revelation 19:15:

<sup>15</sup> And out of his [Jesus Christ] mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which *to strike* (*patassō*) *the nations* (*ethnos*), and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Satan will be bound and hurled into the abyss for a thousand years, so he should not mislead the nations. This shows that the nations, i.e., their inhabitants, will get a resurrection during the thousand years: I quote Revelation 20:1-3:

<sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup> And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, *so that he would not mislead the nations* (*ethnos*) *anymore until the 1,000 years were ended*. After this he must be released for a little while.

At the end of the thousand years, the nations, i.e., their inhabitants, will be present on the earth, and Satan will try to mislead them, according to Revelation 20:7-9:

<sup>7</sup> Now as soon as the 1,000 years have ended, Satan will be released from his prison. <sup>8</sup> and *he will go out to mislead those nations* (*ethnos*) *in the four corners of the earth*, Gog and Ma'gog, to gather them together for the war. The number of these is as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they advanced over the whole earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down out of heaven and consumed them.

Satan will not succeed in misleading the nations, i.e., their inhabitants. For they will be present in the restored paradise after the final test, according to Revelation 21: 23-26 (above) and 22:1-5 (below):

<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp was the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> And *the nations* (*ethnos*) will walk by means of its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup> Its gates will not be closed at all by day, for night will not exist there. <sup>26</sup> And they will bring the glory and the honor of *the nations* (*ethnos*) into it.

<sup>1</sup> And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of its main street. On both sides of the river were trees of life producing 12 crops of fruit, yielding their fruit each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the healing of *the nations*. <sup>3</sup> And no more will there be any curse. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in [the city], and his slaves will render him sacred service; <sup>4</sup> and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> Also, night will be no more, and they have no need of lamplight nor [do they have] sunlight, because Jehovah God will shed light upon them, and they will rule as kings forever and ever.

*That the nations, i.e., their inhabitants, will be present in the restored paradise after the final test, suggests that the majority of Adam's descendants who have lived on the earth will receive everlasting life.*

The main points of this chapter are:

- 1) Only the great crowd will survive the great tribulation.*
- 2) All humans who have died because of inherited sin will get a resurrection.*
- 3) The punishment for sin is death. When a human being dies, all his or her sins are blotted out.*
- 4) The sins of a person have formed his or her personality, and whether these sins are serious or not will influence his or her actions on Judgment Day.*

- 5) *A great teaching program will be instituted. All humans will be judged individually as to whether they change their lives in accordance with God's laws.*
- 6) *At the end of the thousand years, all humans will be perfect and without sin. They will now get the final test as to whether they will serve Jehovah God or the Devil.*
- 7) *Most of the humans on earth will pass the final test and receive everlasting life.*

What is really fantastic is that the situation on the earth after the thousand years will be exactly the same as it would have been if Satan had not rebelled and introduced sin and death. The earth will be a paradise that is filled with billions of Adam's descendants, and these humans will continue to worship Jehovah forever.

This shows Jehovah's tremendous love, wisdom, righteousness, and might. And all creatures in the universe will see that Jehovah's name has been sanctified!

## HUMANS WITH INHERITED SIN ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR ETERNAL DESTINY

*God's principal attributes are love, righteousness, wisdom, and might. Without the will of Adam's descendants, they have inherited imperfection, sin, and death. God loves those he has created, and he will give them a fair and just opportunity to choose to do his will and get everlasting life.*

*This chapter shows that more than 90% of all Adam's descendants have never had a personal opportunity to learn what God's will is. To let all these be eternally annihilated without a chance to do God's will would be contrary to God's love and righteousness.*

*Some people have had the opportunity to do God's will but have refused to do so. I show that imperfect humans with inherited are not qualified or competent to choose their eternal destiny — their inherited sin prevents them from making a just and fair decision. Therefore, it would be contrary to God's love and righteousness to annihilate these forever.*

*The only way that accords with God's love and righteousness is to give all these people a resurrection in the thousand-year-long Judgment Day, apply the ransom sacrifice to them, so they become perfect and without sin like Adam. And now they can, without the handicap of inherited sin, get the same chance as Adam got, to choose to do God's will and live forever.*

The basic principles for the Bible Student's study of the Bible were Jehovah's principal attributes, his righteousness, his wisdom, his love, and his might. We must also use the same principles, and any belief or doctrine that contradicts one of these principles must be rejected. This must also be the situation when we consider our eternal destiny. Regarding this, we read in 1 John 2:17:

Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.

Most humans have never had a genuine opportunity to do God's will. That these should be everlastingly annihilated without having had this opportunity contradicts



both God's righteousness and love. This supports the necessity for a restoration of all things. Let us look at the real situation.

## **MOST HUMANS WHO HAVE LIVED HAVE NOT HAD ANY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL**

During the 6,000 years since Adam was created, around 30 billion of his descendants have lived on earth. What do we find if we consider the 4,000 years before our common era regarding the possibility of knowing God's will? The only place where God's will was taught was inside the Jewish nation, which had the laws of God. The Jews were just a small part of all the nations of the ancient world. We must, therefore, draw the conclusion that more than 90% of all humans who lived in the time before our common era did not have any opportunity to know God's will and to do God's will.

What has the situation been during the 2,000 years of our common era? In the 1st century CE, the Jewish nation existed, and there was much preaching of God's will in Israel and among the nations of the Eastern Mediterranean. However, from the end of the 1st century to the 20th century, very few people had the opportunity to know God's will. Even in the 20th and 21st centuries, when the Bible is known worldwide, few people have been acquainted with God's laws, so they have had the opportunity to do his will.

This means that more than 90% of the approximately 30 billion people who have lived on earth have never had the chance to do God's will and remain forever. How shall we view this situation in the light of the words of Jesus in John 3:16, 17?

<sup>16</sup> "For God loved the world (*kosmos*) so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.<sup>17</sup> For God sent forth his Son into the world (*kosmos*), not for him to judge the world, but *for the world* (*kosmos*) *to be saved through him*.

Many people have read these words many times without understanding their meaning. The word "world" is translated from the Greek word *kosmos*, and it refers to all the 30 billion descendants of Adam. By giving Adam and Eve the ability to procreate children, all these are God's creations, and he loves them.

*Jesus came to save all these, and not to try to save all these. Everything that Jehovah God and Jesus want, will happen. Therefore, will the world be saved.*

The rendering "exercising faith" is an accurate rendering because the Greek present participle gives a verb the force of something that continues or is practiced. The requirement for everlasting life is exercising faith in Jesus Christ, and such an active faith is the same as "doing God's will," as was the requirement for remaining forever, according to 1 John 2:17, which is quoted above.

*We must never forget John's words that Jesus came to save all these 30 billion of Adam's descendants.*

Most of these are dead, and they cannot get everlasting life because they have not exercised faith in Jesus, and they have not done God's will. But Jesus said that all these would be saved. How can this be?

The Bible Students wrestled with this question. And they found the answer that accords with God's love and righteousness: The study IX (A149) in volume 1 of *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (1886) says:

The Restitution Guaranteed by the Ransom—Not Everlasting Life, but a Trial for it, Secured by the Ransom.

All these 30 billion of Adam's descendants were bought by Jesus when he gave his life as a ransom sacrifice. And all of these who have died because of inherited sin *will be saved* from the grave by a resurrection as humans on earth. Now they will have the chance to exercise faith in Jesus, do God's will, and get everlasting life.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE WHO HAVE HAD THE POSSIBILITY TO DO GOD'S WILL BUT HAVE REFUSED**

In the last section, I argued that more than 90% of all humans who have lived on earth have not had the chance to put faith in Jesus Christ and do the will of God. But what can we say about those who have had this chance but have refused to serve God?

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom throughout Israel for three and a half years. But most people refused to believe in him. His followers preached the good news in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. But just a small percentage of the population became Christians.

Today, the Bible is available in the native languages for most inhabitants of the earth. In the Western world, there are several hundred Christian denominations that spread the message of the Bible. One example is the 9 million Jehovah's Witnesses who preach in 240 lands and territories.

What is the responsibility for people who have had the opportunity to do God's will but have refused to do so?

*The Bible Students concluded that imperfect humans are not qualified to make a decision regarding their eternal future; their inherited sin prevents them from making just and fair decisions.*

Paul's words confirm that the Bible Students' view is correct. I quote Romans 7:14-25:

<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual; but *I am fleshly, sold under sin*. <sup>15</sup> For what I am working out I do not know. For what I wish (*thelō*), this I do not practice; but what I hate

is what I do.<sup>16</sup> However, if what I do not wish (*thelō*) is what I do, I agree that the Law is fine.<sup>17</sup> But now the one working it out is no longer I, but sin that resides in me.<sup>18</sup> For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells nothing good; *for ability to wish (thelō) is present with me, but ability to work out what is fine is not [present]*.<sup>19</sup> For the good that I wish (*thelō*) I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish (*thelō*) is what I practice.<sup>20</sup> *If now, what I do not wish (thelō), is what I do, the one working it out is no longer I, but the sin dwelling in me.*

<sup>21</sup> I find, then, this law in my case: that when I wish (*thelō*), to do what is right, what is bad is present with me.<sup>22</sup> I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within,<sup>23</sup> but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and *leading me captive to sin's law that is in my members*.<sup>24</sup> Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?<sup>25</sup> Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, then, with [my] mind I myself am a slave to God's law, but with [my] flesh to sin's law.

Paul was a spiritual man. He possessed knowledge of the sacred secret of God, and he worked diligently to preach the good news of the kingdom and help people serve God. The words he described above will apply to any human who has inherited sin from Adam. I will analyze Paul's words.

Paul says: "I am fleshly, sold under sin." The meaning of this is that he wished to do what was right, but he was unable to do so.

*His conclusion was that the responsibility for doing what was wrong was not himself — for he himself wished to do what was right — but his inherited sin prevented him from doing what was right.*

The important application of this is that if a person with inherited sin is asked to do God's will with the possibility of receiving everlasting life, and he or she refuses, that does not necessarily mean that *he or she* has rejected serving God. It can be *his or her inherited sin* that causes the rejection. This means that a man who is imperfect with inherited sin cannot have a just and fair chance to decide his eternal destiny. He simply does not have the tools or the ability to make the right decision.

I will use the example of drug addiction to illustrate the handicap of imperfect humans with inherited sin to make decisions regarding their eternal destiny. Statistics from the World Health Organization show that there are 300 million drug addicts in the world. Some drugs, such as heroin, give a very strong addiction, as the following quotation shows.

When people become addicted to heroin, they crave the drug so strongly that, even when they know what consequences they face as a result of their heroin use, they are unable to stay away from the drug. This makes relapse to heroin use incredibly likely after detox. Often, those struggling with heroin addiction experience multiple episodes of relapse on their road to recovery.<sup>18</sup>

Most addicts have not planned to become drug addicts. Many people have used painkillers for medical issues, and after some time, have become addicted. Many youngsters have accepted a pill in a moment of thoughtlessness and have become

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18. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/methadone-addiction/pros-cons>

addicted. Just think of a person who is addicted to heroin who wants to serve God and knows that he must quit his bad habit. That will be extremely difficult because “even when they know what consequences they face as a result of their heroin use, they are unable to stay away from the drug,” as the quotation above says.

With the help of professionals and support from family and friends, a few have managed to quit their abuse. But most people are not able to quit. Drug addicts have a strong handicap as far as making a decision to serve God is concerned. The WHO statistics show that there are 400 million people who are addicted to alcohol in the world. They also have a strong handicap in connection with the choice of serving God.

Let us look at this situation in the light of John 3:36:

<sup>36</sup> He that exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

The requirement for everlasting life is to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and obey God’s commandments. For people who are drug addicts, it would be extremely difficult to do the will of God by following the example of Jesus, even if they wanted to do this. Will God judge these people to everlasting annihilation? This would be contrary to God’s love and righteousness. And it would be contrary to Jesus’ words in John 3:17, where he said that he came to save *the world* (all Adam’s descendants). Drug addicts are a part of this world, and therefore, they must be saved.

I used this extreme example in order to stress the issue that imperfect persons with inherited sin are not competent or qualified to make decisions regarding their eternal destiny. The influence of inherited sin on humans is much weaker than the craving for drugs. But still, it is a negative influence that impacts the choices that humans make. As Paul said, “For the good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice.” (Romans 7:19)

And, as I have shown, more than 90% of the 30 billion people who have lived on the earth have not even had the chance to believe in the Son and do God’s will. All these people are also included in *the world* that Jesus will save. They cannot get everlasting life because they have not believed in the Son and have not done God’s will. But according to God’s love and God’s righteousness, and according to Jesus’ words that *the world* will be saved, they must be saved from death and get a just and fair chance to serve God.

But what will happen to persons who have had the chance to serve God but have refused to do so? They are also a part of *the world* that Jesus will save. Because we believe that the words of Jesus are true, these persons will also be saved from death by a resurrection. As Paul showed in his words in Romans 7:14-25, these people are not competent or qualified to make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal future. Their imperfection and inherited sin prevent them from having a fair chance.

Some readers may think that if those who have had the opportunity to serve God but refused will still be saved by a resurrection, this is an excuse for not taking

responsibility for their actions. However, Jesus looked at the situation in a different way.

I use this excellent example one more time: For long periods of time, Jesus had stayed in each of the three cities, Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. He had done much preaching about the kingdom of God, and he had performed many miracles. Yet, the inhabitants spoke against him and did not believe in him. Nevertheless, Jesus said that they will get a resurrection on Judgment Day, according to Matthew 11: 21-24:

<sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Cho·ra’zin! Woe to you, Beth·s’i·da! because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Si’don that took place in YOU, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> Consequently I say to YOU, It will be more endurable for Tyre and Si’don on Judgment Day than for YOU. <sup>23</sup> And you, Ca·per’na·um, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Ha’des you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sod’om, it would have remained until this very day. <sup>24</sup> Consequently I say to YOU people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sod’om on Judgment Day than for you.”

The inhabitants of the three cities got the best chance to do God’s will that any human could get — hearing the preaching of Jesus and seeing his miracles.

*That they refused to listen to Jesus but still will get a resurrection on Judgment Day shows clearly that they, because of their imperfection and inherited sin, were not qualified to make a decision regarding their eternal destiny.*

The same was the case with the whole Jewish population in the days of Jesus. He travelled around in the land of Israel, and he preached about the kingdom of God. But the accounts of the evangelists show that very few people believed in him. Because of the bad actions and lack of faith of the people, Jesus condemned them. He used the following words:

“Wicked generation”: Matthew 12:45 and Luke 11:29.

“Wicked and adulterous generation”: Matthew 12:39; 16:4.

“Wicked and sinful generation”: Mark 8:38.

“Unbelieving and perverse generation”: Matthew 17:17 and Luke 9:41.

Which people are included in the term “generation” (*genea*) mentioned by Jesus? The words in Luke 11:29-32 answer the question:

<sup>29</sup> When *the crowds were massing together*, he started to say: “*This generation is a wicked generation*; it looks for a sign. But no sign will be given it except the sign of Jo’nah. <sup>30</sup> For just as Jo’nah became a sign to the Nin’e·vites, in the same way will the Son of man be also to this generation. <sup>31</sup> *The queen of the south will be raised up in the judgment with the men of this generation and will condemn them*; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Sol’o·mon, but, look! something more than Sol’o·mon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nin’e·veh will rise in the judgment with this generation and will



condemn it; because they repented at what Jo'nah preached; but, look! something more than Jo'nah is here.

This wicked generation included the crowds that were massing together. Jesus did not know each one in these crowds, and his general expression of calling them wicked, shows that *this “wicked generation” included all the Jews living in Israel.* The quotation above (green text) says that this wicked generation will get a resurrection on Judgment Day together with the queen of the south. This shows that the Jews who heard Jesus preach and who refused to believe in him, as well as all other Jews at that time, were not competent to make a decision regarding their eternal future.

The only exception was persons who were permeated by wickedness who had sinned against the holy spirit. They will not get a resurrection, as Jesus shows in Matthew 12:32.

The Bible Students who researched the Scriptures in the 1870s understood that because Adam's descendants were imperfect with inherited sin, they could not make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal future. Therefore, they had to get a resurrection on the thousand-year-long Judgment Day, become perfect and without sin, and after the end of Judgment Day, make their final decision. Becoming perfect like Adam and getting the same choice as he did to do God's will or not was the only way to satisfy God's righteousness and love.

The only group that has, to this day, understood the real meaning of God's plan through the ages for the restoration of all things, and how this will give all Adam's descendants a just and fair chance to choose everlasting life, was the Bible Students under the leadership of C.T. Russell.

## **PEOPLE WHOSE ETERNAL DESTINIES ARE DECIDED WHILE THEY ARE IMPERFECT HUMANS WITH INHERITED SIN**

The important conclusion forming the basis for this chapter is that imperfect humans with inherited sin are not competent to make a decision regarding their eternal destiny. Only when they have become perfect and without sin can they make a just and fair decision. But will not the fact that some people's eternal destiny are decided when they are imperfect sinners nullify this conclusion? Let us see.

## **THE SELECTION OF THOSE WHO WILL BE MEMBERS OF THE HEAVENLY GOVERNMENT**

Chapter 4 showed that as part of God's plan through the ages for a restoration of all things, 144,000 humans will receive a resurrection as spirit creatures, becoming kings, judges, and priests. As judges and priests, they will help those who receive a resurrection on Judgment Day to become perfect and without sin at the end of the thousand years. Regarding these, Jesus said, according to John 5:24:



<sup>24</sup> Most truly I say to YOU, He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment but has passed over from death to life.

All those who die because of inherited sin will “come into judgment” during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. But this was not the case with those whom Jesus refers to. They had “passed over from death to life.” Because they should act as judges and priests during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, their eternal destiny must be decided when they are imperfect persons with inherited sin.

However, these persons are in the same situation as all other Adam’s descendants. Because of their inherited sin, they are not competent to decide their eternal destiny.

*People who are given the heavenly call are not competent to decide their eternal destiny. But God intervenes and makes his decision.*

The basis for God’s intervention is seen in 1 Chronicles 28:9 (above) and Revelation 2:23 (below):

<sup>9</sup> “And you, Sol’o’mon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a complete heart and with a delightful soul; *for all hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning.* If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you leave him, he will cast you off forever.

<sup>23</sup> And her children I will kill with deadly plague, so that all the congregations will know that *I am he who searches the kidneys and hearts, and I will give to YOU individually according to YOUR deeds.*

The people to whom Jesus preached were not competent to make a decision regarding their eternal destiny. But God searched their hearts, and when he found that a person had “a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22) or “opened her heart wide” as did Lydia (Acts 16:14), God would act in connection with this person. In Revelation 17:14, such persons are mentioned as “those called, chosen and faithful.”

God calls persons with pure hearts to become a part of the heavenly government. He declares them righteous because of the ransom sacrifice, and he baptizes them with holy spirit. Now they are born again (John 3:5-8) and are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17), and they have the hope of receiving a heavenly resurrection.

We note that their free will is not overturned. Revelation 22:17 says that they must exercise their free will to choose to serve God, and Revelation 17:14 says that they are “faithful,” i.e., they have continued to do God’s will.

*The inherited sin of these persons prevents them from making a fair decision regarding their eternal judgment. However, God has now declared them righteous, and therefore, they are in the same situation as Adam’s descendants at the end of the thousand years. Now, they can make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal destiny.*

## THE IDENTIFICATION OF THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

The basis for the adverse judgment of everlasting annihilation is the same as in connection with the selection of those with the heavenly calling. As God said to Solomon, according to 1 Chronicles 28:9 (above) and Revelation 2:23 (below):

<sup>9</sup> for all hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning.

<sup>23</sup> I am he who searches the kidneys and hearts, and I will give to YOU individually according to YOUR deeds.

One example of the result of Jehovah's searching of the kidneys and hearts is the situation before the great flood in Noah's days, as we see in Genesis 6:5:

<sup>5</sup> Consequently Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time.

Because of the badness of the humans who lived at that time, Jehovah caused the great flood, and all the people except Noah and his family died. The mentioned situation shows how Jehovah reads the hearts of humans, and that he can act in connection with what he sees.

However, there is a great difference between what happened in connection with the great flood and how Jehovah selects persons who have sinned against the holy spirit.

The quoted words describe the bad situation before the great flood. The words are general because they include men, women, and children. It is obvious that small babies did not have bad inclinations and thoughts in their hearts that were "only bad all the time." While God caused the flood, in order to clean the earth, the reason for the wickedness that caused Jehovah to act was the inherited sin of the people. All these people died because of Adam's sin, and all who die because of inherited sin, will get a resurrection. Revelation 20:13 says that the sea gave up the dead in it, and this confirms that those who died in the great flood will get a resurrection on Judgment Day.

### SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT BY BELIEVERS

When Jehovah searches the kidneys and the hearts to see who has done unforgivable sins and will not receive a resurrection (Luke 20:35), he looks at individuals rather than groups, unlike in connection with the flood.

I will now look at situations in Hebrews describing how individuals act against the holy spirit. I quote Hebrews 6:4-6:

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, and *who have tasted the heavenly free gift*, and who have become partakers of holy spirit, <sup>5</sup> and who have tasted the fine word of God and powers of the coming system of things, <sup>6</sup> *but who have fallen away*, to revive them again to repentance, because they impale the Son of God afresh for themselves and expose him to public shame.

Those who are described here are persons who are called to the heavenly kingdom. They have been declared righteous, baptized with holy spirit, and have become new creations. That they were declared righteous indicates that they had a just and fair chance to choose life, which they did. But after that, they chose to use their free will to turn away from Jehovah, and by this, they rejected the ransom sacrifice. Let us take a closer look.

The expression “have fallen away” is translated from the Greek verb *parapiptō* with the meaning “to abandon a former association, or to disassociate (a type of reversal of beginning to associate).” (Louw and Nida). This verb only occurs once, and therefore, we cannot define it based on different contexts. The one context where the verb occurs shows that a person who “has fallen away” is beyond repentance, and this shows that he or she has sinned against the holy spirit.

According to 1 Corinthians 5:1, a member of the congregation was guilty of sexual immorality by living with his father’s wife. Paul writes that this man had to be disfellowshipped (5:13). Sometime later, the man was reinstated and again became a member of the congregation, something Paul agreed with. (2 Corinthians 2:5-8) Because he continued to have sexual relations with his father’s wife, his sin was grave. But he was not beyond repentance.

The fact that the person who, over a period of time, practiced serious sins was reinstated shows that “falling away” from which there is no possibility of reinstatement, is a very serious sin.

The situation of “falling away” (*parapiptō*) is also described in Hebrews 10:26-31:

<sup>26</sup> *For if we practice sin* (*hamartanō*) *wilfully* (*ekousiōs*) after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left, <sup>27</sup> but there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a burning indignation that is going to consume those in opposition.

<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has disregarded the Law of Moses dies without compassion on the testimony of two or three. <sup>29</sup> How much greater punishment do you think a person will deserve who *has trampled on the Son of God and who has regarded as of ordinary value the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness with contempt* (*enybrizō*)? <sup>30</sup> For we know the One who said: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again: “Jehovah will judge his people.” <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The adverbial *ekousiōs* (“*wilfully*”) in verse 26 has the meaning, “pertaining to being deliberately intentional — ‘intentionally, purposely, deliberately.’” (Louw and Nida) The adverbial occurs only one other place, namely in 1 Peter 5:2, where NWT84 translates it as “willingly.” There is one example of the corresponding adjective *ekousios* in Philemon 14. The NWT84 translates this adjective as “willingly,” and the contrast to this is “under compulsion.”

All persons are sinners, and they violate God’s laws of their free will. As shown above, the lexical meaning of the adverbial *ekousiōs* (“*wilfully*”) in Hebrews 10:26 is general. But the general meaning of “willingly,” that imperfect humans are sinning

by their free will, cannot be what the writer of Hebrews had in mind. Therefore, we need to look at the context in order to pinpoint its exact meaning.

Verse 28 speaks about the one who “has disregarded the law of Moses.” The verb *atheteō* has the meaning “to refuse to recognize the validity of something,” (Louw and Nida) and “to reject; to rebel against.” (Accordance Lexicon) The parallel to the example of rebelling against the law of Moses is that a Christian “has trampled on the Son of God” which means that the person “has regarded as of ordinary value the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.” This means that the person has refused “to recognize the validity” of the blood of Jesus; he has rejected this blood or has rebelled against the ransom sacrifice.

The last part of verse 29 is particularly important. We read that the person “has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness with contempt.” Literally, the Greek text says, “and the spirit of undeserved kindness has insulted.” The verb *enybrizō* has the meaning, “to speak against someone in an insolent and arrogant way.” (Louw and Nida), and “insult; mock.” (Accordance Lexicon)

*The last words in verse 29 show that “willingly” includes a conscious insult of the holy spirit.*

What the writer of Hebrews presents in 10:28, 29 is a description of sin against the holy spirit. This sin can be defined as “an intentional wicked course of action that continues despite the fact that the actor knows that his or her course is wrong, and it is done because of pure wickedness.” Supporting the view that the verses describe sin against the holy spirit, is the use of the verb *hamartanō* (“to sin”) as present participle active. This verb is correctly translated by NWT84 as “practice sin.”

As I have shown, all the sins that are caused by the sinfulness we have inherited from Adam can be forgiven. But sins that a person does because of his own wickedness, which are not caused by the sin he has inherited from Adam, cannot be forgiven. The adverbial *ekousiōs* (“willingly”) refers to such unforgivable sins. And the present participle of the verb shows that these sins continue and are practiced.

Returning to whether a person is competent to make a just and fair decision regarding his or her eternal destiny, I have shown that Christians with the heavenly calling, by being declared righteous, had a fair chance to make this choice. Some people choose to accept Jehovah’s calling but later choose to fall away and go against the holy spirit.

But what can we say about people who have not been declared righteous and have not had the heavenly calling? They are not qualified to make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal destiny. Why will Jehovah not let all of these receive a resurrection, become perfect, and make a fair decision when they are competent to do that? Why will some people not receive a resurrection even though they are not competent to make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal destiny?

## **SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT BY NON-BELIEVERS**

I start by quoting Matthew 12:31 once more:

<sup>31</sup> “On this account I say to YOU, Every sort of sin and blasphemy (*blasfemia*) will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven.

The word “sin” is generally understood, but why does Jesus also include “blasphemy,” which is one special kind of sin? The Greek word *blasfēmia* has the meaning, “to speak against someone in such a way as to harm or injure his or her reputation.” (Louw and Nida). The verb *enybrizō* expresses the same idea from a different point of view. Its meaning is “to speak against someone in an insolent and arrogant way.” (Louw and Nida), and “insult; mock.” (Accordance Lexicon) This verb occurs in Hebrews 10:29, that was discussed above, in the clause “who has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness with contempt (“insult,” *enybrizō*). The anointed Christians who fell away according to Hebrews 10:26-31 rejected the ransom sacrifice and insulted the holy spirit.

Understanding what sin against the holy spirit is, I refer to the words of Jesus one time more and quote Matthew 12:22-30:

<sup>22</sup> Then they brought him a demon-possessed man, blind and dumb; and he cured him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. <sup>23</sup> Well, all the crowds were simply carried away and began to say: “May this not perhaps be the Son of David?” <sup>24</sup> At hearing this, the Pharisees said: “This fellow does not expel the demons except by means of Be·el’ze·bub, the ruler of the demons.”

<sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts (*enthymesis*), he said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself comes to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> In the same way, if Satan expels Satan, he has become divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> Moreover, *if I expel the demons by means of Be·el’ze·bub, by means of whom do YOUR sons expel them? This is why they will be judges of YOU.* <sup>28</sup> *But if it is by means of God’s spirit that I expel the demons, the kingdom of God has really overtaken YOU.* <sup>29</sup> Or how can anyone invade the house of a strong man and seize his movable goods, unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. <sup>30</sup> He that is not on my side is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters.

According to Matthew 12:27, the sons (disciples) of the Pharisees could expel demons. In this case, the demons cooperated with the disciples of the Pharisees in order to mislead those who saw the demons being expelled. When this expelling of demons occurred, the Pharisees evidently used this as an argument that God was on their side. Jesus expelled demons on a much greater scale than the disciples of the Pharisees. But in his case, the Pharisees said that Jesus expelled the demons with the help of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (verse 24).

The actions of the Pharisees were not caused by human weakness, by the sin they had inherited from Adam. Because their disciples expelled demons to a limited degree, they knew that Jesus’ much greater actions could not have been caused by Beelzebub. That is why Jesus said that their disciples should be their judges. The actions of the Pharisees, therefore, were based on a conscious decision, which



revealed their own wickedness. Jesus threatened their position, and therefore they wanted to slander him.

*By their words and actions, this group of Pharisees blasphemed and insulted the holy spirit.*

But some may have problems seeing the seriousness of the Pharisees' words and actions compared to the seriousness of murder, sexual immorality, and other sins from which forgiveness is possible, according to Jesus' words. To understand the difference, we should keep in mind that it was not the words in themselves that were unforgivable but what was behind them.

Verse 25 says that Jesus was "knowing their thoughts (*enthymēsis*).” The word *enthymēsis* has the meaning “the act of thought, reflection, the result of thought, invention, device.” (Mounce), “inborn idea, esteem, thought.” (UBS lexicon).

*When Matthew used the Greek word *enthymēsis*, he was not speaking of thoughts that came up in the minds of these Pharisees when they saw Jesus expelling demons, but he was speaking about the characteristics of the Pharisees, their innermost inclinations.*

I quote Acts 17:29 (above) and Hebrews 4:12 (below):

<sup>29</sup> “Seeing, therefore, that we are the progeny of God, we ought not to imagine that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the *art and contrivance* (*enthymēsis*) of man.

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and [their] marrow, and [is] able to discern *thoughts* (*enthymēsis*) and intentions of [the] heart.

In Acts 17:29, *enthymēsis* is translated as “contrivance” (NIV: “design”), and it stands parallel with “art.” This shows that the Greek word *enthymēsis* refers to much more than abstract thoughts in the mind. In this verse, it refers to actions that are caused by thoughts.

In Hebrews 4:12, the noun is translated as “thoughts,” and it stands parallel with “intentions, “the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” The “word of God” in this context refers to God’s promise to let Israel enter the promised land and experience rest together with God. The reference is also to God’s promise to let people enter the new earth and experience rest together with God. How the Israelites reacted to this “word of God,” and how other servants of God react to the promise to enter the new earth, reveal their innermost “thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

When we understand the meaning of the Greek words that translates the Hebrew words Jesus spoke regarding the Pharisees, we ascertain that Jesus was aware of their innermost motives, the motives of their hearts, and how these motives caused them to react. This is elucidated in Matthew 12:33-35 (above), and the parallel passage in Luke 6:43-45 (below):



<sup>33</sup> “Either YOU people make the tree fine and its fruit fine or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten; for by its fruit the tree is known. <sup>34</sup> Offspring of vipers, how can YOU speak good things, when **YOU are wicked? For out of the abundance of the heart** (*perisseuma kardia*) **the mouth speaks**. <sup>35</sup> The good man out of his good treasure (*agathos thesauros*) sends out good things, whereas **the wicked man out of his wicked treasure** (*poneros thesauros*) **sends out wicked things**.

<sup>43</sup> “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>44</sup> Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. <sup>45</sup> A good man brings forth good out of the good **treasure of his heart** (*thesauros kardia*), but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked [treasure]; for out of the **heart's abundance** (*perisseuma kardia*) his mouth speaks.

The use of Greek words in the two passages is similar. The noun *thesauros* means “a room for the storage of valuables.” (Louw and Nida). And the word *perisseuma* means “that which exists in abundance.” (Louw and Nida) Both words are connected with the heart by Matthew and Luke. So, the meaning is that the heart is a storage room of valuables, and the valuables in this storage room are abundant. What is in this storage room, either good or bad, causes the mouth to speak and the person to act.

Jesus applied the situation mentioned above to the Pharisees, and I quote Matthew 12:34 (above) and Matthew 23:33 (below):

<sup>34</sup> **Offspring of vipers**, how can YOU speak good things, when **YOU are wicked? For out of the abundance of the heart** (*perisseuma kardia*) **the mouth speaks**.

<sup>33</sup> **Serpents, offspring of vipers**, how are YOU to flee from the judgment of Ge·hen'na?

Jesus called the Pharisees “offspring of vipers,” and he said that they were wicked because of “the abundance of their heart.” The word “Gehenna” referred to the strongest existing punishment, but whether the people in the days of Jesus connected Gehenna with eternal annihilation, we do not know. However, some Pharisees had blasphemed and insulted the holy spirit, from which there was no forgiveness, according to Jesus. And therefore, they deserved the strongest form of punishment.

The situation with the Pharisees illustrates how Jehovah “searches the kidneys and hearts” of humans. (Revelation 2:23) When he finds that a person is permeated by wickedness because “the treasure of his heart” is wicked, this person is not “counted worthy of gaining that system of things and the resurrection from the dead.” (Luke 20:35).

Even though the persons who sin against the holy spirit are not qualified to make a fair decision about their eternal future, it is not unjust for Jehovah to annihilate these persons forever. By reading their heart, Jehovah sees that they are so permeated by wickedness that they will never under any circumstances repent and do the will of God.

Who these persons are who have sinned against the holy spirit, we do not know because only God can read the hearts of human beings. However, Awake! of May 22, 1963, page 28, had the article “Resurrection — for whom?” where the magazine had an excellent definition of those who had sinned against the holy spirit:

*There will not be a resurrection for the willfully, deliberately, incorrigibly wicked, those without the slightest spark remaining of conscience or love of righteousness.*

Because of God's righteousness and love for humans, this is an excellent definition of those who have sinned against the holy spirit.

## DISCUSSING PASSAGES SUGGESTING THAT SALVATION IS ONLY FOR THE FEW

*The words of Jesus suggesting that only a few will be saved were not directed to all humans living on earth, but only to individual Jews who could receive the heavenly calling.*

*The Jewish nation was offered to contribute 144,000 members of spiritual Israel. They failed to do so, and the nation was rejected by God. Individual Jews could become members of spiritual Israel to fill the places of people of the nations who had become unfaithful, but they had to exert themselves vigorously in order to achieve this.*

*Jesus said that those following the broad and spacious road go off into destruction. This is also taken as evidence that only a few will be saved. The context shows that those who “go off into destruction” will die and get a resurrection.*

*The words about a few that will be saved relate to some people in a restricted situation and cannot be applied to the whole human family.*

Chapter 3 discussed the resurrection and pointed out that all Adam’s descendants who die because of inherited sin will get a resurrection. However, some expressions of Jesus seem to dispute this conclusion. In this Chapter, I will discuss the meaning of these expressions according to their contexts.

## SALVATION INTO THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM FOR MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH NATION

A man approached Jesus and said, according to Luke 13:23, “Lord, are those being saved few?” Jesus answered: “Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will seek to get in but will not be able.”

These words of Jesus referred to people living in his day, and they seem to contradict the main point of Chapter 6, that people with inherited sin are not qualified to decide their eternal destiny. To be qualified for this, they must first be perfect like Adam. It also seems to contradict the main point of Chapter 3, which states that all who die because of inherited sin will receive a resurrection with the possibility to choose everlasting life.

*The key to the understanding of Jesus' words is that they refer to the new heavens, to the 144,000 with the heavenly calling. And they do not refer to the new earth, to the resurrection during the thousand-year-long Judgment Day.*

I will now discuss the words of Jesus according to Luke 13:23-30:

<sup>23</sup> Now a man said to him: *“Lord, are those being saved (sōzō) few?”* He said to them: <sup>24</sup> *“Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will seek to get in but will not be able.”* <sup>25</sup> When the householder gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside knocking at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us.’ But in answer he will say to you: ‘I do not know where you are from.’ <sup>26</sup> Then you will start saying, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our main streets.’ <sup>27</sup> But he will say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from. Get away from me, all you workers of unrighteousness!’ <sup>28</sup> There is where your weeping and the gnashing of your teeth will be, when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown outside. <sup>29</sup> Furthermore, people will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the Kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> *And look! there are those last who will be first, and there are those first who will be last.”*

There is a parallel account in Matthew 8:10-12

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard that, he was amazed and said to those following him: “I tell you the truth, with no one in Israel have I found so great a faith. <sup>11</sup> But I tell you that many from east and west *will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of the heavens;* <sup>12</sup> *whereas the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside.* There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.”

We do not know exactly what the man had in mind with the use of the Greek word *sōzō*. The meaning of this Greek word is “to save, rescue; to preserve safe and unharmed.” (Mounce) The word *sōzō* is used in the Christian Greek Scriptures to describe being cured from sicknesses and rescued from various situations. It is also used in connection with the hope of a future life.

## THE VIEW OF SALVATION AMONG THE JEWS

There are two sources that can be used to learn about Jewish beliefs regarding salvation, namely the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Mishnah. The Mishnah was compiled around 250 CE. But it contains many traditions that were written in BCE and in the first and second centuries CE. The book *Avot* 4:16 in the *Mishnah* says:

A.R. Jacob says, “This world (*hā ‘olām haʿẓmā*) is like a vestibule before the world to come’ (*hā ‘olām habbā*).

There are different viewpoints in the Rabbinic literature regarding what “this world to come” is. But it is agreed that it is a world with blessings from God.

The community at Qumran used the Hebrew Scriptures extensively, and on this basis, they had viewpoints regarding judgment day, salvation, and everlasting life. The Day of Judgment is mentioned in four different manuscripts. The commentary of Habakkuk (1QpHab) 12:12-14 refers to idols mentioned in Habakkuk 2:18 and says:

This refers to all <sup>13</sup> idols of the Gentiles that they made to worship and bow down to, <sup>14</sup> though they will not save them on *the day of judgment*.

The manuscript 1Q14 8f 10:8, 9, says:

<sup>8</sup> [God, the ones who observe the law] in the party of the Yahad who will be saved (*nātsal*, take away, deliver) on *the Day of* <sup>9</sup> *Judgment* ...]

The text in brackets is reconstructed. The word “Yahad” refers to the community at Qumran, and the members of this community will be saved on Judgment Day. The phrase “day of judgment” is not found in the Hebrew scriptures. But the word “judgment” with reference to the time God will judge people is found in Ecclesiastes 11:9 and 12:14. The idea that God will judge people is mentioned many places in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The words of “everlasting life” (*hayyim netsach*) are found in five Qumran manuscripts:

4Q228f1i9 says:

<sup>9</sup> [... *lif*]e *everlasting*. For thus is it written in the divisions of <sup>10</sup> [the times (?)]

The Damascus Document (CD) 3:20, says:

<sup>19</sup> So He built for them a faithful house in Israel, like none that had ever appeared before; and even <sup>20</sup> at this day, those who hold firm to it shall receive *everlasting life*, and all human honor is rightly theirs

The Community Rule (1QS) IV:7, 8, says:

To these ends is the earthly counsel of the spirit to those whose nature yearns for truth. Through a gracious visitation all who walk in this spirit will know healing, <sup>7</sup> bountiful peace, long life, and multiple progeny, followed by eternal (*‘ōlamim*) blessings and perpetual joy through *life everlasting* (*nētsach*). They will receive a crown of glory <sup>8</sup> with a robe of honor, resplendent forever and ever.

The last word of interest in this discussion is “to save” or “salvation.” The noun occurs 49 times and the verb occurs 52 times in the Qumran manuscripts. I have already quoted The Habakkuk Commentary 12:12-14 in connection with Judgment Day. I quote it again because it also has the word “salvation” in a negative context:

This refers to all <sup>13</sup> idols of the Gentiles that they made to worship and bow down to, <sup>14</sup> though *they will not save them on the day of judgment*.

The Thanksgiving Psalms (1QH<sup>a</sup>) 7:29 has the word “salvation” in a positive context.

<sup>28</sup> the righteous one, and from the womb You established him to give heed to Your covenant at the appointed time of grace and to walk in all things, nourishing himself <sup>29</sup> in the abundance of Your compassion, and relieving all the distress of his soul for *an eternal salvation* (*lishūat ‘ōlam*) and everlasting peace without want. Thus You raise <sup>30</sup> his glory above the mortal. But the wicked You created for [the time of] Your [w]rath, and from the womb You set them apart for the day of slaughter.

The Damascus Document (CD) 20:34 also speaks of “salvation” in a positive context:

All the inhabitants of the earth. Then God will make atonement for them and they will experience His *salvation* (*yeshuah*) because they have trusted in His holy name.

The War Scroll (1QM) 1:5 also speaks of the “salvation” of the people of God:

I[srael. Then the]re shall be *a time of salvation* for the People of God, and time of dominion for all the men of His forces, *and eternal annihilation for all the forces of Belial.*

The picture we get by comparing the quotations above is that there will be a day of judgment, and the people of God will be saved on that day. The reward of those who are saved will be everlasting life. This is what both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures say. The contrast is seen in the last quotation. Those who are in the army of Belial, i.e., those who do not belong to Yahad, the Qumran community, will be eternally annihilated.

We now have a background from which we can look at the question, “Are those being saved few?” The man might have heard Jesus preach about the kingdom of God directly or indirectly, which could have been the background for his question. Or, he could have had the Jewish view of salvation in mind.

The view of the Jews as seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Mishna was that salvation was connected with the world to come and with the Day of Judgment. Those who were saved would get everlasting life in the world to come. If this were the background of the man, he could have wondered if salvation was for the few or for the many. The War Scroll from Qumran could also have been his background. It describes the war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. And because the Sons of Light were the small community at Qumran, he could have wondered whether only this small group would be saved into the world to come.

## THE JEWS WERE THE FIRST ONES WHO WERE CALLED TO THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

Regardless of what the man had in mind, Jesus’s answer relates to the calling of Jews to become members of spiritual Israel, with the hope of reigning together with him in heaven. The nation of Israel was the people of God. But this nation should not continue to be the people of God under any circumstances, only if they fulfilled specific conditions. We read in Exodus 19:5, 6:

<sup>5</sup> And now if YOU will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then YOU will certainly become my special property out of all [other] peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. <sup>6</sup> *And YOU yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* These are the words that you are to say to the sons of Israel.”



The nation violated the covenant of God repeatedly, and at last they were rejected as God's people and as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God would now create a people from all the nations who were spiritual Israel. I quote 1 Peter 2:9, 10:

<sup>9</sup> But YOU are "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession*," that YOU should declare abroad the excellencies" of the one that called YOU out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> For YOU were once not a people, but are now God's people; YOU were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy.

Characteristics of this new nation, the spiritual Israel, is seen in 1 Peter 1:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *the temporary residents scattered about in Pon'tus, Ga-la'ti'a, Cap'pa-do'ci'a, Asia, and Bi-thyn'i'a*, to the ones chosen <sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, with sanctification by the spirit, for the purpose of their being obedient and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ: May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to YOU.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for according to his great mercy he gave us a new birth to *a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for YOU.*

Those to whom Peter wrote were from different nations, but now they were one people, one holy nation. They had received the heavenly calling and looked forward to a life in heaven. In his letter to the Romans, Paul mentions spiritual Israel several times. In chapter 11, he shows that this nation with the heavenly calling had a particular finite number. And John, in Revelation 7:4, shows that spiritual Israel has 144,000 members. Paul shows in Romans chapter 11 that the fleshly Israelites were initially offered the opportunity to contribute 144,000 members to spiritual Israel. But they failed to do so.<sup>19</sup> This is also implied in the last parts of the two accounts discussing the question of whether those being saved are few. I quote Luke 13:30 (above) and Matthew 8:11,12:

<sup>30</sup> And look! there are those last who will be first, and *there are those first who will be last.*"

<sup>11</sup> But I tell you that many from east and west will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in *the Kingdom of the heavens*; <sup>12</sup> whereas the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside.

The situation Jesus discusses involves the kingdom of the heavens and those with a heavenly calling. The word "the first" refers to the Jews who were first offered to contribute the 144,000 members to spiritual Israel, but who only contributed some members. The word "the last" refers to the people of the nations who contributed with the rest of the members of spiritual Israel, as Romans chapter 11 shows.

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19. For a detailed analysis of Romans chapter 11, see my article, "Fleshly Israel and Spiritual Israel According to the Letter to the Romans." (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/05/06/fleshly-israel-and-spiritual-israel-according-to-the-letter-to-the-romans/>)

And similarly, “the sons of the Kingdom” were fleshly Jews who were thrown outside, in contrast to people of the nations who would come from east and west and fill the rest of the 144,000 places in spiritual Israel.

## THE SYMBOLS OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

It is important to remember that there are several requirements for those who will be a part of the heavenly government of 144,000 kings. These requirements could not be met by persons who lived before Jesus Christ came to the earth. One reason for this is that one requirement is the application of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, and this sacrifice could not be applied to persons who lived before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Another requirement is expressed by Jesus when he spoke with Nicodemus, and by Peter. We read in John 3:1-8 (above) and 1 Peter 1:3, 4 (below):

<sup>1</sup>There was a man of the Pharisees named Nic·o·de'mus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This one came to him in the night and said to him: “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, for no one can perform these signs that you perform unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup>In response Jesus said to him: “Most truly I say to you, *unless anyone is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*” <sup>4</sup>Nic·o·de'mus said to him: “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter into the womb of his mother a second time and be born, can he?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered: “Most truly I say to you, *unless anyone is born from water and spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*” <sup>6</sup>What has been born from the flesh is flesh, and what has been born from the spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be amazed because I told you: You people must be born again. <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who has been born from the spirit.”

<sup>3</sup>Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for according to his great mercy he gave us *a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, <sup>4</sup>to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for you.

Jesus shows that to become a part of the kingdom of God, a person must be born again, which means to be born from water and spirit. Peter shows that the new birth leads to an unfading inheritance that is reserved in the heavens. He also shows that the basis for the new birth is the resurrection of Jesus. In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus also shows that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were dead and had not been born again, had not ascended to heaven. John 3:13 says:

<sup>13</sup>Moreover, no man has ascended into heaven but the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man.

In his speech on the day of Pentecost in the year 33 CE, Peter confirmed that the righteous persons of old had not ascended to heaven. We read in Acts 2:34, 35:

<sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, ‘Jehovah said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand <sup>35</sup> until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.”’<sup>20</sup>

Let us now look at the words of Jesus in Luke 13:28, 29, and Matthew 8:11-12. I take the words of Matthew as the point of departure.

<sup>11</sup> But I tell you that many from east and west will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of the heavens; <sup>12</sup> whereas the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside.

The Kingdom of the heavens is a literal entity. It is the heavenly government of 144 000 members and Jesus Christ. But apart from that, the words of Jesus cannot be understood literally because they are used as illustrations. Jesus compared the kingdom of the heavens with a building on the earth where there was a feast. People would be traveling from east, west, north, and south, and they would have a meal at the table in the house together with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets.

The important point in the illustration is that “the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside” of the house where the feast is. And, as I have shown, they are the members of fleshly Israel who were first offered to contribute 144,000 members to spiritual Israel. The only thing that must be understood literally is that the account refers to “the kingdom of the heavens.” The following points are a part of the symbolic drama.

- 1) The house of the feast.
- 2) The table in the house.
- 3) The meal that is served on the table.
- 4) The traveling of people from all directions.
- 5) Being thrown outside of the house.
- 6) The darkness outside.
- 7) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets.

We should note that each of the points above does not symbolize one particular thing. But they are there in order to show the totality of the symbolic drama – the kingdom of the heavens portrayed as a feast in a house. However, the persons mentioned have a particular symbolic reference. Those who come traveling from all directions symbolize those people of the nations that will become members of the heavenly kingdom. Let us then look at the patriarchs and the prophets and their symbolic references.

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20. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a clear distinction between those with “the heavenly calling” (3:1) and those who will live in “the coming inhabited earth” (2:5). Chapter 11 shows that God’s servants who lived before the common era and who showed faith, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will live on the new earth. See my article, “‘God foresaw something better for us, in order that they might not be made perfect apart from us’ (Hebrews 11:39)” (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2025/09/25/god-foresaw-something-better-for-us-in-order-that-they-might-not-be-made-perfect-apart-from-us-hebrews-1139/>)

The reason I say the patriarchs and prophets cannot be understood literally is due to the points I have already discussed, which indicate that none of them will be part of the heavenly kingdom.

One example where a historical person is used as part of a symbolic drama (*allegoreō*) is Melchizedek who pictured God's Son, Jesus Christ, as we read in Hebrews 7:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> For this Mel·chiz'e·dek, king of Sa'lem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup> and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name is translated "King of Righteousness," and then also king of Sa'lem, that is, "King of Peace."<sup>3</sup> In being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, but being made like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explains a symbolic drama in the same way as the one connected to Melchizedek. We read in Galatians 4:22-31:

<sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who want to be under law, Do you not hear the Law? <sup>22</sup> For example, it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the servant girl and one by the free woman; <sup>23</sup> but the one by the servant girl was actually born through natural descent and the other by the free woman through a promise. <sup>24</sup> These things may be taken as a *symbolic drama* (*allegoreō*); for these women mean two covenants, the one from Mount Si'nai, which bears children for slavery and which is Ha'gar. <sup>25</sup> Now Ha'gar means Si'nai, a mountain in Arabia, and she corresponds with the Jerusalem today, for she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>27</sup> For it is written: "Be glad, you barren woman who does not give birth; break into joyful shouting, you woman who does not have birth pains; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of her who has the husband." <sup>28</sup> Now you, brothers, are children of the promise the same as Isaac was. <sup>29</sup> But just as then the one born through natural descent began persecuting the one born through spirit, so also now. <sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, what does the scripture say? "Drive out the servant girl and her son, for the son of the servant girl will by no means be an heir with the son of the free woman." <sup>31</sup> So, brothers, we are children, not of a servant girl, but of the free woman.

The word in verse 24 that is translated as "a symbolic drama" is *allegoreō*. The meaning of this word according to Louw and Nida is, "To employ an analogy or likeness in communication; speak allegorically," and Mounce has the definition: "to say what is either designed or fitted to convey a meaning other than the literal one, to allegorize." This Greek word is not used in other passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

In the drama, the symbolic meaning of the wives of Abraham is described, and if we ask for the symbolic meaning of Abraham, that must be Jehovah God. God was the husband of the "Jerusalem above," the heavenly creatures, and he was also the husband of Israel, according to Isaiah 54:1-5. When Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham pictured Jehovah, who would sacrifice his Son, Jesus Christ.

I have already pointed out that the words of Jesus in Luke 13:23-30 and Matthew 8:11, 12 describe a symbolic drama. And based on Paul's symbolic drama, we can conclude that Abraham represents Jehovah God, Isaac represents Jesus Christ, and

Jacob represents spiritual Israel, with the same being true for all the prophets. Those persons who come from all directions are people of the nations who will participate in a feast in the heavens together with Jehovah, Jesus, and the other heavenly kings.

The words of Jesus in Luke 13:24 were:

<sup>24</sup> “Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will seek to get in but will not be able.

These words refer exclusively to individual Jews. The Jewish nation was offered to contribute 144,000 members of spiritual Israel, but they failed to do so. However, Romans chapter 11 shows that if a person of the nations had become a member of spiritual Israel but had lost his faith and had become unfaithful, a fleshly Jew could take his or her place. But in that situation, the Jew had to “exert himself vigorously” to be worthy of this place.

Those who are thrown “into the darkness outside,” according to the illustration, refer to the whole Jewish nation that did not become a part of the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel, those “first” who will be “the last.” They lost this excellent opportunity. But that does not mean that they were eternally condemned. To the contrary, Jesus showed, according to Matthew 12:39-42, that “the wicked and adulterous generation” which refers to the whole nation of Israel in the days of Jesus, will get a resurrection on Judgment Day.

## SALVATION INTO THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM FOR MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH NATION

In his sermon on the Mount, Jesus used words similar to those in Luke 13:23-30, and I quote Matthew 7:13,14, 21-27:

<sup>13</sup> “*Go in through the narrow gate*; because broad and spacious is the road *leading off into destruction* (*apolhymē*) and many are the ones going in through it; <sup>14</sup> whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road *leading off into life* (*zōē*) and few are the ones finding it.

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ *will enter into the kingdom of the heavens*, but the one doing *the will of my Father who is in the heavens* will. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew YOU! Get away from me, YOU *workers of lawlessness*.

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. <sup>25</sup> And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass. <sup>26</sup> Furthermore, *everyone hearing these sayings of mine and not doing them* will be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. <sup>27</sup> And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and struck against that house and it caved in, and its collapse was great.”

The setting of both the account in Luke 13:23-30 and in Matthew 7:13, 21-27 is the kingdom of the heavens and its 144,000 members. According to Luke, Jesus

spoke about the narrow door, through which few will enter. And according to Matthew, Jesus spoke about the narrow gate through which few are entering.

In both instances, the listeners of Jesus were Jews, and the point is again that the Jewish nation failed to provide the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel. When the nation of Israel was rejected, individual Jews must “exert themselves vigorously” or “go in through the narrow gate” to fill the place of a person of the nations who has lost his or her place.

Because of the setting, we cannot use the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:13,14, 21-27 to show that it is difficult to get everlasting life and only a few will get this reward. However, I will consider the contrast that is mentioned. According to Luke 13:23-30 and Matthew 8:10-12, those who went through the narrow door “should recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of the heavens” while others should “be thrown into the darkness outside.”

The parallel in Matthew 7:13 is that the narrow gate leads to life (*ζωή*), and the broad road leads to destruction (*apollymi*). Thus, “life” is here to live in the kingdom of the heavens, while “destruction” is not to live in the kingdom of God.

But let us look more closely at how Jesus used the Greek word *apollymi* (“destruction”).

### THE REFERENCE OF “DESTRUCTION” (*APOLLYMI*) IN MATTHEW 7:13

The Greek word *apollymi* has the meaning “to destroy or to cause the destruction of persons, objects, or institutions.” (Louw and Nida) As it is used in Matthew 7:13, it stands as the opposite of life, representing the lack of life. One entry in Mounce Greek Dictionary (Gramcord) for *apollymi* in Matthew 7:13 is “*eternal ruin, perdition.*” This is also the viewpoint of many other commentators. But applying Jesus’ words to eternal destruction, definitely is against the context.

Verse 13 shows that the narrow gate leads to life (*ζωή*), and the broad road leads to destruction (*apollymi*). Thus, “life” is here to live in the kingdom of the heavens, while “destruction” is not to live in the kingdom of the heavens. This is confirmed by verse 21 with the words “entering into the kingdom of God,” which means to be one of the 144,000 who will reign with Jesus Christ in heaven.

We should keep in mind that the Jewish nation was offered to fill the 144,000 places in the heavenly government. But they failed to do this, and the whole nation was rejected by God. The Greek word *apollymi* (“destruction”) refers to the Jews who were not able to become a part of spiritual Israel and enter the heavenly kingdom.

*It is of utmost importance to realize that the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14 refer to the situation with the Jewish nation and the kingdom of the heavens, and that his words do not refer to the eternal destiny of all Adam’s descendants.*



The gospel of Matthew is inspired by God. This does not mean that God dictated the words that Matthew should write, but that God's spirit directed Matthew to choose the right events from the life of Jesus. This means that the gospel is a harmonious whole with no contradictions.

When we compare the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:13-21 with his words in chapter 12, we will see that *apollymi* in Matthew 7:13 has the meaning "not getting life in the kingdom of heavens," and that it does not refer to the eternal destiny of the human family. Let us see.

What are the reasons why individual Jews would not enter the kingdom of God? They did not do the will of God (7:21), and they were workers of lawlessness — they did not keep the law of Moses (7:73). They were hearing the words of Jesus but not doing them (7:26). Would such actions deserve the adverse judgment of eternal annihilation? And would the use of *apollymi* in 7:13 refer to "*eternal ruin*," as one Greek lexicon says? The answer to both questions is No! The words of Jesus show this.

Jesus spoke about sin in Matt 12:31, 32:

<sup>31</sup> "On this account I say to YOU, *Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven.* <sup>32</sup> For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come.

Instead of being eternally annihilated if a person violates the law of God, the sins of him or her will be forgiven, according to the words of Jesus.

*The word "destruction" (apollymi) in Matthew 7:13 refers to a death from which there is a resurrection and not to eternal annihilation.*

## WHO ARE THE COWARDS AND THOSE WITHOUT FAITH? (REVELATION 21:8)

We have now discussed the words Jesus used about salvation and destruction. Jesus gave the Revelation to John, and I will now discuss two passages in Revelation that address persons who have sinned against the holy spirit.

Revelation chapter 20 deals with events during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, and chapters 21 and 22 deal with the situation after the thousand years have ended. The earth has now become a paradise filled with perfect humans who worship Jehovah, and all those who have followed the Devil have been annihilated. In this context, we find two passages that seem somewhat strange, namely Revelation 21:8 (above) and 22:15 (below):

<sup>8</sup> But as for the cowards and those without faith and those who are disgusting in their filth and murderers and fornicators and those practicing spiritism and idolaters and all the liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This means the second death."

<sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and those who practice spiritism and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone liking and carrying on a lie.

The key to understanding these verses is the word “outside” in 22:15. This word indicates that the mentioned persons are outside the holy city. This city is mentioned in 21:2 and 22:2. Why are some people outside this city? We read in 20:9 that those who follow the Devil “encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city.” These people are “outside” the beloved city. According to 20:15, those who are outside the city are those who follow the Devil after the thousand years and attack the holy city. They will be hurled into the lake of fire, and this is the destiny of the wicked persons who are mentioned in 21:8 and 22:15.

Thus, the words about the wicked people represent a retrospective view of what happened after the end of the thousand years, when the Devil misled an unknown number of those who had become perfect at the end of the thousand years.

## ANALYZING PASSAGES SUPPOSED TO INDICATE ETERNAL ANNIHILATION FOR SINNERS (I)

### INTRODUCTION

C.T. Russell and the Bible Students believed in The Divine Plan of the Ages, which holds that almost all of the approximately 30 billion people who have lived on the earth will be resurrected during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

I show in Chapter 11 that in 1924, The Divine Plan of the Ages was rejected, and this opens the possibility that billions of Adam's descendants will be eternally annihilated. However, 12 articles in The Watchtower in 1965 restored the Bible Students' view that most of Adam's descendants will have a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

However, in 1988, the conclusions of the articles from 1965 were rejected, and the prevailing view is that billions of Adam's descendants, probably most of them, will be everlastingly annihilated.

The basic reason for the view that billions of Adam's descendants will be eternally annihilated is as follows:

The Bible Students believed that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam's descendants, and that Jesus bought them all. This means that all Adam's descendants will get a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus except the extreme few who "willfully resist the saving power of the Great Deliverer." (*Studies in the Scriptures*, volume I)

However, from the year 1924 onward, the Bible students rejected The Divine Plan of the Ages because of the following scriptures:

<sup>7</sup> the heavens and the earth..., are being reserved to the day of judgment and of **destruction** of the ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7)

<sup>9</sup> These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of **everlasting destruction** from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength. (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

<sup>42</sup> and they will pitch them **into the fiery furnace**. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be. (Matthew 13:42)

<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say, in turn, to those on his left, 'Be on YOUR way from me, YOU who have been cursed, **into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels**.' (Matthew 25:41)

If some people "undergo the judicial punishment of **everlasting destruction**" and they are "**cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels**," how

can most of Adam's descendants get a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus?

Three errors were made in 1924, and they still stand.

- 1) The ransom sacrifice guarantees a resurrection for all who die because of Adam's sin. However, some people's sins are not due to inherited sin but due to their own wickedness. They have sinned against the holy spirit, and for such sins, there is no ransom sacrifice. They will be annihilated forever. The error is in applying passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures to those who die because of Adam's sin, which should be applied to those who have sinned against the holy spirit.
- 2) Some Greek words related to the judgment of people in this wicked system have been wrongly given the meaning "eternal annihilation."
- 3) The context of each account was not carefully considered.

With these errors in mind, I will now analyze the five texts that the members of the Governing Body use to support the view that was first expressed in 1924, that billions of Adam's descendants will be everlastingly annihilated:

- 1) The illustration of the sheep and the goats. (Matthew 25:31-46)
- 2) The illustration of the wheat and the weeds. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42)
- 3) The words in 2 Peter 3:7 about the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people.
- 4) The words in 1 Thessalonians 1:6-9 about vengeance and everlasting destruction.
- 5) The destiny of the armies of the kings in Revelation 19:19-21, who will be killed.

The errors made in 1924 were, first and foremost, based on a wrong interpretation of the illustration of the sheep and the goats. Since then, different interpretations of this illustration have been the primary reason for the misconception that billions of humans will be annihilated forever. Below, I will discuss this illustration in detail.

## THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

*The illustration does not describe how the inhabitants of the nations of the world are separated into two groups, "sheep" and "goats," as the members of the Governing Body claim.*

*The brothers of Jesus are found in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, and treating them in a good or bad way reveals that one must be a part of one of these congregations.*

*The “goats” are persons who have known the truth about God preached by the brothers of Jesus, but they have rejected this truth and thereby have sinned against the holy spirit.*

The view of the present members of the Governing Body is that the words in verses 31 and 32 of Matthew chapter 25 that the Son of man “comes in his glory,” and he “will sit down on his glorious throne,” refer to the great tribulation. Then “all the nations will gather before him, and he will separate people one from another just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Because the destiny of the goats is “the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels” (verse 41), this evidently means everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection for billions of people.

The Watchtower of March 15, 2015, page 26, says:

<sup>3</sup> To understand the illustration of the sheep and the goats correctly, we need to grasp three key elements of the account: the *identity* of those mentioned, the *timing* of the judgment, and the *reason* for being classified as either a sheep or a goat.

These are good points that I will now consider.

## THE TIME OF THE FULFILLMENT OF THE ILLUSTRATION

From the year 1924 and for 71 years, the view was that the words in 25:31, “When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne,” refer to the establishment of the heavenly Kingdom in the year 1914 and the presence of Jesus Christ, when he rules in the midst of his enemies. But The Watchtower of October 15, 1995, pages 22, 23, presented a different view. I quote from this article:

<sup>23</sup> If we analyze Jesus’ activity in the parable, we observe him finally judging all the nations... The parable, though, depicts the time when Jesus judges the people of “all the nations” who are then alive and facing the execution of his judicial sentence.

<sup>25</sup> *This means, then, that Jesus’ ‘sitting down on his glorious throne’ for judgment, mentioned at Matthew 25:31, applies to the future point when this powerful King will sit down to pronounce and execute judgment on the nations.*

We note the words that Jesus will be gathering “all the nations” before him and not some of them. It is not stated that he will judge “all the nations.” But he will separate “people” one from another. The people he will separate, of course, belong to the different nations. But there is no stated relationship between all the nations and the people that will be separated.

**The text tells about two separate actions:**

- 1) The Son of man will gather all the nations before him.**

2) He will separate individual humans like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

That the Son of man will judge the nations is something that was invented by the members of the Governing Body without any basis in the text of the Bible.

The word “comes” in 25:31 is *erkbomai* (“come”), and we can find its reference by studying the context. In Acts 1:11, *erkbomai* refers to Jesus’ return as king in 1914. But in Matthew 24:30, 42, 44, 46, *erkbomai* refers to the coming of Jesus in the great tribulation. However, the words about the transfiguration of Jesus on the holy mountain can help us find the correct time setting for the fulfillment of Matthew 25:31.

I will now compare the words in Matthew 25:31 with what the gospel writers say about the transfiguration:

**Matthew 25:31:** <sup>31</sup>“When the Son of man *comes in his glory*, and all *the angels with him*, then he *will sit down on his glorious throne*.

**Matthew 16:27, 28:** <sup>27</sup>For the Son of man is to *come in the glory of his Father with his angels*, and then he will repay each one according to his behavior. <sup>28</sup>Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here who will not taste death at all until first they *see the Son of man coming in his Kingdom*.”

**Mark 8:38, 9:1:** <sup>38</sup>For whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when *he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he said to them: “Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here who will not taste death at all until first they *see the Kingdom of God already having come* (*erkbomai*, perfect participle active) *in power*.”

**Luke 9:26, 27:** <sup>26</sup>For whoever becomes ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will be ashamed of that person when *he comes in his glory and that of the Father and of the holy angels*.<sup>27</sup> But I tell you truly, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death at all until first they *see the Kingdom of God*.”

There are three important expressions in Matthew 25:31: 1) “comes in his glory,” 2) “with the angels,” and 3) “sit down on his glorious throne.” In the presentation of the transfiguration, the three gospel writers use the words “glory” and “angels,” which are also found in Matthew 25:31. Additionally, the phrase “sit down on his glorious throne” in Matthew 25:31 has a parallel as well.

Six days after Jesus spoke his words, the apostles saw his transfiguration. What they saw was not Jesus acting as judge in the great tribulation, but rather “the kingdom of God” and “the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” These words can only refer to the kingdom of God that was established in the year 1914. The words of Mark are particularly illuminating. He uses the perfect active participle of the verb *erkbomai* (“come”), and the translation must be “see the kingdom of God having come.” (The word “already” in NWT13 is added and is not in the Greek text.) The point here is that the transfiguration showed that the kingdom of God had come; it



was established. And what they saw was not the great tribulation that was the end of the presence of Jesus, but rather its beginning.

One of the apostles who was on the holy mountain with Jesus and who saw his transfiguration was Peter. In his second letter, he referred to the transfiguration, and his words are important. 2 Peter 1:16-18 says:

<sup>16</sup>No, it was not by following artfully contrived false stories that we made known to you the power and **presence** (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but rather, we were eyewitnesses of his magnificence. <sup>17</sup>For he received from God the Father honor and glory when words such as these were conveyed to him by the magnificent glory: “This is my Son, my beloved, whom I myself have approved.” <sup>18</sup>Yes, these words we heard coming from heaven while we were with him in the holy mountain.

Peter confirms the conclusion I already have reached that the transfiguration referred to the coming of Jesus as king in the year 1914 and the establishing of the heavenly Kingdom. Peter says directly that the transfiguration showed **the presence** of Jesus. When the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31 parallel his words about the transfiguration, we have strong evidence that the words in Matthew 25:31 refer to the presence of Jesus from the year 1914 and not to his coming in the great tribulation.

*The members of the Governing Body apply the illustration to Jesus' judgment of the nations and all humans in the great tribulation. The word “judgment” is not found in the text. Two different actions are described: Jesus gathers all the nations before him in order to rule in their midst, and he separates humans that are not identified into two groups during his presence.*

## THE EARTHLY KINGDOM THAT WILL MAKE THE EARTH A PARADISE

Although the illustration refers to the time when Jesus becomes king and the kingdom of God is established, it does not specifically address the different characteristics of **the heavenly kingdom**, as seen in the illustration in Matthew 25:1-13 about the five foolish and the five discreet virgins. But verse 34 in chapter 25 shows that the illustration refers to people who will live in the coming **earthly kingdom**:

<sup>34</sup>“Then the King will say to those on his right: ‘Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit **the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world**.’

When we look for clues that can identify “the kingdom” that is described, we need to consider the time factor that is mentioned in the verse, namely, “the founding of the world.” According to Luke 11:50, 51, the foundation/founding (*katabolē*) of the world (the human family) was laid at the time of Abel when children were born to Adam and Eve. Hebrews 11:11 confirms that *katabolē* is connected with the procreation of children.

The expression “the founding of the world” is also used in the letter to the Ephesians. We read in 1:3, 4, and 2:6:

<sup>3</sup> Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in union with Christ, <sup>4</sup> as he chose us to be in union with him *before the founding of the world*, that we should be holy and unblemished before him in love...

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus.

These verses show that the hope of members of the congregation in Ephesus was to rule with Jesus Christ in his heavenly kingdom. What is particularly important in 1:4 is the use of the preposition. The verse says that the Ephesians whose hope was the heavenly kingdom were chosen *before (pro) the founding of the world*. However, the kingdom that the sheep would inherit according to Matthew 26:34 was prepared *from (apo) the founding of the world*. The two prepositions are mutually exclusive, indicating that the kingdom mentioned in 25:34 is distinct from the heavenly kingdom.

The only alternative is the earthly kingdom that will exist on the earth during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ and after that forever. That there is both a heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom is confirmed in Hebrews chapters 2 and 3. In 2:5 we read about “the coming *inhabited earth*,” and in 3:1 we read about those who are “partakers of *the heavenly calling*.” We appreciate very much that Jesus mentions both the heavenly and the earthly kingdoms in his great prophecy about his presence.

The two different hopes, the heavenly one and the earthly one, are not only seen in the use of the preposition *apo* (“from”) in Matthew in contrast with the preposition *pro* (“before”) in the letter to the Ephesians. But it is also seen in the relationship between the persons that are mentioned in the illustration of the sheep and the goats.

The word “sheep” refers to persons who have God’s approval and who will inherit the earthly kingdom. But there is another group that is mentioned, namely, the brothers of Jesus, in 25:40. The group called the brothers of Jesus in Hebrew 2:11, who also are children of God, according to 2:13, are “partakes of the heavenly calling” according to 3:1. This indicates that the brothers of Jesus that are mentioned together with the “sheep” also are partakers of the heavenly calling.

This conclusion is confirmed in the letter to the Romans, chapter 8. Verses 29 and 30 say that Jesus is “the firstborn among many brothers,” whom God called to the heavenly kingdom. Being brothers of Jesus, these individuals are also the children of God. Just as is the case in Matthew 25:31-46, two different groups are also mentioned in Romans 8:14-23:

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by God’s spirit are indeed God’s sons. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: “*Abba*, Father!” <sup>16</sup> The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> If, then, we are children, we are also heirs—heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ—provided we suffer together so that we may also be glorified together. <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of the present time do not amount to anything in comparison with the glory that is going to be revealed in us.

<sup>19</sup> For *the creation* is waiting with eager expectation for the revealing of *the sons of God*. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but through the one who subjected it, on the basis of hope <sup>21</sup> that the *creation* itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of *the children of God*. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now. <sup>23</sup> Not only that, but we ourselves also who have the firstfruits, namely, the spirit, yes, we ourselves groan within ourselves while we are earnestly waiting for adoption as sons, the release from our bodies by ransom.

Paul shows that he and the Romans to whom his letter was addressed were God's sons or children (verses 14, 15). They were also joint heirs with Christ (verse 16), and they were earnestly waiting for the release of their bodies (Verse 23). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:50 that "flesh and blood cannot inherit God's Kingdom," and in verses 35 to 49, he shows that in order to reign with Jesus Christ in heaven, a person must die and get a spirit body in his resurrection. This is "the release from our bodies."

In addition to the mentioned group of God's children, who have the heavenly calling, there is another group, "the creation" (verse 19), which refers to Adam's descendants. They are "subjected to futility" (verse 19). But with the help of God's children in the heavenly government, they "will be set free from enslavement to corruption" during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. At the end of this period, when they will have reached perfection, they themselves will "have the glorious freedom of the children of God."

Thus, we see that the earthly kingdom is mentioned together with the heavenly kingdom in Romans chapter 8 and Hebrews chapters 2 and 3, and it is implied, together with the earthly kingdom in Matthew chapter 25.

The conclusion to this section is that the brothers of Jesus refer to those who will reign with him in heaven, and the "sheep" are those who will inherit the earthly kingdom.

## THE "GOATS" DO NOT REFER TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Matthew 25:32 NWT13 has the rendering: "he will separate people from each other," but the word "people" most likely will be misunderstood. The understanding of a part of the verse is that "people" refers to the inhabitants of all the nations, and that these inhabitants will be separated into two groups, sheep and goats. But that is a wrong understanding. In order to ascertain this, we need to know the Greek rules regarding pronouns that refer back to nouns. The rules in English regarding pronouns that refer back to nouns are quite similar to the rules in Greek. In order to illustrate the issue, I use an English example, namely, Matthew 5:28.

But I say to you that everyone who keeps on looking at a woman (*gynaika*, *feminine singular accusative*) so as to have a passion for her (*autēn*, *third person feminine singular accusative*) has already committed adultery with her (*autēn*, *third person feminine singular accusative*) in his heart.

\*But I say to you that everyone who keeps on looking at a woman (*gynaika*, *feminine singular accusative*) so as to have a passion for him (*auton*, *third person masculine singular accusative*) has already committed adultery with him (*auton*, *third person masculine singular accusative*) in his heart.

The first quotation is grammatical because the pronouns referring back to the woman are feminine, and “woman” (*gynaika*) is feminine. The second clause is marked with an asterisk because it is ungrammatical. It is not possible to use a masculine singular pronoun to refer back to a feminine singular noun. The rule is the same in Greek. A pronoun that refers back to a noun must have the same gender and number as the noun. Now we understand the rules that can help us answer the questions regarding whether the goats refer to inhabitants of the nations of the world.

Below is my translation of Matthew 25:32:

And all the nations (*panta ta ethne*, *plural nominative neuter*) will be gathered before him. And he will separate *them* (*autous*, *third person masculine plural accusative*) from each other (*allelon*, *masculine plural genitive*), just as the shepherd is separating the sheep from the goats.

Just as “him” in the ungrammatical example above cannot refer back to “the woman,” the pronoun “them” that is masculine cannot refer back to “the nations” that are neuter.

*The pronoun “them” must refer to some humans, but the identity of these humans is not specified in the verse.*

The conclusion is that those who will experience the everlasting fire are not all the inhabitants of the nations of the world who are not Jehovah’s Witnesses, but they are *some unidentified persons* expressed by the pronoun “*them*” among these inhabitants. A parallel example is found in Matthew 28:19, with my literal translation (above) and NWT13 (below):

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples *of all nations* (*ta ethnē*, *neuter plural accusative*), baptizing them (*autous*, *personal pronoun third masculine plural accusative*) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Go, therefore, and make disciples of *people of* all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit.

The grammatical construction in Matthew 28:19 is similar to the construction in 25:32. “All the nations” are neuter, and the following personal pronoun is masculine. Therefore, the personal pronoun cannot refer back to all the nations. The translators of NWT13 realized this, and therefore they added the words “*people of*” before “all the nations.” Thus, the personal pronoun “them” refers back to “*people of*” all the nations. Because the construction of 28:19 is similar to the construction of 25:32, those who are separated as goats are *some people of all the nations* and not all the inhabitants of all the nations.

All the nations were gathered before Jesus when he became king in 1914 because he is subduing in the midst of these nations. (Psalm 110:1, 2) And the Greek text is

clear: After Jesus became king, *some people who are a part of these nations* will be separated from one another into the two groups, sheep and goats.<sup>21</sup> So, the view that the members of the Governing Body have expressed that the “goats” are all the inhabitants of the nations of the world, except Jehovah’s Witnesses, who are the “sheep,” is grammatically impossible.

There is also a parallel example in Revelation 20:8, 9, and my translation is:

<sup>8</sup> And he [Satan] will go out to mislead (*planaō*, aorist active infinitive) the nations (*ta ethnē*, *neuter plural accusative*) those in the four corners of the earth, the Gog (masculine singular accusative) and Magog to gather (aorist active infinitive) *them* (*autous*, *personal pronoun third person masculine plural accusative*) to the war, those being (*ōn*, relative pronoun, masculine plural accusative). And their (*autōn*, *personal pronoun third person masculine plural accusative*) number like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down out of heaven and devoured them (*autous*, *personal pronoun third person masculine plural accusative*)

In verse 8, the verb “mislead” (*planaō*) is aorist infinitive. An infinitive has no temporal reference, and this infinitive shows the purpose of Satan, namely, “to go out to mislead the nations.” But the text does not say that he succeeded in misleading the nations. To the contrary, the text says that Satan will “gather *them*.” The personal pronoun “*them*” is masculine, and therefore it cannot refer back to the nations that are neuter.

So, the situation is exactly the same as with those who would be baptized (Matthew 28:19): people from all nations, but not all nations, would be baptized. The situation is also the same as with the “goats”: they are not the inhabitants of all the nations, but some of these inhabitants. Satan will not mislead the nations at the four corners of the earth, but some people of these nations. This is seen by the use of the masculine personal pronoun three times in verses 8 and 9.

What can we say about Gog and Magog? The word “Gog” has the masculine singular article, and therefore, Gog cannot refer back to the nations that are neuter plural. The word Magog does not have the article, but grammatically speaking, when two names are connected with “and,” only the first name has the article, and the article is implied in connection with the second name. This means that Gog and Magog are grammatically dual, and because of this, the plural pronoun “*them*” can refer back to Gog and Magog. This means that “Gog and Magog” are not designations of the nations at the four corners of the earth, but designations of those

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21. The personal pronoun that the NWT13 translates as “the people” is *autous*, which is third person masculine plural accusative. If the personal pronoun referred back to “nations” that are neuter, the pronoun must have been *auta*, which is third person neuter plural accusative. The antecedent of *autous* is not grammatical but logical, namely, unspecified persons from the nations. I would, therefore, have translated *autous* by “persons” and not by “the people,” with an explanation in a footnote.



persons of these nations who attack the encampment of the holy ones and the beloved city are called “Gog and Magog.”<sup>22</sup>

## THE NATIONS WILL BE PRESENT ON THE EARTH AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Jehovah gave a promise to Abraham, according to Genesis 22:18:

And by means of your seed **all nations** of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice.

The seed of Abraham refers to the 144,000 anointed Christians who will reign with Jesus in heaven, and who will serve as kings, judges, and priests during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

The members of the Governing Body say that the nations with their 8 billion+ inhabitants will be eternally annihilated in the great tribulation. The only ones who will survive are the about 20 million Jehovah’s Witnesses.

*The last chapters of Revelation show the very opposite, namely, that most of the approximately 30 billion people who have lived on earth, including the mentioned 8 billion+ humans who will die in the great tribulation, will have a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. And even more important: These chapters indicate that most of these people who have received a resurrection will pass the test after the thousand years and receive everlasting life:*

Revelation chapter 20 describes the thousand-year reign from the point of view of the resurrection and the final test of all humans. Chapters 21 and 22 describe the situation after the end of these thousand years. These chapters show that the nations of the earth were not eternally annihilated. But they show that the inhabitants of the nations are alive and well after the great tribulation.

I count that the word “nations” (*ethnos*) is used 23 times in Revelation, and the 19 occurrences of the word “nations” in the first 19 chapters always refer to the political nations of the world that are in opposition to God’s kingdom and his sovereignty. The great prostitute Babylon the Great is mentioned in chapters 17 and 18, and 18:23 says that “by your spiritistic practices **all the nations** (*ethnos*) were misled.”

I will now consider what will happen to the nations in and after the great tribulation. I start with Revelation 19:15:

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22. The distinction between the nations of the earth and those who will be judged is seen by expositors of the gospel of Matthew. For example, Robert H. Gundry says in his book *Matthew A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art*, page 512, “The shift from the neuter *panta ta ethnē*, “all the nations,” to the masculine *autous*, “them,” implies individual rather than national judgment (cf. 28:19, 29).



<sup>15</sup> And out of his [Jesus Christ] mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which *to strike* (*patassō*) *the nations* (*ethnos*), and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

The word *patassō* has the meaning, “to strike a heavy blow; to slay by means of a mortal blow or disease.” (Louw and Nida) The inhabitants of the nations will be killed in connection with the great tribulation. However, the nations will have a resurrection during the thousand years, and they will continue to live on the earth during this period. We see this in Revelation 20:2, 3:

<sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup> And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not mislead *the nations* (*ethnos*) anymore until the 1,000 years were ended. After this he must be released for a little while.

That Satan was bound for a thousand years, so he could not *mislead the nations*, shows that *the nations* will exist on the earth during this period. After the thousand years, the nations will still fill the earth, as we see in Revelation 20:7-9: (The rendering of NWT13 above and my literal translation below):

<sup>7</sup> Now as soon as the 1,000 years have ended, Satan will be released from his prison. <sup>8</sup> and he will go out to mislead *those nations* (*ethnos*) in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Ma'gog, to gather them together for the war. The number of these is as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they advanced over the whole earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down out of heaven and consumed them.

<sup>7</sup> And as soon as the 1,000 years have ended, Satan will be released from his prison. <sup>8</sup> and he will go out to mislead *the nations* (*neuter*), those in the four corners of the earth, the Gog and Magog (*masculine*), to gather them (*masculine*) for the war, they (*masculine*) being the number of them (*masculine*) like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they (*masculine*) went up upon the width of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the holy ones and the beloved city. And came down fire out of heaven and devoured them.

Please note the rendering of verse 8: “and he will go out to mislead the nations, those in the four corners of the earth.” The verse shows explicitly that *the nations* (*ethnos*) *are established and exist in the four corners of the earth* —over the whole earth — at the end of the thousand years.

Today, there are 195 nations of the world that are spread all over the earth; we could say that they are at the four corners of the earth. At the end of the thousand years, there is a similar situation; nations are spread all over the world. The inhabitants of the nations today have inherited sin, and because of this, they are on the point of ruining the earth. But the inhabitants of the nations referred to in Revelation 20:8 will, at the end of the 1,000 years, have no inherited sin but “they have come to life” (Revelation 20:5).

The number of those who are misled by Satan after the thousand years is said to be “like the sand of the sea.” I have pointed out that this expression, applied to the seed in the days of Abraham, counts 144,000 members. So, the number of attackers need not be more than 144,000 people. Is it possible to know the approximate

number of the rebels? There are some important clues in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

Chapter 20 ends after the thousand years when Satan and those who supported him were thrown into the lake of fire and were annihilated forever. The new period after the thousand years starts after this final judgment, and it is described in Revelation 21:1-4:

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. <sup>2</sup> I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: "Look! The tent of God is with *mankind* (*anthrōpos*) and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples (*laos*). And God himself will be with them <sup>4</sup> And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

That these words refer to the time after Satan and the rebels are annihilated is seen by the words, "the former things have passed away." There is no death, no mourning, no outcry, and no pain anymore.

New Jerusalem is described as a bride, and the bridegroom is Jesus Christ, as we see in. Revelation 21:9-10 says:

<sup>9</sup> And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls which were full of the seven last plagues, and he spoke with me and said: "Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." <sup>10</sup> So he carried me away in [the power of the] spirit to a great and lofty mountain, and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God

These words show that New Jerusalem is the heavenly government consisting of 144,000 members. They will reign with Jesus during the thousand years, and after that to time indefinite.

The Greek word *anthrōpos* ("human being, individual") is used in the plural, and the words *laos* ("a body of people, a multitude"), also in the plural, refer to the same group. God will be among these human beings, this body of people. But who are they? They are the nations living at the four corners of the earth, as we see in Revelation 21:23-26:

<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp was the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> And *the nations* (*ethnos*) will walk by means of its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup> Its gates will not be closed at all by day, for night will not exist there. <sup>26</sup> And they will bring the glory and the honor of *the nations* (*ethnos*) into it.

According to 20:8, Satan tried to mislead the nations at the four corners of the earth. But here they are, after Satan and the rebels are annihilated.

*The fact that the nations of the earth are present on the earth after Satan and his rebels are gone, shows that the nations (their inhabitants) passed the final test after the thousand years and chose to serve Jehovah. In other*

*words: Revelation chapters 21 and 22 imply that most of the approximately 30 billion people who have lived on the earth will pass the final test and receive everlasting life.*

I have already mentioned that the 19 occurrences of “nations” (*ethnos*) in the first 19 chapters of Revelation refer to the nations of the world. This is also confirmed by the context of Isaiah 60:19, 20, where words about New Jerusalem are quoted:

<sup>19</sup> For you the sun will no longer be a light by day, Nor will the shining of the moon give you light, For Jehovah will become to you an eternal light, And your God will be your beauty. <sup>20</sup> No more will your sun set, Nor will your moon wane, For Jehovah will become for you an eternal light, And the days of your mourning will have ended.

The words that “nations will walk by means of its light” are taken from Isaiah 60:2, 3:

<sup>2</sup> For look! darkness will cover the earth And thick gloom the nations; But on you Jehovah will shine, And on you his glory will be seen. <sup>3</sup> **Nations** will go to your light And kings to your shining splendor.

In the prophecy of Isaiah 60, Jehovah speaks through the prophet to Jerusalem, which represents Jehovah’s people. The nations in Isaiah’s prophecy refer to different political nations that will support Jerusalem, and therefore, “the nations” in the fulfillment after the thousand years must also be the nations of this world with their inhabitants.

The words that “They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it” are taken from Isaiah 60:5:

<sup>5</sup> At that time you will see and become radiant, And your heart will throb and overflow, Because the wealth of the sea will be directed to you; **The resources of the nations will come to you.**

These words show that the inhabitants of the nations that are present after the thousand years are supporting the work of the heavenly government.

Chapter 22 in Revelation continues the description of the situation after the annihilation of Satan and the rebels when New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. We read in 22:1-5:

<sup>1</sup> And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of its main street. On both sides of the river were trees of life producing 12 crops of fruit, yielding their fruit each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the healing of **the nations**. <sup>3</sup> And no more will there be any curse. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in [the city], and his slaves will render him sacred service; <sup>4</sup> and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> Also, night will be no more, and they have no need of lamplight nor [do they have] sunlight, because Jehovah God will shed light upon them, and they will rule as kings forever and ever.

These verses represent a beautiful symbolic description of the situation where the inhabitants of the nations have everlasting life. That their lives are upheld by God

forever is described as a river of water of life and trees that continually produce their fruit. Verses 3-5 relate to those who are connected with the throne of God, the 144,000 members of the government who will rule as kings forever.

*Revelation 19:15 shows that the nations will be killed in the great tribulation. Revelation 20:3, 4 shows that the nations will be present during the thousand-year reign of Jesus (by a resurrection). Revelation 20:23-27 and 22:1, 2 show that the nations are present on the restored new earth after the Devil and his rebels are eternally annihilated. This shows that the nations have passed the final test.*

I started this section with God's promise to Abraham, that his seed would bless all the nations of the world. This discussion shows that these words will get a literal fulfillment: Most of the inhabitants of the nations of the world will be blessed with everlasting life, on the basis of the ransom sacrifice, and through the bride of Jesus, New Jerusalem, which is identical with the seed of Abraham.

*What is ironic indeed is that the Bible has a message regarding the everlasting future of mankind that is the very opposite of what the Governing Body teaches. The passages we have discussed indicate that most of the approximately 30 billion of Adam's descendants who have lived on earth will be present and pass the last test, thereby receiving everlasting life. The situation will not be that most of the 30 billion will be everlastingly annihilated, as the members of the Governing Body teach.*

## THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE "GOATS"

Let us now see how Jesus identifies the "goats." I quote Matthew 25:40-46:

<sup>40</sup>And in reply the king will say to them, *'Truly I say to YOU, To the extent that YOU did it to one of the least of these my brothers, YOU did it to me.'*

<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say, in turn, to those on his left, 'Be on YOUR way from me, YOU who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I became hungry, but YOU gave me nothing to eat, and I got thirsty, but YOU gave me nothing to drink. <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, but YOU did not receive me hospitably; naked, but YOU did not clothe me; sick and in prison, but YOU did not look after me.' <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer with the words, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?' <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them with the words, *'Truly I say to YOU, To the extent that YOU did not do it to one of these least ones, YOU did not do it to me.'* <sup>46</sup> And these will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life."

I will discuss various aspects of identification of the "goats."

## THE IDENTIFICATION MADE BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The new interpretation of the illustration that places its fulfillment at the time immediately before Armageddon came in the year 1995. I will quote a few articles from this time until the present.

The Watchtower of October 15, 1995, page 22, says:

<sup>23</sup> If we analyze Jesus' activity in the parable, we observe him finally judging *all the nations*. The parable does not show that such judging would continue over an extended period of many years, as if every person dying during these past decades were judged worthy of everlasting death or everlasting life. *It seems that the majority who have died in recent decades have gone to mankind's common grave.* (Revelation 6:8; 20:13) *The parable, though, depicts the time when Jesus judges the people of "all the nations" who are then alive and facing the execution of his judicial sentence.*

The Watchtower of August 15, 1998, page 20, says:

<sup>17</sup> *All nations will shortly be examined by Christ so that he can "separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."* (Matthew 25:31-33).

The simplified Watchtower of July 15, 2013, pages 6-8, says:

<sup>11</sup> In 1995, *The Watchtower* gave a new explanation of Matthew 25:31. That verse states: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne." *The Watchtower* said that Jesus became King of God's Kingdom in 1914, but he did not at that time become the Judge of "*all the nations.*" (Matthew 25:32; compare Daniel 7:13.) *Keep in mind, though, that the illustration of the sheep and the goats is mainly about the work Jesus will do as Judge.* (Read Matthew 25:31-34,41,46.) Since Jesus was not the Judge of all the nations in 1914, he could not have begun judging people as sheep or goats in 1914. (See endnote.) When will Jesus begin judging all the nations? (bold font in the original)

<sup>13</sup> *Jesus will judge people of all nations as sheep or goats when he comes during the great tribulation.* Then, at Armageddon, the goats will be 'cut off' forever, that is, destroyed. So this shows us how important our preaching work is. Before the great tribulation begins, people still have time to change their thinking and start living in a way that puts them on the road "leading off into life." (Matthew 7:13, 14) It is true that some people may now have an attitude that might make us think that they are a sheep or a goat. But we should remember that it is during the great tribulation that Jesus will make the final judgment of the sheep and the goats. It is very important to keep preaching the Kingdom message to as many as possible so that they have an opportunity to accept it.

The Watchtower of September 2024, page 20, says:

#### THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

<sup>1</sup> WE LIVE in a climactic time! *Soon, Jesus will judge every living person.*

<sup>3</sup> In the parable of the sheep and the goats, *Jesus described the judgment of people who have the opportunity to respond to the good news and to support his anointed brothers.* (Matt. 25:31-46) During the "great tribulation," he will render this judgment right before Armageddon. (Matt. 24:21) Just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, *Jesus will separate those who loyally support his anointed followers from those who do not.*



The online article (7.18.2024) “What is the coming of Christ?” Says:

**Great tribulation:** The end of this wicked world. First, false religion will be destroyed. Then, there will be a time when Jesus will judge the sheep and the goats and appoint his faithful slave over all the Master’s belongings. Finally, the rest of this system will be destroyed at Armageddon.

The Scriptures make dozens of references to the future time *when Christ comes to judge the people of the earth*. For example, Matthew 25:31-33 says:

“When the Son of man [Jesus Christ] *comes* in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.”

This time of judgment will be part of a “great tribulation” unlike anything in human history. That tribulation will culminate in the war of Armageddon. (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 16:16) *Christ’s enemies, described in his illustration as goats, “will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction.”* (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 19:11, 15) *In contrast, his faithful servants, the sheep, will have the prospect of “everlasting life.”*—Matthew 25:46.<sup>23</sup>

The quotations have the following important points:

- 1) The Watchtower of October 1995: *The people of “all the nations”* who are then alive face the execution of Jesus’ judicial sentence.
- 2) The Watchtower of August 15, 1998: *All the nations* will be judged as sheep or goats.
- 3) The Watchtower of August 15, 2013: *People of all the nations* will be judged as sheep or goats.
- 4) The Watchtower of September 2024: *Soon, Jesus will judge every living person.*
- 5) Online article 7.19.2024: *Christ’s enemies* are the goats; they are all who are living who are not his faithful servants.

The five points above indicate the setting of the illustration given by the members of the Governing Body. In all the quotations above, it is said that the illustration shows how Jesus *will judge* the nations of the world. The word “judge” is not found in the illustration, and there is nothing else in the text that indicates judging. So, when the members of the Governing Body claim that the illustration refers to judging, this is invented by them and has no basis in the Bible.

Verses 31 and 32 tell that Jesus sits down on his glorious throne, and all the nations are gathered before him. I have already shown there are strong reasons to believe that this refers to the year 1914 when Jesus became king and God’s kingdom was established. The text does not say that Jesus is judging the nations or their people.

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23. <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/502015241?q=goats&p=par>



But it says that Jesus separates some unidentified people of the nations as sheep and goats.

Who are those who are supposed to be judged? The quotations from 1995 and 1998 say that all the people of the nations of the earth will be separated into sheep and goats. The next quotation seems to be a little more cautious. The Watchtower of July 2013 says that Jesus will judge “people of all the nations.” This expression does not say that all people of the nations will be judged.

Have the members of the Governing Body changed their mind? No, the quotations from 2024 says that, “Soon, *Jesus will judge every living person.*” This means that the goats are the 8 billion+ people who will be alive when Armageddon comes, who are not Jehovah’s Witnesses. The online article supports this conclusion. It says that “Christ comes *to judge the people of the earth.*” These words can only be understood as referring to all living humans, and this is the same as saying that Jesus “will judge all the people of the nations of the world, the words that are found in The Watchtower of October 15, 1995:

*The members of the Governing Body still believe that the people of all the nations on the earth will be separated into “sheep” and “goats.” Those who support the brothers of Christ (Jehovah’s Witnesses) are the “sheep” and all others are the “goats.” This means the belief is that 8 billion+ humans will be everlastingly annihilated in Armageddon and 20 million+ Jehovah’s Witnesses will survive.*

## THE TRUE IDENTIFICATION OF THE “GOATS”

The separation relates to Christ’s brothers. Persons who come to the support of these brothers when they are in need, will be classified as “sheep,” and those who do not support Christ’s brothers will be classified as “goats.” One important side of the identification is that the “goats” are “cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (verse 41), which is the same as “everlasting cutting-off” (verse 46). This means that the “goats” will be everlastingly annihilated without any hope of a resurrection.

The setting here is that the sins of the “goats” are so serious that they lead to everlasting destruction. However, the sins described do not seem particularly serious. James 4:17 says, “If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him.” But not doing what one knows to be right does not lead to everlasting annihilation. So, it is important to scrutinize the illustration’s text to accurately identify the goats.

## SIN THAT CAN BE FORGIVEN AND SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

We may look at the illustration in the light of Jesus’ words about sin: I quote Matthew 12:31, 32 (above), 12:39-41 (middle), 11:20-22 (below):

<sup>31</sup> “On this account I say to YOU, *Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven.*” <sup>32</sup> For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come.

<sup>39</sup> In reply he said to them: “A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jo’nah the prophet. <sup>40</sup> For just as Jo’nah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. <sup>41</sup> Men of Nin’e’veh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it; because they repented at what Jo’nah preached, but, look! something more than Jo’nah is here.

<sup>20</sup> Then he started to reproach the cities in which most of his powerful works had taken place, because they did not repent: <sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Cho·ra’zin! Woe to you, Beth·sa’i·dal because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Si’don that took place in YOU, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> *Consequently I say to YOU, It will be more endurable for Tyre and Si’don on Judgment Day than for YOU.*

According to Matthew 12:31, 32, every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, except sin against the holy spirit. This includes sexual immorality, murder, and even speaking words against Jesus Christ. According to Matthew 12:39-41 “the adulterous and wicked generation,” who rejected Jesus, will have their sins forgiven and get a resurrection on Judgment Day. I have already demonstrated that “this wicked and adulterous generation” includes all the Jews who lived in the days of Jesus.

Matthew 11:21, 22 speaks about some of the members of “this wicked and adulterous generation,” namely, about the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The inhabitants of these two cities heard the preaching of Jesus and saw his miracles but refused to believe in him. Nevertheless, the sins of the inhabitants of these cities will be forgiven, and they will get a resurrection on Judgment Day.

In view of the points mentioned above, how can it be that when a person does not do something that is good to Christ’s brothers, his sin will not be forgiven, and he will be classified as a “goat” and be everlastingly annihilated? That does not seem to make sense! Is this the same as saying that the words of Jesus in his illustration of the sheep and the goats are not true? Absolutely not! What is wrong is not the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body that the goats will be eternally annihilated. What is wrong is their interpretation of who the goats are.

Jesus said that the only sin that cannot be forgiven is blasphemy against the holy spirit. This means that the “goats” must be guilty of sin against the holy spirit. But how can we see this from the text of the illustration?

### **THE SCENARIO PRESENTED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

During the presence of Jesus from the year 1914, millions of people have died. A few of these have been servants of Jehovah, but most have not known Christ’s brothers or supported them. We can see what their destiny will be by reading Revelation 6:1-8. The white horse symbolizes Jesus Christ becoming king in the year 1914. After that, several catastrophes, like wars, famine, and pestilence, would occur. Verse 8 mentions a horse with the name *badēs*, signifying that those who died in the mentioned catastrophes would come to *badēs*, and all those in *badēs* will get a

resurrection according to Revelation 20:13. This has previously been pointed out, and we read in The Watchtower of October 15, 1995, page 22:

It seems that the majority who have died in recent decades have gone to mankind's common grave. (Revelation 6:8; 20:13)

On this background, I will take a closer look at the separation of the “sheep” and the “goats,” as it is presented by the members of the Governing Body. The Watchtower of May 2024 says that after the great tribulation has begun and until shortly before Armageddon there is a possibility that people can start to serve Jehovah. The article also says that people who die in this period may have a resurrection. But these possibilities are terminated when Armageddon comes.

Shortly before Armageddon, Jesus Christ will separate all living humans into two groups, “sheep” and “goats” on the basis of whether a person has supported the brothers of Christ or not, according to the Governing Body.

I have already shown that Christ's brothers are the rest of the 144,000 anointed Christians who will reign with Jesus Christ in heaven. And the few remaining ones of these are only found in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. This means that the 20 million+ Witnesses who live when Armageddon starts are classified as “sheep” because they have actively supported Christ's brothers in their congregations.

But who are the “goats”? When Armageddon comes, there are 2 billion children below 14 years. These have neither had the possibility nor the capacity to support Christ's brothers. But according to the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body, these will be everlastingly annihilated without any hope of a resurrection. There will also be 800 million people with serious mental problems, also without the possibility or capacity to support Christ's brothers. In addition to these, there are more than 3.2 billion adults who have the capacity to support Christ's brothers. But they have not had a full chance to hear the good news of the Kingdom. All these will also be eternally annihilated, according to the Governing Body.

Most people who consider this scenario will question it because of their sense of justice. That more than 6 billion people will be everlastingly annihilated for something they did not know about and therefore did not do contradicts what is just and right, and it contradicts the love of Jehovah towards his earthly sons and daughters. If we see this scenario in the light of the words of Jesus that every sort of sin will be forgiven, and that the inhabitants of Chorazin and Capernaum, together with the whole generation of Jews, will get a resurrection, the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body simply is terrible and abhorrent!

The members of the Governing Body cannot plead ignorance here and say that Jehovah will find a solution to this situation. The situation I have described reflects the reality of 8 billion people living on the earth, with very few of them serving Jehovah. And it is based on the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body that Jesus Christ will separate all humans into two groups shortly before Armageddon.

Jehovah has a solution to this situation. But this solution is very different from the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body.

### THE REAL SEPARATION OF THE “SHEEP” AND THE “GOATS”

I return to the words of Jesus that every sort of sin will be forgiven except sin against the holy spirit. This means that to deserve everlasting annihilation, a person must have sinned against the holy spirit. Does the illustration of the sheep and the goats show that the goats have sinned against the holy spirit?

A part of Christ's brothers was collected in the first century CE, and this collection started again in the 1870s when C.T. Russell and his associates began studying the Bible to find the truth about God. During the rest of the 19th century and until 1935, almost all the Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses were anointed Christians, considered Christ's brothers.

However, there is evidence that some Christians were not anointed but looked forward to inheriting the earthly kingdom before 1935. I knew Brother Skonnord from Stord, Norway, who became a Bible Student in 1919, but he had an earthly hope. It was from the year 1935 that the focus shifted to the earthly hope.

I have already shown that there is strong evidence that Matthew 25:31 refers to the year 1914 when Jesus became king and all the nations were gathered before him. The calling of the rest of the 144,000 was ongoing, and particularly from 1935, the preaching of the kingdom focused on the possibility of living forever in the earthly paradise. Can we then conclude that the separation of “sheep” and “goats” started in 1935? No.

We must keep in mind that there is no connection in the text between the nations that are gathered before the king Jesus Christ and the separation of the “sheep” and the “goats.” Neither is there any connection between the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom and the separation of the “sheep” and the “goats.” The purpose of the preaching is to help sincere persons to start serving God, and the purpose is not to separate people who will be eternally annihilated.

What, then, does the separation refer to? We can illustrate the situation by quoting Matthew 13:41-43 (above) and 13:47-50 (below):

<sup>41</sup> The Son of man will send forth his angels, and *they will collect out from his kingdom* all things that cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness, <sup>41</sup> and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be. <sup>43</sup> At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

<sup>47</sup> “Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet let down into the sea and gathering up [fish] of every kind. <sup>48</sup> When it got full they hauled it up onto the beach and, sitting down, *they collected the fine ones into vessels, but the unsuitable they threw away.* <sup>49</sup> That is how it will be in the conclusion of the system of things: the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous <sup>50</sup> and will cast them into the fiery furnace. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be.

Both quotations are illustrations and prophecies — they will be fulfilled in the conclusion of the system of things, which is identical to the presence of Jesus from the year 1914. The illustrations relate to the kingdom of the heavens and are therefore fulfilled on anointed Christians. The kingdom of the heavens contained both wheat and weeds, which referred to sincere Christians and false Christians. Therefore, the angels collected the weed, the false Christians, “*out from* his kingdom”.

The kingdom of the heavens was like a dragnet that “gathered up fish of every kind,” both sincere Christians and false Christians. The angels would then “separate the wicked from among the righteous.” The separation of the weeds from the wheat and the unsuitable fish from the fine ones *would occur inside the Christian congregations*. They do not indicate any separation of Christians from the people of the world.

The illustration of the sheep and the goats is not connected with the kingdom of the heavens, but rather with the earthly kingdom that was prepared *from* the founding of the world.

*Just as there was a need to collect out of the heavenly kingdom persons who were doing lawlessness, there was also a need to collect out from among Christians with an earthly hope, persons who were false Christians. This is what the illustration of the sheep and the goats portray. And this illustration is fulfilled during the presence of Jesus, just as the two other mentioned illustrations.*

And now we are close to understanding the sins of the “goats.” They are not sentenced to everlasting annihilation because of something they did not know and did not do. Christ’s brothers took the lead in the congregations and in the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom from the start of the 20th century. Hebrews 13:17 shows how these should be viewed:

<sup>17</sup> Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among YOU and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over YOUR souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to YOU.

Jesus showed that the “goats” did not support his brothers who, historically speaking, took the lead in the congregations. This means that the “goats,” in reality, did not support Jesus. Hebrews 6:4-6 describes a situation when anointed Christians did not support Jesus:

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, and who have tasted the heavenly free gift, and who have become partakers of holy spirit,<sup>5</sup> and who have tasted the fine word of God and powers of the coming system of things,<sup>6</sup> *but who have fallen away (parapiptō), to revive them again to repentance, because they impale the Son of God afresh for themselves and expose him to public shame.*

The people who are mentioned in these verses were not ignorant. They had been enlightened, and they had accepted the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. But instead of valuing this free gift, they fell away. The word *parapiptō* has the meaning “to abandon

a former relationship or association.” These persons consciously rejected the worship of Jehovah and the kingship of Jesus Christ, and therefore they deserved to get an adverse judgment.

In a similar way, the “goats” have also rejected the ransom sacrifice by their refusal to support the brothers of Jesus, who have taken the lead in the Christian congregations. This means that the goats are not ignorant inhabitants of the nations, because, in order to support or not support Christ’s brothers, a person must know who these brothers are, and this is only possible by being a part of one of the Christian congregations where Christ’s brothers are.

*The “goats” belonged to the Christian congregations where Christ’s brothers are. But they consciously refused to support Jesus and his brothers. Therefore, they sinned against the holy spirit. When we understand this, we ascertain that the sentencing of the “goats” to everlasting annihilation is just and right.*

We can see that the judgment of the “goats” is righteous by comparing two accounts:

Hebrews 6:4-6: Christians who had benefited from the ransom sacrifice and had been born again and had a heavenly hope, but who rejected the ransom sacrifice and who had refused to continue to serve Jehovah, had sinned against the holy spirit and would be everlastingly annihilated.

Matthew 25:40, 41: Christians who knew the position of the anointed brothers of Jesus but who refused to support these brothers of Jesus, indicating that they rejected the ransom sacrifice and refused to be servants of God, had sinned against the holy spirit and would be “cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.”

Accusing the 8 billion+ living persons for the lack of support for the brothers of Jesus, with the result that they lose their lives forever, is completely absurd. Most of these people are unaware of who the brothers of Jesus are and the need to support them. But the situation is different for persons who are a part of the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses. They have benefited from the ransom sacrifice and dedicated their lives to Jehovah. If they consciously refuse to continue to serve Jehovah, they can rightly be accused of failing to support the brothers of Jesus. And they can rightly be labeled as “goats.”

## THE SOLUTION OF JEHOVAH

What is the solution to the situation that when Armageddon comes, there are 8 billion+ humans on the earth who are not serving Jehovah, most of whom have not had a personal chance to do so?

The solution is very simple because it is based on God’s plan through the ages for the restoration of all things and on the ransom sacrifice. Jesus died for all Adam’s descendants, and he bought them all. This means that each descendant of Adam



must get a personal chance to accept or reject the ransom sacrifice. Most of the 8 billion+ humans who live when Armageddon comes have not had this chance. Therefore, when they die, they will get a resurrection during the thousand-year-long Judgment Day to get this chance.

Not only these, but all others who are not among the 144,000 who will get a heavenly resurrection or those who have sinned against the holy spirit, will get a resurrection on Judgment Day. Paul shows this in 1 Corinthians 15:22 when he wrote that “*all* who die in Adam,” i.e., who all who die because of inherited sin, will get a resurrection. This includes all who have lived on the earth except the members of the two mentioned groups.

## DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE “SHEEP” AND THE “GOATS” HAS LED TO THE REJECTION OF PARTS OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE

Russell and the Bible Students believed that the ransom sacrifice included Adam and Eve and all their descendants. The ransom sacrifice should be applied to all these during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

The important point was that imperfect humans with inherited sin are not competent to make a just and fair decision regarding their eternal destiny. Therefore, they must die, get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, and become perfect and free from inherited sin. Then they will have their full personal chance, exactly the same chance that Adam had.

There were two exceptions, though. One exception was that the ransom sacrifice could be applied to persons who loved Jehovah. They would be baptized with holy spirit and become new creations. When they died, they would get a heavenly resurrection and become a part of the heavenly government.

The other exception was mentioned in Volume 1 of Studies in the Scriptures (1886, A 156):

According to God's arrangement in providing a ransom, *all mankind, unless they wilfully resist the saving power of the Great Deliverer, must be delivered from the original penalty.*

The Bible Students believed that very few persons would “willfully resist” the ransom sacrifice. One example of such a person was Judas, and in The Watchtower of November 1, 1911, Russell expressed the view that Judas would not get a resurrection.

The illustration of the sheep and the goats, which is a part of Jesus’ great prophecy, has had three different applications:

### 1879-1924

The separation of the sheep and the goats occurs during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. After the thousand years, the goats will be everlastingly annihilated. The Watchtower of May 1915, page 157 (5694) says:

The other sheep will be the great flock of the Lord, the great family of Adam, purchased by Jesus. For a thousand years the work of calling and gathering mankind and separating between sheep and goats will progress, as outlined in Matthew 25:31-40.

## 1924-1995

Several problems were seen with the application of the illustration to the thousand-year reign of Jesus. Two articles in the year 1924 solved the problem as to the right time application of the illustration. But it created more problems. I quote from The Watchtower of February 15, 1924, page 57 (above) and 59 (below):

The Lord has been present since 1874, but not until 1914 did he take unto himself his power and reign. *From the language used by our Lord in the parable it seems that the particular application should be made after 1914.* He said: “When the Son of man shall come . . . then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”—Matthew 25: 3L

*Our conclusion therefore is that the parable of the Sheep and Goats has a particular and specific fulfilment between the year 1914, at the beginning of the World War, and the beginning of individual restoration blessings.*

The importance of the ransom sacrifice was stressed. The Watchtower of February 15, 1924, page 41, says:

*The great ransom sacrifice we as Christians all agree is the touchstone or measuring square by which we are to determine whether or not a doctrine is true or false.* If a doctrine does not square with the ransom it cannot be true and should be discarded. If a conclusion or doctrine is entirely in harmony with the ransom, then we should hesitate to discard it without careful and prayerful consideration.

The Watchtower of December 15, 1924, contains the death blow to The Divine Plan of the Ages. But the view that the ransom sacrifice included all Adam’s descendants was still believed and continued to be believed until the year 1934. I quote page 381, 382:

*4 For a time the parable became to Bible Students a picture of the judgment at the end of that thousand-year day of judgment, when the righteous (the sheep) would enter into the blessedness of life on the restored earth, and when the wicked (the goats) would be destroyed forever as unworthy of life. It is now seen to be a symbolic description of a judgment at the time of the second advent, one which determines who among men have already proved themselves unworthy of the blessings of the kingdom.* The true interpretation has thrown light on many other scriptures, and has enabled the servants of the Lord to see their work and the purpose of their message much more clearly than hitherto.

### RANSOM GUARANTEES OPPORTUNITY OF LIFE

*13 Since the time when it pleased God to make the plan of the ages clear, and once again to set forth the “ransom for all” by the blood of his dear Son (1 Timothy 2:4-6), it is seen that neither Adam nor any of his sons are excluded from its benefits. It came, therefore, to be commonly held that with the exception of the Church (those begotten of God to newness of life) everyone must have an actual resurrection from the dead in order to participate in the benefits of the ransom. It was further thought that none besides the Church could be subjected to final destruction until, in the resurrection, a full opportunity had been given to enter into obedience to Christ and into blessings of life. But clearly*

*those views are not true to Scripture or to fact.* It is not necessary that one should have received the gift of the holy spirit before he can be subject to the sentence of death; nor true, as some have thought, that no one could be amenable to the second death before the death of Jesus. The death of Judas as the son of perdition is evidence sufficient against both suppositions. Who can think that if father Abraham had turned from God after the long experience which he had, God would be obliged to bring him forth in resurrection in order that he should have a full opportunity for knowing God?

14 *The ransom price accepted by God can not entail upon him a necessity to let each person die before giving him the benefit of the ransom, and that such opportunity can be given only in resurrection. It does, however, appear to show that everyone must get an opportunity of freedom from the bondage of Satan, as well as from the power of death.* It is God's own good pleasure to decide when he will give that opportunity. It seems evident that there are now some who, like Judas (the outstanding figure and representative of those who reject the way of God), see the purpose of God in Christ and reject it.

#### KNOWLEDGE BRINGS APPROPRIATE RESPONSIBILITY

15 *What stands out clearly is that there are some who are children of the wicked one, who know sufficient of God both in experience and by the fact that they stand forth as representing him who in spirit are bitterly opposed to his ways, and who are really and truly servants of the evil one. For God to let all this pass as if they acted in blindness would seem to belittle his justice rather than to exalt it. Such would not learn righteousness even in the land of uprightness.—Isaiah 26:10.*

The first judgment, that of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, resulted in the separation of wheat and chaff and in the burning of the chaff. (Matthew 3:12) It was a casting off of that which was waste. The second judgment, now in operation upon Christendom, is more complex and has two phases. It results in the separation of the sheep and goats, and also of wheat and tares (Matthew 13: 24-30); that is, separation between those who are “the children of the kingdom” and those who are the “children of the wicked one”. The tares are those, chiefly ecclesiastics, who profess to represent God, but who are servants of the present order of things and opponents of the kingdom of heaven. *The parable of the Sheep and Goats shows another aspect of this same judgment.* The sheep are not the “wheat”, the children of the kingdom, but are the meek of the earth who, when the truth of God is presented to them, are inclined to take it; they are not supporters of Satan's system of government. The goats correspond very closely to the tares. They are those who have professed to be supporters of God and of righteousness, but who have the wayward disposition which is so frequently shown by the goat, and which is so contrary to the meek disposition associated with the sheep.

17 This parable shows that even as Satan will be bound during the reign of Christ in order that he can not hinder the work of restoration, *so those who have been decisively to be his [Satan's] willing servants will not be permitted then to oppose the truth. They will be destroyed at the commencement of the Messianic reign (Matthew 25:41)*; but Satan is permitted to live (bound) for a later testing.—Rev. 20: 3.

The Bible Students, including J.F. Rutherford, believed that sincere persons could, on the basis of the ransom sacrifice, be granted forgiveness for sins.

But the important issue was the belief that, because of imperfection and inherited sin, it was impossible for humans to be qualified and have a just and fair chance to decide to serve God or not. It could be compared to a pupil in elementary school who was asked to take a university exam. He would not pass the exam because he

was not qualified for the test. This means that people who violated the laws of God could not be sentenced to eternal annihilation, except in rare cases where a person was permeated by wickedness, as in the case of Judas.

Because of the situation, Adam's descendants had to die, which was the penalty for sin. The ransom sacrifice guaranteed each of these dead persons a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. The sacrifice also guaranteed that each resurrected person would gradually proceed toward perfection. At the end of the thousand years, all humans would be perfect without sin, and everything that was lost in connection with the first paradise was restored. To use the illustration: Every human had now made a university study and was qualified to take a university exam.

### *This view of the Bible Students is the truth of the Bible!*

J.F. Rutherford had now developed a different view. His application of the illustration of the sheep and the goats to the time after 1914 was correct because Matthew 25:31 connects the illustration with the time when Jesus becomes king.

But [his interpretation](#) of the illustration both contradicted several texts in the Bible, and represented a perverted outlook of people — a different view of human beings than Jehovah and Jesus have.

According to § 13 (brown script), Rutherford rejected The Divine Plan of the Ages, and Rutherford says regarding the views of this Plan: “But clearly those views are not true to Scripture or to fact.” What he meant when he said that the views of The Divine Plan of the Ages were contrary to fact is seen in ¶ 15 (brown script).

His point is that there are so many wicked people on the earth who oppose true Christians and grossly violate the law of God. These people must be held accountable for their wicked works *now*. It is not right that these wicked people will die and get a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus, and there get the chance to serve God. He ignored the fact that all humans are imperfect with inherited sin, and he claims that all people at that time were separated into two groups, “sheep” and “goats.” And the “goats” will be everlastingly annihilated at Armageddon, as we see in ¶ 17 (light violet script)

But why would Rutherford, on this background, still stress “the ransom for all”—(1 Timothy 2:4-6), and “that neither Adam nor any of his sons are excluded from its benefits” (dark blue script)? (¶ 13)

*The words about Adam and his sons align perfectly with the new model Rutherford presented, because this model did not reject the ransom sacrifice. What the model rejected was God's purpose with the ransom sacrifice. He rejected what The Divine Plan of the Ages taught, that all humans would, because of the ransom sacrifice, get a resurrection during the Millennium.*

*The old viewpoint of the Bible Students was that the ransom sacrifice would be applied to all humans during the thousand-year reign of Jesus and cause the complete restoration of everything that*

*was lost in the first paradise. No human being would ever be annihilated in this old system of things, only during the thousand years. The only exception was rare and extreme cases when a person was permeated by wickedness, like Judas. Such a person could be everlastingly annihilated.*

*The new view was that the ransom sacrifice would be fully applied in this old system of things. And the test would not only be related to humans who had become perfect. But the sacrifice was fully applied after the year 1914, and all imperfect humans with inherited sin had to take a stand for or against God and be separated as “sheep” and “goats.” The “goats” would not get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. But they would be everlastingly annihilated.*

*The reason the ransom sacrifice could still be viewed as including all Adam’s descendants was that both models allowed the application of the sacrifice to all humans. The difference was when this application would occur, and how many humans in this old system of things would be everlastingly annihilated. The view of the old model was that everlasting annihilation of persons in this old system would almost never occur, while the view of the new model was that great numbers of humans to whom the sacrifice had been applied, had had their test, and would be everlastingly annihilated.*

While the ransom sacrifice, including all Adam’s descendants, could be applied to both models, the differences between the two models put a strain on the belief in the ransom sacrifice. And the result was that after some years, basic parts of the ransom sacrifice were rejected by the leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The rejection of The Divine Plan of the Ages occurred in 1924, and the rejection of the most important part of the ransom sacrifice, that it includes *all* Adam’s descendants, occurred 10 years later, in 1934. This was stressed three years later, and I quote The Watchtower of July 1, 1937, page 350:

<sup>36</sup> When with his disciples, Jesus instructed them that all creatures that will receive everlasting life and the blessings of Almighty God must willingly and faithfully serve God. Then of himself he said: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20: 27, 28) This shows that the man Jesus understood that it was the will of his Father Jehovah not only that he tells the truth and become the Vindicator of his Father but that *as a man he must die to provide the ransom or redemptive price “for many” of the human race. For how many of the human race: all or only a part? Not for all, because the redemptive price results beneficially only to those who believe on and obey God and Christ Jesus.*

Therefore he gave his life as a ransom for as many of the human race as take their stand on the side of God and Christ and maintain their integrity toward God when put to the test. It is written: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6: 23)

I will later show that the view that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam’s descendants, and that “the vast majority” of these, including great numbers of humans who have grossly violated God’s laws, will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, again was held between 1965 and 2000. But the view of The Divine Plan of the Ages, which holds that imperfect humans with inherited sin are not qualified to be tested regarding their everlasting future, was not restored. The view was still that billions of imperfect humans would be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation.



## 1995-2025

In 1995, a new interpretation of the sheep and the goats illustration was presented. This new view is that the illustration of the sheep and the goats was not fulfilled from the year 1914, but it will be fulfilled in the great tribulation. In this great tribulation, God will judge all the nations and their inhabitants. Only the “sheep” who are Jehovah’s Witnesses will survive the great tribulation, and 8 billion+ will be everlastingly annihilated. Quotations showing this view have already been given.



## ANALYZING PASSAGES SUPPOSED TO INDICATE ETERNAL ANNIHILATION FOR SINNERS (II)

*The primary reason for J.F. Rutherford's rejection of The Divine Plan of the Ages in 1924, and why this rejection remains, is the illustration of the sheep and the goats, which has been totally misinterpreted. This was discussed in detail in Chapter 8.*

*The second most important reason for the rejection of The Divine Plan of the Ages and for the view that billions of people will be everlastingly annihilated is the account in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10. This account will now be discussed in detail, as well as the illustration of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42), the account of the armies of the kings that will be killed (Revelation 19:19-21), and the words in 2 Peter 3:7 about the destruction of the ungodly men.*

### WHAT DO THE WORDS “EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION” IN 2 THESSALONIANS 1:9 MEAN?

*Jehovah God acts according to the principle of **like-for-like**. To save the human family, God arranged for a corresponding ransom — a perfect man for a perfect man (**like-for-like**).*

*Verse 6 says that it is “righteous **to repay** tribulation for tribulation for those who make tribulation for you.” (**like-for-like**)*

*Verse 8 says that God will “bring vengeance” (*ekdikesis* = punishment on the basis of what is rightly deserved — **like-for-like**) “for those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.”*

*This punishment is described as “everlasting destruction” in verse 9. But these words cannot refer to everlasting annihilation without hope of a resurrection because:*

- 1) *God's righteousness requires making tribulation for those who deserve tribulation (**like-for-like**) and not everlasting annihilation.*
- 2) *God will bring vengeance upon "those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus". The righteous punishment for these is death — the punishment for sin (**like-for-like**) and not everlasting annihilation. It is not righteous to bring everlasting annihilation upon those who are ignorant, who "do not know God."*

*This discussion will show in detail that the words "everlasting destruction" refer to death from which there is a resurrection.*

Paul's second letter to the congregation in Thessalonica tells about the revelation of Jesus in the great tribulation, when particular groups of people will be judged. Second Thessalonians 1:9 says:

<sup>9</sup>These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of **everlasting destruction** (*olethros aiōn*) from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.

The Governing Body has used this verse to show that all those who are living when Armageddon comes and who are not Jehovah's Witnesses will be eternally annihilated. The Watchtower of May 2024 has some comments on this verse. And these comments show that the members of the Governing Body have not changed their view regarding those who will die in Armageddon. We read on page 10:

**10 Will all who die during the events of the great tribulation be destroyed forever with no hope of a resurrection? The Scriptures make it clear that **outright opposers** whom Jehovah and his forces will destroy at Armageddon will not be resurrected.** (2 Thess. 1:6-10) But what about others, for example, who may die from natural causes, from accidents, or at the hand of other humans? (Eccl. 9:11; Zech. 14:13) Could some of these people be among the "unrighteous" who will be resurrected in the new world? We simply do not know.

The words in this quotation deceive the readers and lead them to get a wrong impression of what the members of the Governing Body really teach.

**Point 1:** Those who will not get a resurrection are called "outright opposers," and the reference is to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. These verses do not refer to outright opposers of God. But the verses say that those who will "undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction (*olethros aiōn*)" are "those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." By calling these "outright opposers" they try to hide the fact that they teach that billions of ignorant people, who have never had a full opportunity to serve God, will be everlastingly annihilated without any hope of a resurrection.

**Point 2:** The members of the Governing Body also try to hide what they really teach by the way they use their words. They write that in the beginning of the great

tribulation before Armageddon, it is possible to start to serve Jehovah, and those who die of natural causes during the great tribulation may possibly get a resurrection.

These words of the members of the Governing Body contradict what they say in other places. The illustration of the sheep and the goats is the main basis for the view of the destiny of the inhabitants of the world during the great tribulation. The words about the possibility that people who die a natural death may get a resurrection contradict the way the members of the Governing body interpret this illustration. Now, there are three possible groups, 1) those who serve Jehovah, who are “sheep,” 2) those who do not serve Jehovah, who are “goats,” and 3) People who do not serve Jehovah but die natural deaths in connection with the great tribulation, who are neither “sheep” nor “goats.”

However, the illustration only depicts two groups, and the members of the Governing Body do not teach about a third group. The words about the possibility that people who die of natural causes in the great tribulation may get a resurrection are the same as pulling wool over the eyes of the readers. We can say this because of an article in the Watchtower of September 2024 about the sheep and the goats. We read on page 20:

<sup>1</sup>WE LIVE in a climactic time! *Soon, Jesus will judge every living person.*

<sup>3</sup>Just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, *Jesus will separate those who loyally support his anointed followers from those who do not.*

These words show that in the great tribulation, “every living person” is judged. So, there is no group of people who die natural deaths and who are not judged by Jehovah. This is confirmed by the last words in the quotation, saying that all who are not “sheep” are goats. In other words, all who are not Jehovah’s Witnesses are “goats” and will be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation.

We understand that the teaching of the members of the Governing Body, in contrast to the cheating words about the possibility that some who die natural deaths possibly may get a resurrection, is that the 8 billion+ humans who live when Armageddon comes, most of whom are ignorant regarding God’s purpose, will be everlastingly annihilated without any hope of a resurrection. Only Jehovah’s Witnesses will survive Armageddon.

*By calling billions of people who have not had the possibility to serve Jehovah as “outright opposers,” the members of the Governing Body try to hide their horrendous teaching that billions of ignorant people will be killed in Armageddon without hope of any resurrection.*

## THE JUDGMENT BASED ON GOD’S JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

The judgments of God are always just because they are based on his righteousness. The basic principle of all God’s judgments is found in Exodus 21:23, 24:

<sup>23</sup> But if a fatal accident should occur, then you must give soul for soul,<sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand.

The principle here is *like-for-like*. These verses show that God's punishment is built on strict justice. It is not more severe than that wrong action. It is no less severe than the wrong action. But it is exactly of the same seriousness as the seriousness of the wrong action.

We can see a positive application of this principle in connection with the ransom sacrifice. I quote 1 Timothy 2:5, 6 (above), and Romans 5:17, 18 (below):

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who gave himself *a corresponding ransom* for all—[this is] what is to be witnessed to at its own particular times.

<sup>17</sup> For if by the trespass of the one [man] death ruled as king through that one, much more will those who receive the abundance of the undeserved kindness and of the free gift of righteousness rule as kings in life through the one [person], Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> *So, then, as through one trespass the result to men of all sorts was condemnation, likewise also through one act of justification the result to men of all sorts is a declaring of them righteous for life.*

Adam was a perfect man who used his life in a selfish way. Because of this, all his descendants inherited sin. Jesus was a perfect man who used his life in an unselfish way, and he gave his life as a sacrifice. By this, he bought Adam and all his descendants, and because of this, the inherited sin of Adam's descendants can be removed.

The righteous principle is the perfect man, Jesus, instead of the perfect man, Adam (*like-for-like*).

I will apply this just principle to God's judgment as it is described in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, which I quote and discuss in detail in the next section.

The situation here parallels the one described in Jesus' great prophecy about his presence in Matthew 24:1-25:46. Several events Jesus mentions had a miniature fulfillment in the first century CE, extending to 70 CE, and these events will have their final fulfillment after the year 1914.

## THE FULFILLMENT IN THE FIRST CENTURY CE

The Greek word *olethros* means "perdition, destruction." (Mounce). The Greek word *aiōn* can refer to the characteristics of a particular period of time, and it can be translated as "system of things," as does NWT84 and NWT13. Or it can be translated by "age." However, it can also exclusively refer to time. In that case, the meaning is "pertaining to an unlimited duration of time." (Louw and Nida) The two words together must refer to a destruction without any time limit. The view of the Governing Body is that the destruction of those who are destroyed is eternal.

The important question is who these persons are who supposedly will be destroyed forever. Paul shows that the members of the congregation accepted the good news under difficult conditions. First Thessalonians 1:6, 7 says:

<sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, seeing that you accepted the word *under much tribulation* with joy of holy spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Mac·e·do'ni·a and in A·cha'ia.

The situation that Paul probably had in mind is described in Acts 17:1-10:

<sup>1</sup> They now journeyed through Am·phip'o·lis and Ap·ol·lo'ni·a and came to Thes·sa·lo·ni'ca, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> So according to Paul's custom he went inside to them, and for three sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and [saying]: "This is the Christ, this Jesus whom I am publishing to YOU." <sup>4</sup> As a result some of them became believers and associated themselves with Paul and Silas, and a great multitude of the Greeks who worshiped [God] and not a few of the principal women did so.

<sup>5</sup> But *the Jews, getting jealous, took into their company certain wicked men of the marketplace idlers and formed a mob and proceeded to throw the city into an uproar*. And they assaulted the house of Ja'son and went seeking to have them brought forth to the rabble. <sup>6</sup> When they did not find them they dragged Ja'son and certain brothers to the city rulers, crying out: "These men that have overturned the inhabited earth are present here also, <sup>7</sup> and Ja'son has received them with hospitality. And all these [men] act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus." <sup>8</sup> They indeed agitated the crowd and the city rulers when they heard these things; <sup>9</sup> and first after taking sufficient security from Ja'son and the others they let them go.

Paul says that the Thessalonians "accepted the word under much tribulation." One example is that a mob threw "the city into an uproar" because of the Christians. Verse 4 in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, speaks about "all your persecutions and the hardships that you are suffering." But no details are given. So, the situation was that the Thessalonians experienced tribulation and were suffering. But there is no account that any one of the congregation was killed.

## THE FULFILLMENT IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The important verses are 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, which I quote:

<sup>3</sup> We are obligated to give God thanks always for YOU, brothers, as it is fitting, because YOUR faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and all of YOU is increasing **one** toward one another. <sup>4</sup> As a result we ourselves take pride in you among the congregations of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the hardships that you are suffering. <sup>5</sup> This is a proof of the righteous judgment of God, leading to your being counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering (*paskhō*). <sup>6</sup> This takes into account that *it is righteous on God's part to repay (anapodidomi) tribulation to those who make tribulation for you*. <sup>7</sup> But you who suffer tribulation will be given relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels <sup>8</sup> in a flaming fire, as *he brings vengeance (ekdikēsis) on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus*. <sup>9</sup> These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of *everlasting destruction (olethros aiōn)* from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength, <sup>10</sup> at the time when he comes to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in that day with wonder among all those who exercised faith, because the witness we gave met with faith among you.



I will now look at the details:

Verse 6 says:

*it is righteous on God's part to repay (anapodidomi) tribulation to those who make tribulation for you.*

These words refer to the fulfillment in the first century that those who caused tribulation for the Thessalonians would experience tribulation themselves (*like-for-like*). But at the same time, these words are the first part of the words that refer to the bigger fulfillment in the great tribulation.

Please note that God's actions are based on his righteousness. This is seen by the use of the Greek word *anapodidomi* ("repay") with the meaning "to pay something back to someone as the result of an incurred obligation." (Louw and Nida) This means that *anapodidomi* ("a corresponding payment") is a word parallel to the word *antilytron* ("a corresponding ransom"). (2 Timothy 2.6).

The verse shows that in connection with punishment, tribulation must be repaid for tribulation. (*like-for-like*)

Verse 8 says:

*he brings vengeance (ekdikēsis) on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.*

These words refer to the revelation of Jesus (verse 7), which is the great tribulation. The important Greek word here is *ekdikēsis* ("vengeance") with the meaning, "to punish, on the basis of what is rightly deserved." (Louw and Nida)

Let us compare the two important words in verse 6 and verse 8:

Verse 6: *anapodidomi* — "to pay something back to someone as the result of an incurred obligation." (*like-for-like*)

Verse 8: *ekdikēsis* — "to punish, on the basis of what is rightly deserved." (*like-for-like*)

The meaning of both words is similar; they both refer to a corresponding payment. In verse 6, the corresponding payment is tribulation for tribulation. In verse 9, the nature of the punishment is stated, namely, *olethron aionion* ("everlasting destruction"), and the sins paid for are not knowing God or not obeying the good news.

The members of the Governing Body interpret "everlasting destruction" as everlasting annihilation without any hope of resurrection. But this interpretation causes a great problem. Both verses 6 and 8 speak of a corresponding punishment (*like-for-like*). But that does not fit the punishment of everlasting annihilation. How so? What are the actions for which "everlasting annihilation" is given as a payment? The answer is found in verse 8:

*he brings vengeance (ekdikēsis) on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.*

Here we can see the real problem. The actions that are punished are 1) not knowing God, and 2) not accepting the preaching of the good news of the kingdom. Paul stresses in verses 6 and 8 that the punishment must be commensurate; it must



be as severe as the wrong action, neither more nor less. The punishment must be based on the principle of *like-for-like*.

But punishing some persons for what they do not know and other persons because they do not act in accordance with what is preached, with everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection, would be extremely unjust. The God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save the world (John 3:16, 17) will never annihilate forever any of those he has created who have not had a full chance to choose to serve him.

The interpretation of the members of the Governing Body is not only wrong; it is absolutely horrible! It is a disgrace to Jehovah God. His name is dragged through the mud because he is described as a cruel and unjust God.

What would be a just punishment? What would be *like-for-like*? Only persons who have a Christian personality will survive the great tribulation. This is necessary because these will be used by God to cultivate the earth and make it ready for the resurrection. If persons who violate God's laws were to survive, they would cause problems for God's servants

The penalty for sin is death, and therefore it will be just that all those who are not servants of God will die in the great tribulation. Because the death of Jesus is a corresponding ransom, all those who die in the great tribulation will have a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. This is a perfect application of the principle *like-for-like*.

All those "who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus" will learn the truth about Jehovah God and his Son after their resurrection. When they have become perfect and without sin at the end of the thousand years, they will have a fair personal chance to choose to serve God or not.

The next section will show that the semantic meaning of the words *olethron aiōnion* ("everlasting destruction") supports the view that those who die in the great tribulation will have a resurrection.

## THE JUDICIAL PUNISHMENT OF EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION

In order to understand the nature of the punishment, we need to analyze the words used by Paul.

### THE WORDS *OLETHRON AIŌNION* DO NOT REFER TO "EVERLASTING ANNIHILATION"

If the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10 of the members of the Governing Body is wrong. How shall we understand the words of verse 9 that those who live when Armageddon comes "will undergo the judicial punishment of *everlasting destruction* (*olethros aiōn*)"?

As an illustration, I refer to the destiny of the "goats." According to Matthew 25:36 the goats will experience "everlasting cutting-off (*aiōnios kolasis*)" The adjective

*aiōnios* refers to a time period with unknown length. This period may or may not last forever. The word *kolasis* can refer to cutting branches of trees, and it can also refer to punishment.

The point here is that the two Greek words together clearly refer to some kind of destruction. But there is no *linguistic* reason why these words must refer to eternal annihilation with no hope of a resurrection. However, because verse 41 says that the “goats” will be “cursed into the eternal fire that is prepared for the Devil and his angels,” and we know that the Devil will experience the second death and be everlastingly annihilated, we know that the “goats” will be everlastingly annihilated without any hope of a resurrection. Therefore, everlasting cutting-off in this context refers to everlasting annihilation.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, we find the two words *olethros aiōnion*. The adjective *aiōn* in this verse is the same word as in Matthew 25:46, and it may or may not refer to a time period that lasts forever. The noun *olethros* can refer to destruction, but the word does not necessarily refer to disintegration, to something that is completely lost and does not exist anywhere. This means that just like the *semantic meaning* of the words *aiōnios kolasis* in Matthew 25:46 is not everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection, neither is the semantic meaning of the words *olethros aiōn* in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 *in itself* everlasting annihilation without any hope of resurrection.

The conclusion is that while the context of Matthew chapter 25 explicitly shows that the words “everlasting cutting-off” refer to everlasting annihilation, the context of 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 explicitly shows that the words *olethros aiōn* (“everlasting destruction”) do not refer to everlasting annihilation — ignorant persons without any chance to serve God cannot lose their lives forever.

### A POSSIBLE USE OF HEBREW IDIOM

Paul was an educated Jew, and time and again he refers to the Hebrew Scriptures. He also uses word plays that can only be fully understood by persons who know Hebrew. The words in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 that the members of the Governing Body interpret as referring to eternal annihilation may be understood on the basis of Hebrew idiom. In many situations of judgment, the focus is not on the continued life or non-continuation of life of those who are judged, but rather on the judgment itself and on its nature. I quote Matthew 18:8 (above) and Mark 9:43-48 (middle) and Isaiah 66:22-24 (below):

<sup>8</sup> If, then, your hand or your foot is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you; it is finer for you to enter into life maimed or lame than to be thrown with two hands or two feet into *the everlasting fire* (*pyr to aiōnion*)

<sup>43</sup> “And if ever your hand makes you stumble, cut it off; it is finer for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go off into Ge·hen'na, into *the fire that cannot be put out* <sup>44</sup> — <sup>45</sup> And if your foot makes you stumble, cut it off; it is finer for you to enter into life lame than with two feet to be pitched into Ge·hen'na <sup>46</sup> — <sup>47</sup> And if your eye makes you stumble, throw it away; it is finer for you to enter one-eyed into the kingdom of God than with two eyes to be pitched into Ge·hen'na, <sup>48</sup> *where their maggot does not die and the fire is not put out.*

<sup>22</sup> “For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I am making are standing before me,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “so the offspring of YOU people and the name of YOU people will keep standing.”

<sup>23</sup> “And it will certainly occur that from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath all flesh will come in to bow down before me,” Jehovah has said. <sup>24</sup> “And they will actually go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that were transgressing against me; for *the very worms upon them will not die* and *their fire itself will not be extinguished*, and they must become something repulsive to all flesh.”

Isaiah speaks about new heavens and a new earth and of the carcasses of persons who were transgressing against Jehovah. He is not discussing the destiny of the persons to whom the carcasses belong, whether they will get a resurrection or not. But he is discussing the judgment itself, which is final and complete.

There are no worms that will not die and no fire that cannot be extinguished. However, Isaiah uses the words “the very worms upon them.” This indicates that worms will consume the carcasses, and they will not die as long as there is flesh to eat. Fire is often associated with God’s judgments, so dead bodies, particularly the bones, can be consumed. The point here is that the fire will not be extinguished as long as there are bones that can be burned.

So, again, the focus is not on the eternal destiny of individuals. But it is on the completeness of the judgments against the transgressors. Their bodies will be completely destroyed.

The idea of Gehenna was not known in the days of Isaiah. The question remains whether Gehenna in the days of Jesus symbolized a death with no hope of a resurrection. Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah, and like Isaiah, his focus was on the completeness of God’s judgment. The noun *aiōn* refers to a time whose length is unknown. So, the expression “everlasting fire” refers to a fire whose extinguishing end we do not know.

Jesus applies the words in a similar way to how Isaiah did. The worms would eat the flesh of dead bodies that were thrown into Gehenna. And the fire that was burning to consume garbage that was thrown into the valley would not be extinguished as long as there were bones and garbage to burn.

We can see how the Hebrew idiom that I mentioned is used in connection with the city of Tyre in Ezekiel 26:18-21:

<sup>18</sup> Now the islands will tremble in the day of your downfall. And the islands that are in the sea must be disturbed owing to your going out.”

<sup>19</sup> “For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, ‘When *I make you a devastated city*, like the cities that are actually not inhabited, when [I] bring up over you the watery deep, and the vast waters will have covered you,<sup>20</sup> I will also bring you down with those going down into the pit to the people of long ago, and I will cause you to dwell in the lowest land, like places devastated for a long time, with *those going down into the pit, in order that you may not be inhabited; and I will put decoration in the land of those alive.*

<sup>21</sup> “‘Sudden terrors are what I shall make you, *and you will not be; and you will be sought for, but you will no more be found to time indefinite*,’ is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

The prophet Ezekiel does not speak about the final destiny of the inhabitants of Tyre. But he shows that they will go down into the grave, and the city and its inhabitants will no longer be found. However, Jesus said, according to Matthew 11:21, 22, that the inhabitants of Tyre will get a resurrection.

I will use one more example, namely, the destruction of Edom. I quote Isaiah 34:9, 10:

<sup>9</sup> And her torrents must be changed into pitch, and her dust into sulphur; and her land must become as burning pitch. <sup>10</sup> *By night or by day it will not be extinguished; to time indefinite its smoke will keep ascending.* From generation to generation she will be parched; forever and ever no one will be passing across her.

As in the case of Tyre, Isaiah was not discussing the eternal destiny of the inhabitants of Edom. But he discussed the complete destruction of Edom, which was illustrated in that the smoke of the devouring fire would continue to ascend for a long time with no end in sight.

On the background of these Hebrew examples, I return to the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10. The setting is the relief that the Thessalonians will get when God punishes those who have persecuted the Thessalonians. If Paul follows the Hebrew idiom, the words “everlasting destruction” refer to the completeness of this destruction. Now the Thessalonians can have full relief because their persecutors are found nowhere. And the destruction of those who live at the revelation of Jesus Christ will also be complete. This would mean that Paul was not discussing the eternal destiny of the persecutors or those who will die in the great tribulation.

The fact that those who “will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction” are persons who do not know God and persons who do not accept the preaching of the kingdom, indicates that Paul used the Hebrew idiom: The completeness of the judgment is stressed and not the everlasting destiny of those who will be judged. No person who knows Jehovah God will claim that he will annihilate ignorant persons forever.

I have already pointed out that more than 6 billion people who will be alive at the beginning of the great tribulation have had no opportunity to discover the truth about God. So, they do not “know God.” Of the 2 billion others, less than 20 million have obeyed the good news about our Lord Jesus. From this, we understand that the facts on the ground when the great tribulation comes are exactly those that Paul describes in 2 Thessalonians 1:8: Those who lose their lives are 8 billion+ “who do not know God and who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.”

<i>The conclusion of this section is:</i>
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*There is no linguistic or contextual reason for the claim that the Greek words olethron aiōn (“everlasting destruction”) refer to everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection for those who die in the great tribulation.*

*Most of those who are judged are ignorant. If the words olethros aiōn refer to eternal annihilation without any hope of a resurrection, God will judge ignorant people to annihilation without any hope of a resurrection. This would both go against God’s righetousness and against his love.*

*No person who knows God will make such a claim.*

## WHO ARE THE WEEDS IN MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43?

*The weeds are not the 2.4 billion members of the Christian denominations and their clergy, as the members of the Governing Body claim.*

*Just as the “goats” in the illustration in Matthew 25:31-46 are members of the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses who have rejected the ransom sacrifice and have not supported the brothers of Jesus, the weeds are Christians with the heavenly hope, who practice lawlessness and whom the angels will collect out of the Christian congregations.*

*The letter to the hebrews shows that anointed Christians who have rejected the ransom sacrifice will not get a resurrection but will be everlastingly annihilated.*

The illustration and prophecy of the sheep and the goats, which I discussed in the previous Chapter shows how some persons with the hope of living forever in the earthly paradise will reject the ransom sacrifice and will be eternally annihilated.

In the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses during Jesus’ presence, there has also been a small group of anointed Christians who hope to reign with Jesus Christ in heaven. The illustration and prophecy about the wheat and the weeds show how some of these will reject the ransom sacrifice and will be eternally annihilated. I quote Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43:

<sup>24</sup> He presented another illustration to them, saying: “The Kingdom of the heavens may be likened to a man who sowed fine seed in his field.”<sup>25</sup> While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat and left.<sup>26</sup> When the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds also appeared.<sup>27</sup> So the slaves of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow fine seed in your field? How, then, does it have weeds?’<sup>28</sup> He said to them, ‘An enemy, a man, did this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go out and collect them?’<sup>29</sup> He said, ‘No, for fear that while collecting the weeds, you uproot the wheat with them.’<sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest season, I will tell the reapers: First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up; then gather the wheat into my storehouse.”<sup>...</sup>



<sup>36</sup>Then after dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples came to him and said: “Explain to us the illustration of the weeds in the field.” <sup>37</sup>In response he said: “The sower of the fine seed is the Son of man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world. As for the fine seed, these are the sons of the Kingdom, but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Therefore, just as the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be in the conclusion of the system of things. <sup>41</sup>*The Son of man will send his angels, and they will collect out from his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and people who practice lawlessness,* <sup>42</sup>*and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace.* There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be. <sup>43</sup>At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Let the one who has ears listen.

Most of the illustrations of Jesus express general truths and are time indifferent. The illustration about the man who planted a vineyard in Luke 20:9-13 speaks about the killing of the son of the man, and this may refer to the killing of Jesus in 33 CE. Apart from this, I am aware of only four illustrations that have a clear time element, namely the illustration of the wheat and the weeds, the illustration of the sheep and the goats, the illustration of the dragnet, and the illustration of the minas. All four illustrations give several concrete details, and they must be viewed as prophecies.

## THE TIME FRAME OF THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS

In the first century CE, the fine seed was sown when sincere persons entered the kingdom of God, i.e., the kingdom of his beloved Son. (Colossians 1:13) In the last part of that century, Satan the Devil sowed weeds when persons in the Christian congregation introduced false teachings and violated God’s laws. This bad influence is described in 1 John, 2 John, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation, which were written in the last part of the first century CE.

In the second century, elders gave themselves more power and became bishops. And later, a clergy with priests and bishops developed. Throughout the centuries, only a few sincere persons have served God in spirit and truth, as the illustration shows. And there was no separate group of true Christians. This situation would continue until the harvest.

In Jesus’ explanation, there is a clear time frame. Verse 39 says that the harvest is *synteleia aiōnos*, which can correctly be translated as “a conclusion of a system of things” as does NWT84. In Matthew 24:3, we find the expression *synteleias tou aiōnos*, which is the same as the expression in 13:39. In 24:3, Matthew parallels *synteleias tou aiōnos* with the *parousia* (“presence”) of Jesus. And this presence began in 1914 when Jesus started to reign in the midst of his enemies, and the kingdom of God was established. This period is also called “the time of the end” in Daniel 12:9.

At the beginning of this harvest time, aka “the conclusion of the system of things,” aka “the time of the end, aka “the presence of Jesus” between the year 1914 and the great tribulation, the angels would do the harvest work.



## THE FULFILLMENT DURING THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

Which harvest work has been done by the angels during the presence of Jesus since the year 1914?

### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WEEDS BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Watchtower of March 15, 2010, pages 19, 22, said:

<sup>5</sup> Who is the enemy, and who are the weeds? Jesus tells us that the enemy “is the Devil.” The weeds are described as “the sons of the wicked one.” (Matt. 13:25, 38, 39) In a literal sense, the weeds that Jesus referred to were probably the bearded dandel. This poisonous plant closely resembles wheat in its early stages before it reaches maturity. *What a fitting picture of imitation Christians, those who claim to be sons of the Kingdom but do not produce genuine fruitage! These hypocritical Christians who claim to be followers of Christ are really part of the “seed” of Satan the Devil.*—Gen. 3:15.

<sup>12</sup> How long does the judgment last? Jesus referred to the harvest as a “season,” so it continues over a period of time. (Rev. 14:15, 16) The judgment of the individual members of the anointed continues throughout the time of the end. It will last until they are finally sealed.—Rev. 7:1-4.

<sup>13</sup> *Who will be collected out from the Kingdom, and how do they cause stumbling and do lawlessness?* (Matt. 13:41) *The weedlike clergy of Christendom have misled millions for centuries.* They have done this by means of God-dishonoring teachings, “things that cause stumbling,” such as the doctrine of eternal punishment in hellfire and the confusing and mysterious Trinity. Many religious leaders have set a bad example for their flocks by their adulterous friendship with this world and in some cases by their flagrant immoral conduct. (Jas. 4:4) Additionally, Christendom has become increasingly tolerant of immorality among its members. (*Read Jude 4.*) Despite all of this, they continue to maintain an outward show of piety and godliness. How happy the sons of the Kingdom are to be separated from such weedlike influences and corrupt teachings that cause stumbling!

<sup>14</sup> How do the weedlike ones weep and gnash their teeth? (Matt. 13:42) “The sons of the wicked one” are tormented by the fact that “the sons of the kingdom” have exposed the spiritually poisonous condition of these weedlike ones. They also bemoan the diminishing support they receive from their church members, as well as their loss of control over the laity.—*Read Isaiah 65:13, 14.*

<sup>15</sup> *In what sense are the weeds collected and burned with fire?* (Matt. 13:40) This refers to the final outcome for the weeds. *Their being thrown symbolically into the fiery furnace indicates that they are headed for eternal destruction.* (Rev. 20:14; 21:8) The imitation, weedlike Christians, the impostors, will be eradicated during the “great tribulation.”—Matt. 24:21.

The explanation of The Watchtower is that the weeds are the clergy of Christendom and all who claim to be Christians but do not produce the right fruit.

*The Christian religions in the world count 2.4 billion members, and what The Watchtower says is that all these people will experience eternal destruction with no hope of a resurrection.*

## THE IDENTIFICATION GIVEN BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY IS FALSE

We can definitely conclude that the interpretation of the members of the Governing Body is wrong because of the words of Jesus in Matthew 13:41:

The Son of man will send his angels, and *they will collect out from his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and people who practice lawlessness*,<sup>42</sup> and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace.

The setting of the illustration is the kingdom of the heavens, according to verse 24, and this kingdom was established in the year 1914. According to 13:30, during the harvest, the wheat was gathered and brought into the barn. Historically speaking, the wheat, which symbolizes the sons of the kingdom (verse 38), was collected from the 1870s, when the Bible Students began their preaching, and throughout Jesus' presence.

The members of the Governing Body apply the “weeds” to the clergy of Christendom and to all persons who claim to be Christians but do not bear the right fruits — a group that includes 2.4 billion people. The basic reason why this interpretation is wrong is that verse 41 says that the weeds will be gathered “*out of his kingdom.*” Neither the clergy nor all the 2.4 billion Christians have been a part of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, they cannot be collected “*out from* his kingdom.”

The illustration of the dragnet supports this conclusion. I quote Matt 13:47-50:

<sup>47</sup> “*Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet let down into the sea and gathering up [fish] of every kind.*”<sup>48</sup> When it got full they hauled it up onto the beach and, sitting down, they collected the fine ones into vessels, but the unsuitable they threw away.<sup>49</sup> That is how it will be *in the conclusion of the system of things: the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous*<sup>50</sup> and will cast them into the fiery furnace. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be.

People who are symbolized by fish are gathered *into the kingdom* of heaven, and after that, the wicked are separated from the righteous. In both illustrations, the wicked are collected out of the kingdom; i.e., they had a relationship to it but proved they were not worthy. So, it is clear that the weeds cannot symbolize the 2.4 billion people who claim they are Christians but do not have the right fruits.

## THE TRUE IDENTIFICATION OF THE WEEDS

It is true that from the latter part of the first century CE, false Christian groups emerged, and over time, these evolved into false Christian denominations. The illustration shows that, from the end of the first century CE onward, sincere

individuals who served God would be among the false Christians. But no group of sincere Christians would form and separate from the false Christians.

However, this situation changed during harvest time, which began in 1914. Historically, the change began in the 1870s. Sincere individuals from various Christian denominations gathered to study the Bible and discover the true Christian doctrines. This group was led by Charles T. Russell. In the 19th century, there was a loosely connected group of Bible students. But it was first some years after the death of Russell in 1916 that the group of Bible students became a united group under the leadership of Joseph F. Rutherford. This new situation could be seen as the fulfillment of the words of verse 30 in chapter 13 that the angels “would gather the wheat into my storehouse.”

But what can we say about the “weeds”? According to verse 41, the angels would collect the weeds “out from his kingdom.” We can see situations that may be a fulfillment of these words in the days of C.T. Russell and J.F. Rutherford. Many different persons associated with Russell and other Bible students at a time when there was only a loosely connected group. The illustration suggests that the wheat was gathered into God’s storehouse, indicating a tightly united group consisting of different congregations with members called by God, who could be viewed as “wheat.”

In the process of catching fish with a dragnet, both good and unsuitable fish were gathered. Only during the sorting process did the different qualities of the different fish become known. In a similar way, a number of people gathered around Russell and his friends. But it was not clear from the outset who was like the wheat and who was like the weeds. However, in time, the spiritual quality of each person would become visible, and persons who showed that they were weeds were collected by the angels. So, the situation was not that some people who were like wheat became weeds. But the situation was that time was needed to show who would turn out to be wheat and who would turn out to be weeds.

The book *Faith on the March* by A.H. Macmillan, an associate of Russell, and various history books published by the Watchtower Society can be used to discern the difference between the wheat and the weeds during the time of Russell and the Bible Students. Nelson Barbour cooperated with Russell for some time. But then he discarded the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and he and his followers showed that they were weeds. After Russell’s death, P.S.L. Johnson led a rebellion, and he and his friends demonstrated their true colors. To this day, there are some groups of Russellites in different countries that originated in this rebellion.

One way to show that a person is anointed with the holy spirit and a member of the 144,000 who will reign with Jesus Christ in heaven is to eat the bread and drink the wine at the memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. If we look at the numbers for these, we can see the illustration fulfilled.

We do not know exactly how many faithful anointed Christians lived in the first century CE. But after Jesus had preached for three and a half years, only 120 of his followers were present on the day of Pentecost in 33 CE. We read in the Christian

Greek Scriptures about 3,000 and 5,000 that were added to the congregation. But according to Matthew 22:14, Jesus said, “For there are many invited, but few chosen.” So, we can expect that a few thousand anointed Christians were members of the Christian congregations in the first century C.E.

According to the illustration, no true believer was separated from false Christians between the first century CE and the days of C.T. Russell. What have we seen regarding anointed Christians during the presence of Jesus Christ? In the year 1935, there were 52,000 Witnesses who claimed to be anointed. In the year 1961, when I became a Witness, there were 14,000 who claimed to be anointed, and in 2023 there were 20,000 who claimed to be anointed. If we add the numbers of all the different persons who claimed to have been anointed during the 110 years of Jesus’ presence, the number will be several hundred thousand. Some of these may be sincere Christians who wrongfully believed that they had the heavenly hope. But a number of the several hundred thousand mentioned, evidently, can be viewed as “weeds,” in the fulfillment of the words of Jesus.

The focus of Jesus when he told his illustrations was the kingdom of heaven and how its members were called, and it was not on the world in general. It is very important to understand that Jesus, by telling the illustration about the wheat and the weeds, did not refer to the preaching work during the time of the end, and that people would be separated into two groups. The focus of the illustration is the formation of a tightly united group of persons who are chosen to reign with Jesus Christ in the heavenly Kingdom and the separation of these from unworthy persons. And this separation would occur in the time of the end, after the time when there was no distinction between true Christians and false Christians.

*The members of the Governing Body believe that the false Christian religions of today with 2.4 billion members are the “weeds.” But this is a wrong view because the members of these religions have never been a part of the heavenly kingdom, and therefore, it cannot be said that they will be collected “out of the Kingdom.”*

*The weeds are persons who have been called to reign with Jesus Christ in heaven, who have turned against Jehovah, and who have rejected the ransom sacrifice.*

## THE DESTINY OF THE WEEDS

The destiny of the weeds is expressed in Matthew 13:41, 42:

<sup>41</sup>The Son of man will send his angels, and they will collect out from his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and people who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup>and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.

Pitching the weeds into the fiery furnace reinforces the illustration’s setting. In the harvest, the weeds were burned to ashes. The application of these words does not necessarily mean that the humans who are symbolized by the weeds are everlastingly annihilated. The words only show that they will lose their lives.

However, the situation suggests that the weeds' fate is everlasting annihilation. How so? We can conclude this from Hebrews 6:4-6 (above), and 10:26-29 (below):

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, and who have tasted the heavenly free gift, and who have become partakers of holy spirit,<sup>5</sup> and who have tasted the fine word of God and powers of the coming system of things,<sup>6</sup> but who have fallen away, to revive them again to repentance, because they impale the Son of God afresh for themselves and expose him to public shame.

<sup>26</sup> *For if we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left,*<sup>27</sup> *but [there is] a certain fearful expectation of judgment and [there is] a fiery jealousy that is going to consume those in opposition.*<sup>28</sup> Any man that has disregarded the law of Moses dies without compassion, upon the testimony of two or three.<sup>29</sup> Of how much more severe a punishment, do YOU think, will the man be counted worthy *who has trampled upon the Son of God and who has esteemed as of ordinary value the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified*, and who has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness with contempt?

Those who are symbolized as weeds have been anointed Christians. But they have rejected the ransom sacrifice and have practiced lawlessness. The ransom sacrifice is no longer available for them, and they will not have any resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

The prophecy speaks about “their weeping and gnashing of their teeth.” This corresponds to the words “a fearful expectation of judgment” (10:27) Before they lose their lives by being “thrown into the fiery furnace,” they will expect the judgment with fear, as if they wept and gnashed their teeth.

## The JUDGMENT OF UNGODLY PEOPLE (2 PETER 3:7)

*The false teachers in the Christian congregations who “will disown even the owner that bought them,” will be everlastingly annihilated.*

*The ungodly people who are living when the great tribulation comes, and the figurative heaven and earth will be burned, will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.*

The illustration of the sheep and the goats, discussed in Chapter 8, shows how some persons who were part of the group hoping to live in the earthly paradise rejected the ransom sacrifice and were separated from the “sheep” to experience everlasting annihilation. The illustration of the wheat and the weeds, which was discussed above, shows how some persons with the hope of reigning with Jesus Christ in heaven, rejected the ransom sacrifice, and were cast out of God’s kingdom to experience everlasting annihilation.

Now I will discuss the destiny of some persons who are false teachers within Christian congregations and of those who have not been part of God’s people, as



mentioned by Peter. The second letter of Peter speaks about new heavens and a new earth (3:13). It also speaks about the judgment of ungodly people in 3:3-7:

<sup>3</sup> First of all know this, that in the last days ridiculers will come with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires <sup>4</sup> and saying: “Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as they were from creation’s beginning.” <sup>5</sup> For they deliberately ignore this fact, that long ago there were heavens and an earth standing firmly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; <sup>6</sup> and that by those means the world (*kosmos*) of that time suffered destruction (*apollymi*) when it was flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and the earth that now exist are reserved for fire and are being kept until *the day of judgment and of destruction* (*apoleia*) *of the ungodly people*.

Awake! of March 22, 1993, page 9, has the following comment on Peter’s words:

*At times the Bible uses the terms “heavens” and “earth” in figurative ways.* “Heavens” may be used to mean Satan, the god of this world; world rulers under his control; and wicked spirit forces in heavenly places—all of which exercise demonic influence over mankind. (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12) “Earth” is frequently used to refer to the peoples on the earth. (Genesis 11:1; 1 Kings 2:1, 2; 1 Chronicles 16:31; Psalm 96:1) *It is these symbolic heavens and earth of this present wicked world that 2 Peter 3:7 says are to be destroyed by “fire.”—Galatians 1:4.*

The words about the heavens, the earth, and the fire are, of course, figurative. In 3:13, Peter speaks of “new heavens and a new earth.” The new heavens refer to the kingdom of God, the government over the new earth, which will function during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. In a similar way, the old heavens must refer to the governments of this old system of things. And the new earth must refer to the people who will live in the new system of things.

*Who are “The ungodly (*asebēs*) people” that will experience destruction (*apoleia*)?*

We get some clues in 2 Peter 2:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> However, there also came to be false prophets among the people, as *there will also be false teachers among YOU*. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive (*apoleia*) sects and *will disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction* (*apoleia*) upon themselves. <sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many will follow their acts of loose conduct, and on account of these the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively. <sup>3</sup> Also, with covetousness *they will exploit YOU with counterfeit words*. But as for them, the judgment from of old is not moving slowly, and *the destruction* (*apoleia*) *of them is not slumbering*.

Peter says that false teachers will exploit the members of the congregations with counterfeit words, even reject the ransom sacrifice. These people will experience a speedy destruction. The word translated as “destruction” is *apoleia*, the same word that is used in the expression, “destruction of the ungodly people” in 3:7. This means that the ungodly people whom Peter says will be destroyed according to 3:5 must refer to the false teachers in the Christian congregations who rejected the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. This is not all, because we read in 2:4-7:



<sup>4</sup> Certainly if God did not hold back from punishing the angels that sinned, but, by throwing them into Tar'ta·rus, delivered them to pits of dense darkness to be reserved for judgment;<sup>5</sup> and he did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly (*asebēs*) people;<sup>6</sup> and by reducing the cities Sod'om and Go·mor'rah to ashes he condemned them, *setting a pattern for ungodly* (*asebēs*) *persons of things to come*.

The destruction of ungodly people in the great flood and when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed are said to be a pattern for the destruction of ungodly (*asebēs*) people in the future. This idea is repeated in 3:5-7:

<sup>5</sup> For they deliberately ignore this fact, that long ago there were heavens and an earth standing firmly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God;<sup>6</sup> and that by those means the world (*kosmos*) of that time suffered destruction (*apollymi*) when it was flooded with water.<sup>7</sup> But by the same word *the heavens and the earth that now exist* are reserved for fire and are being kept until *the day of judgment and of destruction* (*apoleia*) *of the ungodly* (*asebēs*) *people*.

There is a contrast in these words. Long ago, there were literal heavens and a literal earth, and the world (*kosmos*) of mankind was destroyed by water. The literal heavens and the literal earth are still standing. Therefore, when Peter speaks about “*the heavens and the earth that now exist*,” he must refer to figurative heavens and a figurative earth. As Awakel pointed out, the heavens must refer to human governments, and the earth must refer to the people on the earth. The figurative heavens and the figurative earth will be destroyed by fire:

- 1) The ungodly persons that will be destroyed: The false teachers in the congregations.
- 2) The heavens: The human governments will be destroyed.
- 3) The earth: The inhabitants of the earth will be destroyed.

The focus of this discussion is the Greek word *apoleia* (“destruction”). It is applied to false teachers who reject the ransom sacrifice. Because it is the ransom sacrifice that is the basis for a resurrection, these people will be eternally annihilated without any hope of a resurrection.

The word *apoleia* is also applied to the humans on the earth who will be destroyed in the great tribulation. All these people will receive a resurrection because they have not had a full opportunity to accept or reject the ransom sacrifice. The only exception is those who have sinned against the holy spirit—they will not receive a resurrection. Only God knows who has committed this unforgivable sin.

The word *apoleia* means “destruction,” and it can refer to a destruction that leads to a resurrection and to an everlasting destruction. There is nothing in 2 Peter that indicates the nuances of *apoleia*.

Because Hebrews says that those who reject the ransom sacrifice will be everlastingly annihilated, it is obvious that the mentioned false teachers who do that will be everlastingly annihilated as well.

Because we know that the ransom sacrifice covers all who will be killed in the great tribulation, we know that those who are said to experience “judgment and destruction” (3:7) when heaven and earth will be burned, will have a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

## WHO ARE THE ARMIES OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH (REVELATION 19:19-21)?

The climax of God’s purpose is described in the book of Revelation, and we read in 19:17-21:

<sup>17</sup> I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven: “Come here, be gathered together to the great evening meal of God,”<sup>18</sup> so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of military commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those seated on them, and the flesh of all, of freemen as well as of slaves and of small ones and great.”<sup>19</sup> *And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army.*<sup>20</sup> *And the wild beast was caught, and along with it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who worship its image. While still alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulfur.*<sup>21</sup> *But the rest were killed off with the long sword that proceeded out of the mouth of the one seated on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

Verse 19 says that the armies of the kings of the earth waged war against the king Jesus Christ. How can this be? According to the vision of Paul in Acts 9:3-5, when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus, persecuting his servants is the same as persecuting Jesus. This means that because Jesus is invisible, the armies of the kings of the earth will wage war with Jesus by waging war with his followers on the earth. Exactly how this will happen, we do not know, but the context suggests it will occur shortly before or during the great tribulation.

What is the destiny of the soldiers in the armies of the kings? Verse 20 shows that the wild beast and the false prophet, which are symbols of organizations, will be hurled into the symbolic lake of fire. But verse 21 says that “the rest” will be killed by the judge Jesus Christ. This probably includes the soldiers of the armies.

Will the killing of the mentioned persons indicate eternal annihilation? The lake of fire is the symbol of the second death, eternal annihilation, and those persons who at the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus will not serve God are said in 20:15 to be hurled into the lake of fire, thus being annihilated forever. Because “the others,” which may include the soldiers in the armies of the kings, are said to be killed but not hurled into the lake of fire, it is logical to conclude that they will be in line for a resurrection because they were bought by Jesus Christ.

Who are the soldiers in the armies of the kings? Of course, we do not know their identities, nor do we know how many soldiers are in the armies of the kings. However, they can hardly exceed 28 million, as this is the total number of soldiers

worldwide today. The number is probably much smaller because it is difficult to believe the armies of all the 195 countries of the world will be united in an all-out attack on the people of God.

We must also inquire about the personal responsibility of each soldier in the armies of the kings. The members of the Governing Body say that the enemies of God, those who are “outright opposers,” will be destroyed in the great tribulation. However, Paul was an “outright opposer” who became a follower of Jesus. The soldiers in an army just obey the orders of their superiors, and they do not necessarily have any animosity toward the people of God. We must therefore expect that they will get a resurrection like all others who die in the great tribulation, except those who have sinned against the holy spirit.

How shall we understand the words of Revelation 19:15 (above) and 14:14-20 (below) where we read:

<sup>15</sup> And out of his mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which to strike the nations, and *he will shepherd them with a rod of iron.* Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

<sup>14</sup> Then I saw, and look! a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was someone like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.<sup>15</sup> Another angel emerged from the temple sanctuary, calling with a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud: “Put your sickle in and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.”<sup>16</sup> And the one seated on the cloud thrust his sickle into the earth, and the earth was reaped.<sup>17</sup> And still another angel emerged from the temple sanctuary that is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.<sup>18</sup> And still another angel emerged from the altar, and he had authority over the fire. And he called out with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, saying: “Put your sharp sickle in and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes have become ripe.”<sup>19</sup> *The angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and he hurled it into the great winepress of God's anger.*<sup>20</sup> The winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress as high up as the bridles of the horses for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

The King Jesus Christ shepherds the nations with a rod of iron, and the meaning of this is seen in the prophecy in Psalm 2:9:

You will break them with an iron scepter, And you will smash them like a piece of pottery.”

That Jesus shepherds the nations with a rod of iron means that the members of the nations will die in the great tribulation. And they will get a resurrection. Regarding the wine and its grapes, The Watchtower of July 1, 1967, page 407, says:

Speaking of the victorious army under Jesus Christ, Revelation says: “He treads too the press of the wine of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty.” (Rev. 19:15) This global winepress will crush the political vine of the earth with all its political branches, huge clusters of grapes, wicked deeds and oppression, which are the fruitage produced by their kingdoms. Grapes are usually crushed at wine-making by human feet, but not so with the vine of the earth. God threshes with horses' hoofs the product of this vine. The Word of God and his heavenly armies leap into the winepress and stamp it out until they completely express the “anger of the wrath of God the Almighty.” It is a time of victory, and just as in Palestine wine-making was a festive time, the treaders will doubtless shout

and sing as they trample out the grapes. (Jer. 25:30; 48:33) *It will result in a terrible destruction, but it will be selective, Jehovah God destroying only those who really are against him and his kingdom and the interests of all men.*—Rev. 14:18-20; Joel 3:12-17.

The Watchtower speaks of “the political wine,” and this may or may not be correct. There is nothing in the context that identifies the wine. As in Revelation 19:21, there is a difference between the political nations and persons who live in these nations. The Governing Body claims that all humans who live when Armageddon comes, except Jehovah’s Witnesses will be eternally annihilated. This is not written anywhere in the Scriptures. Revelation 19:21 says that “the rest” (*hoi loipoi*) were killed by the long sword that proceeded out of the mount of the one seated on the horse. This rest is not identified. The grapes of the wine symbolize humans. But these humans are not identified.

It is important to note that there is only one passage in Revelation saying that some humans will be eternally annihilated without any hope of a resurrection. This is Revelation 20:15, where we learn about the destiny of those who follow the Devil in his rebellion against Jehovah after the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. Because they are perfect, their judgment is final.

So, we must draw the conclusion that all those who are mentioned in the different accounts in Revelation and who are said to be killed will get a resurrection on Judgment Day.

## TABLE SHOWING THE CONCLUSIONS

<b>Revelation 20:15</b>	<i>Those who follow Satan</i> in his rebellion after the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ will be hurled into the lake of fire, which symbolizes the second death or <i>everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection.</i>
<b>Matthew 25:31-46</b>	According to verse 41, <i>the “goats”</i> will experience “the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” This means that the “goats,” who are persons who have been invited to live in the earthly paradise, but who have rejected the ransom sacrifice, will experience <i>everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection.</i>
<b>Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43</b>	According to verse 42, <i>the weeds</i> “will be collected out from his kingdom,” which means that they have sinned against the holy spirit. They will be pitched “into the fiery furnace,” and this means that they will experience <i>everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection.</i>
<b>2 Peter 3:7</b>	<i>The ungodly people</i> who will experience destruction include two groups:

	<p>The false teachers who have rejected the ransom sacrifice will experience <i>everlasting annihilation without any hope of a resurrection.</i></p> <p>The ungodly people who will be destroyed in the great tribulation <i>will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus</i></p>
<p><b>2</b> <b>Thessalonians</b> <b>1:9</b></p>	<p><i>Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our lord Jesus</i> will die in Armageddon and will experience <i>a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus</i></p>
<p><b>Revelation</b> <b>19:19-21</b></p>	<p><i>The armies of the kings of the earth</i> will die in Armageddon and will experience <i>a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.</i></p>

## ANALYZING GREEK WORDS SUPPOSED TO REFER TO ETERNAL TORMENT

*Different creeds of the Christian denominations say that Satan, the Devil and people who do not believe in God will be tormented forever and ever. Neither the Devil nor any human being has intrinsic everlasting life, which is the requirement for being tormented forever.*

*In this Chapter, the meanings and applications of the Greek words **gehenna**, **kolasis**, and **basanos**, and related forms, are analyzed in detail. The conclusion is that there is no linguistic or contextual basis for the view that any spirit creatures or any humans will be tormented as a punishment. The punishment for sin is death and not torment.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the book of Revelation, there are passages seemingly showing that God will torment some of his creatures. I quote 14:10 (above) and 20:10 (below):

<sup>10</sup> he will also drink of the wine of the anger of God that is poured out undiluted into the cup of his wrath, and **he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur** in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb.

<sup>10</sup> And the Devil who was misleading them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulphur, where both the wild beast and the false prophet [already were]; and **they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

There are two immediate problems with the view that God's enemies shall be tormented forever.

**First**, we cannot take the United Nations and throw it in the Atlantic Ocean. In a similar way, the wild beast and the false prophet are symbols of organizations. And we cannot take symbols and throw them into a literal lake of fire and sulfur.

**Second**, in order to be tormented forever, a person must live forever. But neither humans nor the Devil have intrinsic everlasting life.

So, the meaning of the two quoted passages that most people will get at first glance is wrong. In this Chapter I will make an analysis of the concepts of hell and torment.



## THE MEANING OF THE GREEK WORD GEHENNA

In the King James Bible translation from 1611 CE, four words are translated by “hell”: The Hebrew word *sheōl* and the Greek words *hades*, *geenna*, and *tartaroō*. None of these words are translated by “hell” in modern Bible translations. Nevertheless, the view of a burning hell with torment was introduced by the King James version and by different creeds. One of the few Greek words whose contexts *could* suggest torment after death is Gehenna, written as *geenna*, and I will analyze this word in its contexts.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the word Gehenna occurs 11 times. According to these texts, Gehenna is associated with fire, and persons can be thrown into Gehenna. In Matthew 18:8, 9, Jesus uses the words “everlasting fire” as a parallel to Gehenna; in 13:42 he speaks about the “fiery furnace”; and in Matthew 25:41, Jesus speaks about “the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” Jesus spoke Hebrew, and *gē hinnom* (“the Valley of Hinnom”) is the Hebrew equivalent to *geenna*. What did Jesus mean when he spoke about Gehenna? And how would his listeners understand his words?

### THE HEBREW WORDS *GĒ HINNOM*

The Valley of Hinnom (*gē hinnom*) was located south and southwest of Jerusalem (Joshua 15:8). Ahaz sacrificed his sons to Molech by burning them alive in the Valley of Hinnom. (2 Chronicles 28:1, 3; Jeremiah 32:35) The place in the Valley of Hinnom where the sacrifices were offered is called Topheth (*tofēṭ*). (Jeremiah 7:31, 32) King Josiah polluted the Valley of Hinnom to prevent idolatrous worship there. How could Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom be connected with the judgment of God? Jehovah would never command that living humans should be burned, as Jeremiah 32:35 shows. The Valley of Hinnom is never connected with torment by fire in the Hebrew Scriptures. But it is connected with the judgment of God against the wicked persons. Jeremiah 7:30-33 says:

<sup>30</sup> For the sons of Judah have done what is bad in my eyes . . . <sup>31</sup> They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, in order to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, something that I have not commanded and that has never even come into my heart.” <sup>32</sup> “Therefore look! the days will come,” declares Jehovah, “when it will no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom but the Valley of the Slaughter. They will bury in Topheth until there is no place left. <sup>33</sup> And the dead bodies of this people will become food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth, with no one to frighten them away.”

We note that the Valley of Hinnom will be filled with *dead bodies* when God makes his judgment against Judah. This is also described in Jeremiah 19:2, 6, 7, 10, 11. The judgment of Assyria is also connected with the Valley of Hinnom. Isaiah 30:31 says that Jehovah will strike Assyria with his rod, and Assyria will be terrified. Then verse 33 says:

<sup>33</sup> For his Topheth is already prepared; it is also made ready for the king. He has made the woodpile deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood. The breath of Jehovah, like a torrent of sulphur, will set fire to it.

Children were, contrary to the will of God, burned as sacrifices in Topheth. Now God speaks of a fire in Topheth that will consume the Assyrians. It is obvious that it is not a literal fire that will torment people, as we also can see from verse 27, “his tongue is like a consuming fire,” and verse 28, where we read that “his spirit is like a flooding torrent.” The imagery continues in verse 30 where we read:

Jehovah will make his majestic voice heard, and reveal his arm as it descends in the heat of anger, with the flame of a consuming fire, a cloudburst and a thunderstorm and hail stones.<sup>24</sup>

Because of this, we understand that the fire in Topheth is a consuming fire that led to the annihilation of the Assyrians and not to their torment. The place of Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom is also connected with the universal judgment of God. Isaiah 66: 24 first describes the new heaven and new earth where the nations will worship God. Then he says:

And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

As in the cases of the people of Judah and the Assyrians, the prophet does not speak of living persons but of dead ones — of corpses (*pəgər*). When a person dies and is buried, worms will feed on the body (Isaiah 14:11). The worms are said to be “*their* worms,” the worms that feed on the dead body. Worms do not live forever, but these worms will not die as long as there is flesh to consume. The fire mentioned is “*their* fire,” and the fire must be treated in the same way as the worms — it will not be quenched before the bodies are totally consumed.

The prophet Jeremiah (7:32, 33) describes a situation that has some similarities with Isaiah’s words; when Topheth is filled with dead bodies. Isaiah says that their bodies will be consumed by worms and fire, and Jeremiah says that they will be consumed by birds and animals. In both cases, total destruction is described.

Isaiah also describes the judgment of other nations. In 34:2–8, he says that God is angry with the nations, and he will destroy them and give them over to slaughter. A vivid imagery follows: The stench of the dead bodies will ascend, and the mountains will melt because of their blood. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their army will wither away. In the heavens, God’s sword will be drenched with blood when it descends on Edom in judgment. The people of Edom are devoted to destruction, and there will be a great slaughter in the land of Edom. In order to show that the destruction of Edom is eternal, verses 9, 10 say regarding Edom:

<sup>9</sup> Her streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur, and her land will become like burning pitch. <sup>10</sup> It will not be extinguished night and day, and its smoke will continue to ascend to time indefinite. From generation to generation she will remain devastated. No one will ever pass through her to time indefinite.

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24. See Isaiah 10:16–19, where fire also is said to consume the enemies.

To emphasize total destruction, strong pictures that do not describe literal situations are used: Burning pitch and sulphur are mentioned, and the smoke of the fire will always ascend to the heavens. Let us now turn to the imagery related to the judgment of God and *geenna* in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

## THE GREEK WORD *GEENNA*

There are 11 occurrences of *geenna* in the Christian Greek Scriptures. I will now discuss two questions, 1) What do we know about *gē hinnom* in the time of Jesus, and 2) what is the relationship between the words of Jesus regarding *geenna* and what is said about *gē hinnom* in the Hebrew Scriptures?

There is no contemporary evidence from the time of Jesus showing what occurred in *gē hinnom* and how the valley was viewed. Apart from the Christian Greek Scriptures, we must build on evidence before and after the time of Jesus. In the 6th century BCE, Jeremiah 31:40 speaks of “the valley of the corpses (*pagar*) and the fatty ashes.” This most likely refers to the Valley of Hinnom, and it suggests that the polluted condition persisted because corpses were unclean.

Neither the Dead Sea Scrolls nor other documents from BCE tell us anything about *gē hinnom*. As a matter of fact, we have no description of *gē hinnom* before the Jewish theologian David Kimhi, who was born in 1160 CE, wrote about this valley. In his comments on Psalm 27:13, he wrote:

And it is a place in the land adjoining Jerusalem, and it is a loathsome place, and there they throw unclean things and carcasses. Also, there was a continual fire there to burn the unclean things and the bones of the carcasses. Hence, the judgment of the wicked ones is called parabolically Gehinnom.

The evidence we possess suggests that *gē hinnom* (*geenna*) was an unclean place where corpses or carcasses were thrown, and the carcasses and other rubbish were burned with fire.

*Table 10.1 Passages where Gehenna is mentioned.*

<b>Matt 5:22</b>	will be in danger of the fire of Gehenna
<b>Matt 5:29</b>	than for your whole body to be pitched into Ge·hen'na.
<b>Matt 5:30</b>	your whole body to go to Gehenna
<b>Matt 10:28</b>	destroy both soul and body in Gehenna
<b>Matt 18:9</b>	thrown into Gehenna of fire
<b>Matt 23:15</b>	a son of Gehenna
<b>Matt 23:33</b>	the judgment of Gehenna
<b>Mark 9:43</b>	go off into Gehenna, to the unquenchable fire

Mark 9:45	be thrown into Gehenna
Mark 9:47	be thrown into Gehenna
Luke 12:5	after killing has the authority to throw into Gehenna
James 3:6	set on fire by Gehenna

How will the words about *geenna* in the Christian Greek Scriptures corroborate the words of Kimhi?

## GEHENNA REFERS TO THE GEOGRAPHICAL PLACE THE VALLEY OF HINNOM

Those who believe in eternal torment believe that man has an immortal soul, and it is this soul that will be tormented in the spiritual realm. The Bible shows that a human *is* a soul and does not have a soul, and when a man dies, he is in the same condition as a dead animal, as we read in Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20:

<sup>19</sup> For there is an eventuality as respects the sons of mankind and an eventuality as respects the beast, and they have the same eventuality. As the one dies, so the other dies; and they all have but one spirit, so that there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity. <sup>20</sup> All are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust.

The view that the souls will be tormented in hell, which is in the spiritual realm, is contradicted by the words of Jesus. We read in Matthew 18:8-10 (above), and Mark 9:45-47 (middle), and Matthew 5:29, 30 (below):

<sup>8</sup> If, then, your hand or your foot is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you; it is finer for you to *enter into life maimed or lame* than to be *thrown with two hands or two feet* into *the everlasting fire*.<sup>9</sup> Also, if your eye is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you; it is finer for you to *enter one-eyed into life* than to *be thrown with two eyes* into *the fiery Ge·hen'na*.

<sup>45</sup> And if your foot makes you stumble, cut it off; it is finer for you to *enter into life lame than with two feet* to *be pitched* into *Ge·hen'na*.<sup>46</sup> — <sup>47</sup> And if your eye makes you stumble, throw it away; it is finer for you to *enter one-eyed into the kingdom of God than with two eyes* to *be pitched* into *Ge·hen'na*,<sup>48</sup> *where their maggot does not die and the fire is not put out*.

<sup>29</sup> If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you. For it is more beneficial to you for *one of your members to be lost* to you *than* for *your whole body to be pitched* into *Ge·hen'na*.<sup>30</sup> Also, if your right hand is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you. For it is more beneficial to you for *one of your members to be lost than* for *your whole body to land* (*aperkbomai*) in *Ge·hen'na*.

I have marked similar words with similar colors, and I compare similar words with the same colors in Table 10.2:

Table 10.2 Comparison of similar words in passages with Gehenna

18:8	<i>The everlasting fire</i>	<i>thrown</i>	<i>with two hands and feet</i>	<i>enter into life than thrown into the everlasting fire</i>
18:9	<i>Gehenna</i>	<i>be thrown</i>	<i>with two eyes</i>	<i>into life than thrown into fiery Gehenna</i>
9:45	<i>Gehenna</i>	<i>be pitched</i>	<i>with two feet</i>	<i>enter into life than be pitched into Gehenna</i>
9:47	<i>Gehenna</i>	<i>be pitched</i>	<i>with two eyes</i>	<i>enter the kingdom of God than be pitched into Gehenna</i>
5:29	<i>Gehenna</i>	<i>be pitched</i>	<i>your whole body</i>	<i>one of your members to be lost than your whole body be pitched into Gehenna</i>
5:30	<i>Gehenna</i>	<i>to land</i>	<i>your whole body</i>	<i>one of your members to be lost than your whole body to land into Gehenna</i>

In five instances, we find “Gehenna” as the place, which is the focus, and in one instance, the parallel is everlasting fire. Fire is also connected with Gehenna in Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:48. The action is to throw or pitch. In 5:30, the expression is “to land.” The Greek word *aperkhomai* means “to go away, depart.” So, the idea is the same as in the other cases, but viewed from a different perspective.

In two places, Jesus said that “your whole body” will be thrown or get away into Gehenna, and in the other four instances, Jesus mentions parts of the body, like hands, feet, and eyes. But these are parts of the body, so the whole body is also included in these sayings.

*The point is that because it is the body of flesh and blood that was thrown into Gehenna, the references must be to a geographical place, to the Valley of Hinnom southwest of Jerusalem.*

### WHAT DOES GEHENNA SYMBOLIZE?

The words of Jesus exclude the idea that there is a spiritual part of man, the soul, that is thrown into a place in the spiritual realm with eternal torment. His words also show what the symbol of Gehenna is because of the contrasts Jesus makes. The English conjunction “than” makes the contrast in all six instances. And the opposite of Gehenna is “enter into life” in three instances and “enter the kingdom of God” in one instance. This means that Gehenna is the opposite of life, which is no life, or death.

How did the people in the days of Jesus view Gehenna? We cannot give a clear answer. But there are some allusions. I quote David Kimhi one time more:

And it is a place in the land adjoining Jerusalem, and it is a loathsome place, and there they throw unclean things and carcasses. Also, there was a continual fire there to burn the unclean things and the bones of the carcasses. Hence, the judgment of the wicked ones is called parabolically Gehinnom.

Gehenna was a garbage dump that was burning with fire, in order to consume the garbage and dead bodies that were thrown into it, and it is connected with the judgment of wicked persons. The graves of the Jews were called memorial tombs (*mnemeion*), indicating that a person who rested in such a grave was in the memory of God and would be resurrected. Because of this, it was very important for a Jew to be placed in a memorial tomb. As Jesus shows, the bodies of wicked persons were thrown from the city wall and into Gehenna. This could symbolize that the person was so wicked that he was not in God's memory and was not in line for a resurrection. Jesus knew how the Jews viewed Gehenna, and he used this in his teaching

It is very important to distinguish between the people's view of what Gehenna symbolized and God's view of those who were thrown into Gehenna. When the body of a dead criminal was thrown into Gehenna, this meant for the people that he would not get a resurrection. But it is not certain that this was God's view. This conclusion is supported by Jesus' words in Matthew 5:21, 22 (above) and Matthew 12:31, 32 (below):

<sup>21</sup> "YOU heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You must not murder; but whoever commits a murder will be accountable to the court of justice.' <sup>22</sup> However, I say to YOU that everyone who continues wrathful with his brother will be accountable to the court of justice; but whoever addresses his brother with an unspeakable word of contempt will be accountable to the Supreme Court; whereas whoever says, 'You despicable fool!' will be liable to the fiery Ge·hen'na.

<sup>31</sup> "On this account I say to YOU, Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come.

In his sermon on the Mount, Jesus points out that bad actions are wrong. But these actions start in the hearts and minds of those who do them. In 5:21, Jesus shows that not only is murder wrong, but this starts with wrath and bad feelings toward a person. In 5:22, he does not explain how expressions of animosity toward a person can lead to different court cases. But he describes that different degrees of animosity are bad. And the worst expression of animosity will cause his dead body to be thrown into Gehenna. And in the view of the people, that would mean not to be in line for a resurrection.

It is obvious that if a person says 'You despicable fool' one or more times, God will not sentence that person to be eternally annihilated. So, while Gehenna in the minds of the people evidently meant eternal annihilation, that was not the view of Jehovah God. This is confirmed by the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:31, 32, where he says that "every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men" except sin against the holy spirit. The words of Jesus in Luke 12:4, 5 (above) and Matthew 10:28 (below) will also support this view:

<sup>4</sup> Moreover, I say to YOU, my friends, Do not fear those who kill the body and after this are not able to do anything more (*perissos*). <sup>5</sup> But I will indicate to YOU whom to fear: Fear him who after killing has authority (*eksousia*) to throw into Ge·hen'na. Yes, I tell YOU, fear this One.



<sup>28</sup> And do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot (*dynamai*) kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can (*dynamai*) destroy both soul and body in Ge·hen'na.

According to Luke, Jesus speaks about a person who dies and of those who cannot do more. The Greek word *perissos* has the meaning, “pertaining to that which is exceptional in the sense of being more than what is expected.” (Louw and Nida) So, we must not fear those who are not able to decide the destiny of a dead person.

The noun *eksousia* has the meaning, “the right to judge on the basis of having the potential to evaluate; a state of control over someone or something.” (Louw and Nida) When a criminal died, his body could be thrown from the walls of Jerusalem and into Gehenna. This would symbolize that he was so wicked that he would not get a resurrection. By using the noun *eksousia*, Luke indicates that those who would throw criminals into Gehenna needed the permission to do so, perhaps from some court.

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus used the view of the people that throwing a body into Gehenna symbolizes eternal annihilation for that person. On this background, he introduced the Hebrew word *nephesh* corresponding to the Greek word *psyche* (“soul”), and he deployed a contrast between body and soul. In order to understand this contrast, I quote Genesis 2:7 (above), Genesis 6:17 (upper middle), Psalm 146:4 (lower middle), and Ecclesiastes 12:7 (below):

<sup>7</sup> And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life (*neshāmā*), and the man came to be a living soul (*nephesh*).

<sup>17</sup> “And as for me, here I am bringing the deluge of waters upon the earth to bring to ruin all flesh in which the force (*ruah*) of life (*hayyim*) is active from under the heavens. Everything that is in the earth will expire.

<sup>4</sup> His spirit (*ruah*) goes out, he goes back to his ground; In that day his thoughts do perish.

<sup>7</sup> Then the dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit (*ruah*) itself returns to the [true] God who gave it.

The noun *neshāmā* has the meaning “breath, blast of breath; by extension: life, life force, spirit.” (Kohlenerger and Mounce) The basic meaning of *neshāmā* is “breath.” However, when God blew *neshāmā* into Adam’s nostrils, he received his life force (*ruah*). This is seen in connection with the death of all humans and animals in the great flood. The Hebrew word *ruah* means “spirit,” and according to Genesis 6:17, humans and animals have *ruah hayyim* (“spirit of life”). Humans and animals are souls, and a soul consists of body and spirit, as Psalms 146:4 shows. Ecclesiastes 12:7 uses figurative language and says that when a person dies, the spirit (*ruah*) goes back to God who gave the life.

On the basis of the four scriptures above, we can understand the words in Luke 12:4, 5 and Matthew 20:28. The soul (*nephesh/psyche*) consists of the body and the spirit of life. When a person dies, the body is lifeless, but the spirit of life (*ruah hayyim, pneuma*

ζοε) goes back to God. And God will again blow *neshāmā* into the nostrils of those who will be resurrected in the earthly paradise, so they get *ruah hayyim* (“the spirit of life”)

The point of Jesus is that we should not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill *ruah hayyim*. But we must fear him who has the authority to kill the soul, i.e., to kill both the body and *ruah hayyim*. The word “soul” in Matthew 20:28 can be defined as “the right to live” because when a person’s *ruah hayyim* goes back to God, this person has the right to live by a resurrection in the future.

Jesus spoke Hebrew, and he used the word *nephesh* (translated as *psyche*) two times in Matthew 20:28. His listeners knew the meaning of the word “body” (Hebrew *kofar*, Greek *soma*) and “soul” (Hebrew *nephesh* and Greek *psyche*). But they would hardly get a correct understanding of what Jesus meant by the words “kill the soul.” We can see this by reading Joshua 10:10:

<sup>30</sup> Accordingly Jehovah gave it also and its king into Israel’s hand, and they went striking it and every soul (*nephesh*) that was in it with the edge of the sword. They did not let a survivor remain in it. So they did to its king just as they had done to the king of Jer’i’cho.

Joshua speaks about killing all the souls in Jericho. So, the listeners would understand the words “kill the soul” as killing the person. They would perhaps wonder why Jesus differentiated between killing the body and killing the soul, that for them would be one and the same thing. But they would not understand what Jesus meant. Therefore, Jesus used a parallelism that could help the listeners:

who **kill** (*apokteinō*) the body but cannot **kill** (*apokteinō*) the soul;  
can **destroy** (*apollymi*) both soul and body **in Ge·hen'na**.

The verb *apokteinō* means to take the life of someone so they die. The verb *apollymi* has the meaning “to destroy or to cause the destruction of persons, objects, or institutions.” (Louw and Nida). Jesus used *apollymi* (“destroy”) as a parallel and contrast to *apokteinō* (“kill”). And *apollymi* is much stronger than *apokteinō* because it can refer to destruction. However, whether this destruction is eternal or not, we cannot know when this verb is used. Therefore, Jesus added an even stronger element, namely, Gehenna.

As I have shown, the people believed that those who were thrown into Gehenna were eternally annihilated. Therefore, when Jesus used the word Gehenna, it indicated that the destruction described by the verb *apollymi* (“destroy”) was eternal and final. This is also shown by the use of “soul.” Because we know that a human soul consists of a body and the spirit of life, when the soul is destroyed, both these elements are destroyed. And when the spirit of life does not return to God when a person dies but is destroyed, the person has no right to receive a resurrection.

***For the Jews in the time of Jesus, Gehenna probably symbolized that a person died without being in the memory of Jehovah, and without the possibility of a resurrection. However, only God knows whether those whose bodies were thrown into Gehenna or those whom the Christian Greek Scriptures say have come, or will come, to Gehenna will get a resurrection. “Vox populi vox dei” (the voice of the***

*people is the voice of God) is wrong. We must distinguish between the view of the people and the view of Jehovah God.*

## HOW WOULD THE LISTENERS UNDERSTAND THE WORDS OF JESUS?

The book of 1 Enoch, which is not a part of the Bible, tells that we all have souls or spirits that continue to live after the body is dead, and that sinners will be tormented by fire. On the other hand, both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures teach that no part of man continues to live after he is dead. The consequence of this is that sinners cannot be tormented by fire after they are dead because torment requires that a person, or a part of him, is living.

However, there is one problem that we must discuss. Parts of the book of 1 Enoch were probably written in the 2nd or 1st century BCE. But the verses that describe torment by fire of fragments of the book from this time are lacking. However, the Ethiopic text of 1 Enoch 110:13 says:

In these days, my servant will lead them to a deep cleft with fire, and they will be tormented; they will be locked up in their prison forever.

In the Aramaic Dead Sea Scroll 4Q204 f1v:1, which is a fragmentary text of 1 Enoch, the half part of the word *ʿyq* (“torture”) corresponding to the word “tormented” in the Ethiopic text, and the half part of the word *ʿlm* (“time indefinite”)<sup>25</sup>, corresponding to the word “forever” in the Ethiopic text, are found. This may suggest that the descriptions of torment in the Ethiopic text of 1 Enoch were original, and that this book existed in the days of Jesus.

Moreover, the Pharisees, who may have originated in the 2nd century BCE, believed that sinners would be tormented. Josephus says regarding the beliefs of the Pharisees:

Every soul, they maintain, is imperishable, but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment.<sup>26</sup>

On several occasions, Jesus referred to the judgment of Gehenna and connected it with fire, as we have seen. We must, therefore, ask: Was Jesus’ view of the fate of the sinners influenced by 1 Enoch and others who believed in eternal torment?

It has been argued that if the destiny of God’s enemies is eternal annihilation, the words of Jesus about Gehenna would have misled his listeners. Because 1 Enoch and the Pharisees advocated eternal torment for the souls or spirits of God’s enemies, the listeners of Jesus would have taken his words about *gē hinnom* and *geenna* to mean that he agreed with this view.

After Alexander the Great’s conquest of the world in the 4th century BCE, Greek influence spread throughout the Middle East, including Israel. One important Greek

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25. The basic meaning of the word *ʿlm* is “a time whose length is not known; time indefinite.” But translators often use the word “everlasting” to translate *ʿlm*.

26. Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities*, XVIII, 14 i, 3.

idea was that every man has an immortal soul. Many Jews became influenced by Greek thoughts, but there were also many who resisted this influence. One reason behind the Maccabean uprising in the middle of the 2nd century BCE was to resist the Greek influence and to promote the religion of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>27</sup>

We do not know how many Jews in the days of Jesus subscribed to the Greek idea of an immortal soul. But there can be no doubt that many persons were faithful toward the Hebrew Scriptures, which say that the soul can die and that a man dies in the same way as an animal and comes to the same place, as we see in Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20, that is quoted above.

The hope mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures is not personal immortality but a resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of the dead is mentioned in Isaiah 26:19, Hosea 13:14, and Daniel 12:13, and it is implied by all the prophecies about God's creation of new heavens and a new earth. One example that can illustrate the view of many sincere Jews in the days of Jesus is the view of Martha, the sister of Lazarus. Her brother died, and Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha answered: "I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." (John 11:23, 24) Martha was a God-fearing woman, and her words regarding the resurrection on the last day likely reflected the views of many other sincere Jews.

Confirming this are Paul's words when he stood before Felix. Paul said, according to Acts 24:15:

<sup>15</sup> And I have the hope toward God, which hope these men themselves also entertain, that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Who were "these men" who believed in the resurrection? They were the men who attacked and accused Paul. This suggests that not only humble and sincere Jews, such as Martha, but also the broader Jewish population believed in a resurrection. If that belief were not widespread, Paul would not have argued that Jews, whom he did not know, held this belief.

One premise behind the argument that Jesus' words about Gehenna could be misunderstood is that the belief in an immortal soul and eternal torment for sinners was widespread among those who listened to Jesus. The words of Martha and Paul suggest that this was not true, but that the belief in the resurrection was widespread.

There is also another issue that may shed light on how listeners would understand the words of Jesus, namely, what *gē hinnom* meant to ordinary Jews in the days of Jesus. When we communicate, we assume that we and our listeners share common knowledge, and that when we use particular words, our audience has about the same understanding of them as we do.

Geographical names are also used today to represent something. One geographical name may refer to a rubbish dump, another to a mental hospital. Other geographical names may refer to a university, a research institution, or a governmental office. When someone says that Washington said this and that, and Moscow answered this and that,

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27. The books 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees tell about this situation.

the reference is to the governments in the two capitals. In a similar way, when Jesus referred to *gē hinnom*, that name evoked something in his listeners' minds.

As mentioned, we have no contemporaneous accounts from the days of Jesus as to what *gē hinnom* represented; therefore, we cannot rightly criticize Jesus and say that his words would mislead his listeners to think that he argued in favor of eternal torment for sinners. A rejection of the belief in an immortal soul would exclude the idea of eternal torment. And because *gē hinnom* was connected with God's universal judgment in the Hebrew Scriptures, without an immortal soul, this judgment could not be anything but annihilation.

## DOES THE GREEK WORD *KOLASIS* IN MATTHEW 25:46 REFER TO “ETERNAL PUNISHMENT”?

Jesus concluded his illustration about the sheep and the goats with some words about the destiny of those who belong to these two groups. We read in Matthew 25:46:

NIV: “Then they will go away to eternal punishment (*kolasis*), but the righteous to eternal life.”

NWT84: And these will depart into everlasting cutting-off (*kolasis*), but the righteous ones into everlasting life.”<sup>28</sup>

Some countries have the death penalty, and this is also called capital punishment. So, death can be viewed as a punishment. However, the adjective “eternal” before “punishment” in Jesus's words could indicate that this punishment is not instantaneous and refers to death. But it refers to living persons who will be punished without end. But the expression “everlasting cutting-off” in NWT84 indicates the end of the life of those receiving this punishment. I will now consider this issue from the perspective of lexical semantics and linguistics.

The important word is *kolasis*, and according to Liddell and Scott, the core meaning of the noun *kolasis* is “checking the growth of trees, esp. almond trees.” Because checking the growth of trees implied the use of force to cut off unwanted branches, the word can, according to the same source, also denote “chastisement” and “correction.” The question, therefore, is how the Bible translator should render this word. It is clear that “punishment” and “cutting off” are legitimate renderings of *kolasis*, and a study of why the translators made different choices will reveal the role of theology in Bible translation.

Where can the translator look to make a balanced decision? There are essentially five sources that can be explored: how the word is used in 1) classical Greek writings, 2) in apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books, 3) Josephus, and 4) the Septuagint. Because the word is in a quotation of Jesus, source 5) is an exploration into the original Hebrew words. Also, the teachings of Jesus and the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures about the destiny of those who will not gain everlasting life must be carefully

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28. The footnote says, “Lit., ‘lopping off; pruning.’”

considered. The noun *kolasis* occurs only two times and the verb *kolazō* occurs two times, as we see in 1 John 4:18 (above). 2 Peter 2:9 (middle), and Acts 4:21 (below)

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love throws fear outside, because fear exercises a restraint (*kolasis*). Indeed, he that is under fear has not been made perfect in love.

<sup>9</sup> Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off (*kolazō*).

<sup>21</sup> So, when they had further threatened them, they released them, since they did not find any ground on which to punish (*kolazō*) them and on account of the people, because they were all

The noun *kolasis* is rendered as “restraint,” and the verb *kolazō* is rendered as “cut-off” and “punish.” We may have these renderings in mind when we look at the other sources.

## THE USE OF KOLASIS IN THE SEPTUAGINT

The Greek word *kolasis* occurs seven times in the Septuagint. This word is a translation of *miqshōl* in five instances, as seen in Table 10.3, and I will now consider the meaning of *miqshōl* in these five instances and two other Hebrew words.

*Table 10.3 Hebrew words translated by kolasis*

	HEBREW	SEPTUAGINT	MEANING
<b>Ezekiel 14:3</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 14:4</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 14:7</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i> <sub>2</sub>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 18:30</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 44:12</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 43:10</b>	<i>kālam ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	put to shame, punishment
<b>Jeremiah 18:20</b>		<i>kolasis</i>	

In the Septuagint we find the expression *kolasin tōn adikion*, and NETS,<sup>29</sup> renders this expression as “the punishment of their injustices.” The Hebrew expression is *miqshōl ‘āwōn*. Each of these Hebrew words has its own meaning, but together they convey the idea of punishment, including death.

The basic meaning of *miqshōl* is, “(cause of) stumbling and so falling, a stumbling block, obstacle.” (The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew). In a figurative sense *miqshōl* is the meaning, “calamity; in divine judgment, as a hindrance to restoration of people.” (BDB), and “stumbling block, obstacle; (occasion of) stumbling, downfall.” (Kohlenberger and Mounce)

One example of *miqshōl* referring to the punishment of death is Jeremiah 6:21:

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29. NETS is a translation of the Greek text of the Septuagint.



<sup>21</sup> Therefore this is what Jehovah has said: “Here I am setting for this people **stumbling blocks** (*miqshōl*), and they will certainly stumble over them, fathers and sons together; the neighbor and his companion—**they will perish** (*‘abad*).”

The parallel in the verse is between “stumbling blocks” and “perish.” So, when the Hebrew word *miqshōl* is used, it can refer to the destruction and death of humans. Three elements are visible: 1) stumbling blocks are laid, 2) the people will stumble, and 3) the people will die.

The meaning of *‘āwōn* is, “sin, wickedness, iniquity, often with a focus on the guilt or liability incurred, and the punishment to follow.” (Kohlenberger and Mounce), and “misdeed, sin; guilt caused by sin; punishment.” (BDB)

The following passages are referred to in BDB as examples of the meaning “punishment” of *‘āwōn*:

#### Jeremiah 51:6

<sup>6</sup> “FLEE out of the midst of Babylon, and provide escape each one for his own soul. Do not be rendered inanimate through her **error** (*‘āwōn*). For it is the time of **vengeance** (*neqāmā*) belonging to Jehovah. There is treatment that he is **paying back** to her.

#### Ezekiel 21:23, 24, 25, 29 (Heb 21:30-34)

<sup>23</sup> And it has become to them like an untrue divination in their eyes—those who are sworn with oaths to them; and he is calling **error to remembrance**, in order [for them] **to be caught**. (*‘āwōn lebittāfēsh* the sin/guilt to be caught).

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, ‘By reason of **YOUR causing YOUR error** (*‘āwōn*) to be remembered by YOUR transgressions being uncovered, in order that YOUR sins may be seen according to all YOUR dealings, by reason of YOUR being called to remembrance **YOU people will be seized even by the hand.**’

<sup>25</sup> “And as for you, O deadly wounded, wicked chieftain of Israel, whose day has come in the time of **the error** (*‘āwōn ketš*) **of [the] end**,

<sup>29</sup> because of [their] beholding for you an unreality, because of [their] divining for you a lie, in order to put you on the necks of the slain ones, the wicked men whose day has come in the time of **the error** (*‘āwōn ketš*) **of [the] end**.

#### Ezekiel 35:5

<sup>5</sup> for the reason that you proved to have an indefinitely lasting enmity and you kept delivering the sons of Israel over to the power of the sword, in the time of their disaster, in the time of **[their] final error** (*‘āwōn ketš*).”

#### Ezekiel 44:10, 12

<sup>10</sup> “But as for the Levites who got far away from me when Israel, who wandered away from me, wandered after their dungy idols, they **must also bear their error** (*nāshū ‘āwōn*).

<sup>12</sup> For the reason that they kept ministering to them before their dungy idols and became to the house of Israel **a stumbling block into error** (*miqshōl ‘āwōn*), that is why I have raised my hand against them,’ is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘and **they must bear their error** (*nāshū ‘āwōnim*).

In Jeremiah 51:6 *’āwōn* stands parallel with “vengeance” and “paying back,” so the meaning must be “punishment for sin.” Ezekiel 21:23, 24, 25, 29, and 35:5 connects *’āwōn* with “being caught,” “being sized by the hand,” and with “the end.” All these expressions refer to punishment, indicating that *’āwōn* often means punishment. Ezekiel 44:10, 12 shows that the people must bear their error, which means that they are guilty of punishment.

In five instances, the nouns *miqshōl* and *’āwōn* stand together as a unit. Because *miqshōl* can refer to calamity and divine judgment, and *’āwōn* can refer to “punishment,” the combination of both words is a strong expression of divine adverse judgment. The Septuagint translates five of the examples of *miqshōl* and *’āwōn* with *kolasis tōn adikōn*, and NETS translates this expression with “punishment of their injustices.” This is a good translation of the Greek words, and I will translate the Hebrew expression *miqshōl ’āwōn* as “the punishment of their sin” or just “punishment.”

The Hebrew word *kālam* is also translated by *kolasis*. Its meaning is, “humiliated, ashamed, put to shame, dishonored, confounded: 1. be humiliated, ashamed, before men; before enemies (by defeat, etc.); before God. 2. be put to shame, dishonored, confounded, by judgments of (God)” (BDB) I quote Isaiah 41:11 (above) and Ezekiel 43:10 (below):

<sup>11</sup> All who *rage against you* will surely *be ashamed* (*kālam*) and disgraced; those who *oppose you will be as nothing and perish*.

<sup>10</sup> And if they actually feel humiliated (*kālam*, *kolasis*) because of all that they have done (*’āwōn*) [“they shall receive their punishment,” the Septuagint]....

Isaiah 41:11 is constructed as a parallelism, meaning the same idea is expressed using two synonymous words or expressions that convey the same meaning. In this verse, “be ashamed” is parallel to “will be as nothing and perish.” This shows that *kālam* in the Nifal stem can express the idea of people who are perishing. In this verse, the Septuagint uses the verb *entrepō* with the meaning “be ashamed.”

Ezekiel 43:10 has the verb *kālam* together with the noun *’āwōn* as *kolasis* (“punishment”). And just as the translators of the Septuagint in five instances have translated *miqshōl* (“stumbling block”) and *’āwōn* (“sin”) as *kolasis* (“punishment”), they have translated *kālam* and *’āwōn* as *kolasis* (“punishment”).

The noun *kolasis* occurs seven times in the Septuagint. In five instances, the meaning is “punishment,” in the sixth instance, it can be either “punishment” or “be put to shame,” and in the seventh instance, there is no Hebrew equivalent to *kolasis*.

## THE WORDS *KOLASIS* AND *KOLAZŌ* IN EXTRA-BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Let us first look at the writings of Josephus, where *kolasis* occurs 49 times. In William Whiston’s translation, the word is translated as “punishment,” and an unreflective reader may, therefore, draw the conclusion that this is the meaning of the word. Could it, in some or many instances, have been translated as “cutting-off”? Certainly, it could. For example, we read about Jeremiah:

So they mollified the multitude with these words, and delivered Jeremiah from *the punishment* (*kolasis*) to which he was condemned.<sup>30</sup>

The prophet had not been tormented or tortured, but he had been thrown into a pit to prevent him from prophesying against the rulers. Because the prophet was cut off from the people, it would be more appropriate to describe this situation as a cutting-off rather than as a punishment. In another writing, Josephus uses the word *kolasis* two times with reference to death:

While Titus was in Cesarea, he solemnised the birthday of his brother [Domitian] after a splendid manner, and inflicted a great deal of *the punishment* (*kolasis*) intended for the Jews in honour of him: for *the number of those that were now slain* in fighting with the beasts, and were burnt, and fought with one another, *exceeded two thousand five hundred*. Yet did all this seem to the Romans, *when they were thus destroying ten thousand several ways, to be a punishment* (*kolasis*) beneath their deserts.<sup>31</sup>

In the second use of the word in this text, the parallel word of *kolasis* is “destroying,” which means that the Jews were killed. Thus, the word was used in the same sense as the Hebrew word *kārat* (“to cut off”), which I will come back to later. The victims were simply cut off from their lives. The word *kārat* is used in this sense in several other passages as well.

In the translations of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books, *kolasis* is often translated as “punishment.” The situation here is the same as in Josephus: in many instances, the context would not forbid the translation “cutting-off.” But because “punishment” is the traditional rendering, this word is used.

## THE HEBREW WORD *KĀRAT* AS A POSSIBLE BASIS FOR *KOLASIS*

Persons in Israel who were guilty of grave sins were killed, according to the Law. Exodus 30:38 says:

<sup>38</sup> Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its smell must be *cut off* (*kārat*) from its people.

The verb translated by “cut off” is *kārat*, and it occurs 290 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Of these, 119 refer to “making a covenant” (Literally: “to cut a covenant”), and 171 refer to cutting for different objects, including being cut off from life. In the Septuagint, there are 23 different words that translate *kārat*, and all these relate in some way to the core meaning “cut.” Interestingly, there is a clear relation between the Hebrew word *kārat* and the Greek words used to describe the destiny of ungodly people, and the link is the translation of *kārat* in the Septuagint.

The Greek word in the Septuagint used to translate *kārat* in 45% of the cases is *eksolethreuō*, which refers to “cutting-off.” But in The Christian Greek Scriptures, this word occurs only in Acts 3:23 in the sense “*being cut-off* from the people.” Second Thessalonians 1:7, which describes the eternal destiny of wicked people, uses the word

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30. Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.6.2.93.

31. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7.3.1.37–38. Text is online at <http://tinyurl.com/2bs4hvy>.

*olethros* (“destruction”). Because this is the substantive corresponding to the verb *‘eksolethreuō* that is the most used word for translating *kārat*, the idea of *kārat* (cutting-off) must be the basis for the expression in 2 Thessalonians 1:9:

<sup>9</sup> These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting *destruction* (*olethros*) from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.

The Septuagint uses the word *apollymi* 13 times, which translates *kārat* several times in The Christian Greek Scriptures, referring to the destiny of the wicked.<sup>32</sup> Jesus uses the corresponding noun *apōleia* (“destruction”) one time in this same sense,<sup>33</sup> and the same is true in 2 Peter 3:7.

***The Hebrew word kārat — to be cut off from life was the destiny of ungodly people, according to the Hebrew Scriptures — is evidently behind the Greek words olethros and apōleia.***

Even in Jesus’ illustration in Matthew 13:34–43, the idea of *kārat* is the basis. He compared the sons of the kingdom to fine seed and the sons of the wicked to weeds. The final end is that the weeds are burned with fire,<sup>34</sup> which means that they are annihilated (cut off from any existence). The Greek word used for “burn” (or “burn up”) in Matthew 13:40 is *katakaiō*, and the Septuagint uses this word as a translation of *kārat*.<sup>35</sup>

When Jesus uttered the words in Matthew 25:46, he spoke Hebrew. It is likely that Jesus used a form of the verb *kārat* and that this was translated by *kolasis*. This is likely because the idea of *kārat* (“cutting-off”) is so closely connected with the destiny of ungodly people in the Christian Greek Scriptures and in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moreover, the word Jesus used is contrasted with life and living, and except for “death,” I am not aware of any Hebrew word other than *kārat* that better could express the opposite of life and living.

We should also remember that the core meaning of *kolasis* well matches the core meaning of *kārat* — the core meaning of *kolasis* was to cut off branches from trees, and the core meaning of *kārat* was to cut off any object, including branches and other objects of wood.<sup>36</sup> It is true that the seven occurrences of *kolasis* in the Septuagint

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32. It is, for example, found in Matt. 10:28 in the phrase, “destroy (*apollymi*) soul and body in Gehenna.”

33. Matt. 7:13.

34. In Matthew 13:42, we read about the weeds: “And they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be.” Because weeds thrown into a fiery furnace will be burned to ashes, the weeping and gnashing of teeth must occur before the destruction of the people symbolized by the weeds.

35. In Exodus 34:13, we read according to the Hebrew text: “But the altars YOU people are to pull down (*nātats*, “break down”), and their sacred pillars you are to shatter (*shāḥar*, “crush; smash”), and their sacred poles YOU are to cut down (*kārat*, “cut”).” The NETS is an English translation of the Septuagint, and the last clause of the verse in this translation is “and the cast images of their gods you shall burn (*katakaiō*) with fire.”

36. Examples of *kārat* used to cut off wooden objects are Num. 13:23, Judg. 6:26, Job 14:7, and

never translate *kārat*. As shown above, *kolasis* refers to a stumbling block that causes people to be cut off from life. Thus, *kolasis* and *kārat* have similar core meanings and can denote the same things. This may have been the reason why Matthew chose this word in 25:46.

## THE TRANSLATION OF *KOLASIS* IN MATTHEW 25:46

What is the best way to render *kolasis* in English? The answer must be based on the lexical and contextual evidence. If we examine the lexical evidence from a quantitative perspective, we see that most examples of the use of *kolasis* in ancient writings denote punishment (though not pain or torment). Quantitative arguments can be deceptive, however, because the extrabiblical literature where the word occurs contains immense amounts of mythology. We cannot determine the meaning of the word in its application to the destiny of the ungodly based solely on mythological statements. The conclusion must be that, lexically speaking, *kolasis* can denote both punishment and cutting off or restraining something.<sup>37</sup>

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, we find two examples of the verb *kolazō* and two examples of the substantive *kolasis*. In Acts 4:21, the context suggests that the verb denotes punishment, and NWT84 has “punish” in this verse, but we cannot rule out the stronger meaning “cut them off,” that is, “to kill them” in this verse. In 1 John 4:18, the context cannot tell us the exact reference of *kolasis*. NWT84 renders it as “a restraint,” and the footnote says, “Or, ‘checking; correction; punishment.’ Lit., ‘lopping off.’” In 2 Peter 2:9, again the context is not decisive, and NWT84 renders the verb as “to be cut off,” and the footnote says, “Or, ‘be checked.’” The last place where we find the substantive is Matthew 25:46; the context (vv. 31–46), and we read in verse 41:

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say, in turn, to those on his left, ‘Be on YOUR way from me, YOU who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.

The Devil and his angels will be annihilated forever, and these words of Jesus show that this will also be the destiny of the “goats.” So, how should *kolasis* be rendered into English?

Bible translators have two options in Matthew 25:46: either to use “punishment” or to use “cutting off.” Lexically speaking, both options are equally good. The duty of the translators is not only to find a target language word that is lexically correct, but to consider what the word signals to the readers and which connotations they will make.

We can use the Greek word *pornē* as an example. The meaning is, “a prostitute, a whore, a harlot, an unchaste female.” We can also add the words, “call girl, escort, sex worker, and streetwalker. All eight words can translate the Greek word *pornē*. But

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Jer. 6:6.

37. It is nothing strange that certain words may denote different things. This is also true in connection with other words that refer to the destiny of ungodly people. For example, *olethros* may denote both “utter destruction” and “waste,” and *apōleia* may denote both “destruction” and “losing” something.”



which English word will a translator choose? That depends, first of all, on the context and how the woman is portrayed within it. It also depends on the associations and connotations the reader will make regarding the word that is chosen.

In our context, the choice is between “everlasting punishment” and “everlasting cutting-off. Linguistically speaking, both expressions are equally good. But what about the associations and connotations that the readers will make?

It is true that a death sentence could be defined as punishment, but I am sure that few (if any) living persons whose mother tongue is English would use the term “everlasting punishment” in reference to a death sentence. This means that the natural connotations modern Bible readers will make when they read that some persons “will go away to eternal punishment” (NIV) is that they will continue to live after death and be punished all the time without ending.

The NWT84 rendering of “everlasting cutting-off” aligns more closely with the words of 25:41, suggesting that the destiny of the goats is the same as that of the Devil and his angels. The understanding of most readers of the words “everlasting cutting-off” is that the goats will lose their lives forever, and no connotations about punishment that continues forever are possible. So, in my view, the rendering “everlasting cutting-off” is the best rendering.

## THE USE OF THE GREEK WORDS *BASANIZŌ*, *BASANOS*, *BASANISMOS*, AND *BASANISTĒS*

The basic meaning of the verb *basanizō* and the three related nouns given by lexicons of New Testament Greek is *to torment/torment*, and the words are used 29 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. When the object of the verb *basanizō* is a living creature, its meaning can be *torment*. However, inanimate things and symbols can also be objects, and these cannot feel pain. This means that the word cannot have only one meaning or reference.

In all languages, a word can acquire different meanings and nuances over time. If a word is a physical object, meanings based on its appearance, its use, and what it stands for or represents often arise. We may use the Hebrew word *karan* as an example. The word is a physical object, and its basic meaning is *horn*. Horns could be used to store perfume, and one meaning was “perfume box” (Job 42:14); the words Keren Happuk, “horn of antimony,” are used as eye shadow. Horns could also contain oil and other liquids, and the meaning “receptacle” arose. A horn could also be used as a musical instrument, and the meaning “trumpet” arose (Joshua 6:5). At sunrise and sunset, the rays of the sun may look like gigantic horns, and “ray” also became a meaning (Habakkuk 3:4). The word may also represent the word “strength.” (Jeremiah 48:25)

## THE MEANING OF *BASANOS* AND RELATED TERMS

Like *karan*, which is a physical object, *basanos* was a physical object as well. We read in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, volum 3, page 855:



Basanos comes from the Egyptian word for touchstone for gold (*hydia lithos* Baccyl Frag 14). Attested since tehognis and Pindar in cl. Gk. Usage. It signifies originally a means of testing; then torture as a means of examination, and finally, torment generally.

This definition relates to classical Greek, and the meanings of words are often different in New Testament Greek than in classical Greek. The word *psykhē* (“soul”), for example, refers to humans and animals, which *are* souls, and souls can die. In classical Greek *psykhē* refers to a spiritual part of man that cannot die. There is no doubt that *basanos* in the book of the Maccabees, written in the second century BCE, and in the apocryphal books of 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and the Wisdom of Solomon, often refers to torment. This is also the case in some passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures. But if we have the example of the Hebrew word *karan* in mind, we must be open to different meanings of the word as well.

As the quotation above shows, the word originally referred to a physical object: a stone on which pure gold would leave a yellow streak if rubbed against it. So, the meaning was “touchstone.” Because the purity of gold could be tested, the word could be used for any test of genuineness. Because torture was often used in interrogations of prisoners, the word also got the meaning “inquiry by torture.” Regarding the related word *basanistēs*, *The Greek-English Lexicon* of Liddell and Scott gives the meanings “examiner; questioner; torturer; gaoler [prison guard].”

Before we look at its use in the Christian Greek Scriptures, I will examine *basanos* in the Septuagint.

## THE USE OF *BASANOS* IN THE SEPTUAGINT

Jesus spoke Hebrew, and Luke used the word *basanos* in an illustration told by Jesus. Which Hebrew word did Jesus use? Matthew uses the word *basanizō* three times and Mark two times. Their native tongue was Hebrew, and which Hebrew word(s) did they have in mind? In Revelation, *basanizō* is used five times and *basanismos* is used six times. This is a book that is heavily influenced by Hebrew. So, it is important to see whether the Hebrew Scriptures can offer clues to the meaning of *basanos* and related words.

Table 10:4 lists the Hebrew words translated as *basanos* in the Septuagint and their meanings. In what follows, I will discuss each word.

*Table 10.4 The use of the word basanos in the Septuagint*

	HEBREW TEXT	SEPTUAGINT	MEANING
<b>Ezekiel 3:20</b>	<i>mikhsbōl</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 7:19</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 16:52</b>	<i>kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment
<b>Ezekiel 16:54</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 32:24</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment by death

<b>Ezekiel 32:30</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	judgment/punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 12:18</b>	<i>de'agā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	fear, anxiety
<b>1 Samuel 6:3</b>	<i>'āsham:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	guilt, guilt offering

The verb *mikshōl* is translated two times with *basanos* in the Septuagint. I start with the verb *kāshal* that corresponds to the noun *miqshōl*.

The verb *kāshal* has the active meaning of “to stumble, falter, fall,” the passive meaning, “be brought down,” and the causative meaning “be overthrown.” (Kohlenberger and Mounce). An example showing that even the active form can mean destruction is when Isaiah speaks about God’s judgment of both the houses of Israel in 8:15:

<sup>15</sup> And many among them will be certain to **stumble** (*kāshal*) and to **fall** (*nāfal*) and **be broken**, (*shābar*) and to be snared (*yāqash*) and caught (*lāqad*).

The parallel verbs “stumble,” “fall,” and “be broken” point to the destruction of the people. The noun corresponding to the verb *kāshal* is *mikshōl*, and its meaning is “stumbling, means or occasion of stumbling, stumbling-block.” (BDB) This noun can refer to people who stumble and are destroyed. This is seen in Isaiah 8:14, the verse before the verse that is quoted above:

<sup>14</sup> And he must become as a sacred place; but as a stone to strike against and as a rock over which to **stumble** (*mikshōl*) to both the houses of Israel, as **a trap** (*pah*) and as **a snare** (*mōkēsh*) to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The point here is that both the verb *kāshal* (“to stumble”) and the noun *mikshōl* (“stumbling-block”) can refer destruction of those who are mentioned in the context.

The noun *mikshōl* is translated in the Septuagint by the Greek word *basanos*, which can mean “torment” in both the apocryphal books and in the Bible. From the use of the noun *basanos* in the Septuagint, we see that the word has other meanings than “torment,” as well.

## THE HEBREW WORDS TRANSLATED AS BASANOS

There are two places where the Septuagint translates *mikshōl* with *basanos*. In the next section, I will show that the Septuagint also translates *mikshōl* with *kolasis*, and this is very important for the meaning of *basanos* and related words in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

### Ezekiel 3:20

<sup>20</sup> And when someone righteous turns back from his righteousness and actually does injustice and I must put a **stumbling block** (Hebrew: *miqshol*, Greek: *basanos*) before him, **he himself will die** (*mūt*) because you did not warn him. For his sin he will die, and his righteous acts that he did will not be remembered, but his blood I shall ask back from your own hand.

As we see in the quotations from Isaiah 8:14, 15 above, the Hebrew word *miqshōl* is a synonym for death. This means that the Greek word *basanos* also can refer to death and not necessarily to torment. We see this clearly in the parallel between “stumbling block” (*mikhsbōl*) and “he himself will die” (*mūt*) in 3:20.

### Ezekiel 7:9, 19

<sup>9</sup> Neither will my eye feel sorry nor shall I feel compassion. According to your ways shall I do the bringing upon you yourself, and your own detestable things will come to be right in the midst of you; and YOU people will have to know that I am Jehovah doing the smiting (*nākā*, **kill; slaughter**).

<sup>19</sup> “‘Into the streets they will throw their very silver, and an abhorrent thing their own gold will become. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah’s fury. Their souls they will not satisfy, and their intestines they will not fill, **for it has become a stumbling block** (*miqshōl*) **causing their error**.”

The last clause literally says: *ki* (for) *miqshōl* (punishment) *‘avōnām* (their sin) *bāyā* (it will be). The Hebrew word *miqshōl* parallels the word *nākā* (kill, slaughter) at the end of verse 9. Therefore, I translate *miqshōl* as “punishment,” and because *miqshōl* is translated as *basanos* in the Septuagint, *basanos* has the meaning of punishment to death or death penalty.

### Ezekiel 16:52, 54

<sup>52</sup> You also, **bear your humiliation** (*kelimmā*, *basanos*) when you must argue in favor of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more detestably than they did, they are more righteous than you. And you also, be ashamed and bear **your humiliation** (*kelimmā*) in that you make your sisters appear righteous.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>53</sup> “‘And I will gather their captive ones, the captive ones of Sod’om and of her dependent towns, and the captive ones of Sa-mar’i’a and of her dependent towns; I will also gather your captive ones in the midst of them, <sup>54</sup> in order that you may **bear your humiliation** (*nāsā kelimmā*, *basanos*); and you must feel humiliated owing to all that you have done, in that you comforted them.

The Hebrew word *kelimma* occurs in Ezekiel 16:52. The first occurrence is translated as *basanos* (“punishment”), and the second as *atimia* (“dishonor”). In 16:54, *nāsā kelimmā* is translated as *basanos* (“punishment”). The words *nāsā kelimmā* (“to bear the disgrace”) point to having responsibility for the bad actions with the implication of punishment. But the context does not show what the judgment refers to.

### Ezekiel 32:24, 30

<sup>24</sup> “‘There are E’lam and all her crowd round about her grave, all of them slain ones, those falling by the sword, who have gone down uncircumcised to the land down below, those who have caused their terror in the land of those alive; and **they will bear their humiliation** (*nāsā kelimmā*, *basanos*) **with those going down into [the] pit**.<sup>35</sup> In the midst of slain ones they have set a bed for her among all her crowd. Her burial places are round about it. All of them are uncircumcised, slain by the sword, because their terror was caused in the land

of those alive; and **they will bear their humiliation** (*kelimmā*) **with those going down into [the] pit**. In the midst of slain ones he has been put.

<sup>30</sup> ““There is where the dukes of the north are, all of them, and all the Si·do'ni·ans, who have gone down with the slain ones, in their terribleness because of their mightiness, ashamed. **And they will lie down uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and will bear their humiliation** (*nāsā kelimmā, basanos*) **with those going down into [the] pit**.

In verses 24 and 30 there are again the words *nāsā kelimmā*, indicating, stronger than *kelimmā* alone, the responsibility that will lead to punishment. In this case, the punishment is death, shown by the words, “going down into the pit.”

### Ezekiel 12:18

The noun *de'āgā* has the meaning, “fear, anxiety, restlessness.” (Kohlberger and Mounce). It is translated as *basanos* in the Septuagint in Ezekiel 12:18:

<sup>18</sup> “Son of man, with quaking your bread you should eat, and with agitation and with **anxious care** (*de'āgā, basanos*) your water you should drink.

In this example, there is no association with judgment or death. But *de'āgā* is parallel to quaking and agitation and must have the meaning “anxiety.”

### 1 Samuel 6:3

The Hebrew word *'āšham* is also translated by *basanos* in the Septuagint. The meaning of the noun is:

- “1. commit an offence, a trespass, do a wrong, or an injury, with 𐤑.
2. be or become guilty; in offences requiring a sin-offering, of trespass-offering; with 𐤑 guilty of, with 𐤓 in or through.
3. be held guilty, bear punishment.” (Louw and Nida)

The Philistines had captured the ark, and God punished them for this action. Therefore, they wanted to return the ark to Israel, and we read in 1 Samuel 6:1-3 NWT84:

<sup>1</sup> And the ark of Jehovah proved to be in the field of the Phi·lis'tines seven months. <sup>2</sup> And the Phi·lis'tines proceeded to call the priests and the diviners, saying: “What shall we do with the ark of Jehovah? Let us know with what we should send it away to its place.” <sup>3</sup> To this they said: “If YOU are sending the ark of the God of Israel away, do not send it away without an offering (*rekām*), for YOU should by all means return to him **a guilt offering** (*āšham, basanos*). Then it is that YOU will be healed, and it must become known to YOU why his hand would not turn away from YOU.”

The noun *basanismos* is not found in the Septuagint. But the verb *basanizō* is found one time in 1 Samuel 5:3. The NETS has “plagued them” for *basanizō*. However, this verb is parallel with the verb *parassō*, meaning “strike kill.” So, there is no reason to believe that *basanizō* includes any form of torment in the Septuagint. Moreover, there is no corresponding Hebrew text to the clause with *basanizō*.

*The conclusion is that none of the eight occurrences of basanos in the Septuagint include any notion of torment or torture.*

## THE NOUN BASANOS HAS THE SAME MEANING AS KOLASIS

**This is the most important part of this Chapter.**

In the previous section on the noun *kolasis*, I showed that, according to the Septuagint, *kolasis* can refer to both “punishment” and “cutting-off” (“death”). Because *basanos*, in six occurrences, translates the same Hebrew words as *kolasis*, it is a synonym for *kolasis* and can have the same meaning. This is seen in Table 10.5:

*Table 10.5 The nouns kolasis and basanos are synonyms*

	HEBREW	SEPTUAGINT	NETS
<b>Ezekiel 14:3</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 14:4</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 14:7</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 18:30</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 44:12</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 43:10</b>	<i>kālam</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	be put to shame or punishment
<b>Ezekiel 12:18</b>	<i>rāzā</i>	<i>kolasis</i>	quivering,
<b>Ezekiel 3:20</b>	<i>mikhshōl</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 7:19</b>	<i>mikhshōl, ‘āwōn</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 16:52</b>	<i>kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 16:54</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 32:24</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 32:30</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 12:18</b>	<i>de’āgā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	fear, anxiety
<b>1 Samuel 6:3</b>	<i>’āsham:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	guilt, guilt offering

The blue color shows that five occurrences of *mikhshōl āwōn* are translated in the Septuagint with *kolasis* with the meaning “punishment,” and that one occurrence of *mikhshōl āwōn* and one occurrence of *mikhshōl* are translated by *basanos*, with the meaning “punishment and “punishment by death.”

The Green color shows that one example of the verb *kālam* is translated with *kolasis*, with the meaning “be put to shame” or “punishment,” and that one example of the corresponding noun *kelimmā* is translated by *basanos* with the meaning “punishment” and three examples of *nāsā kelimmā* is translated by *basanos* with the meaning “punishment by death.”

*Because of these parallels, there is no doubt that both **kolasis** and **basanos** can refer to punishment, either punishment by death or punishment in other situations. This shows the almost universal view of Bible translators that **basanos** and related words in the Christian Greek Scriptures always refer to torment is wrong.*

## THE USE OF BASANOS AND RELATED WORDS IN THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

The verb *basanizō* occurs 12 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures; the noun *basanismos* occurs 5 times; the noun *basanos* occurs 3 times; and the noun *basanistēs* occurs 1 time. I will now analyze the contexts and see if we can find the meaning of these words. Table 10:6 shows the meanings I have found, and I will discuss each example in turn.

*Table 10.6 The use of basanos, basanismos, basaniastēs, and basanizō*

<b>Matthew 4:24</b>	<i>basanos</i>	pain
<b>Matthew 8:6</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	torment
<b>Matthew 8:29</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	punish
<b>Matthew 14:24</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	be hard pressed
<b>Matthew 18:34</b>	<i>basanistēs</i>	jailer
<b>Mark 5:7</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	punish
<b>Mark 6:48</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	be hard pressed
<b>Luke 8:28</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	torment
<b>Luke 16:23</b>	<i>basanos</i>	torment
<b>Luke 16:28</b>	<i>basanos</i>	torment
<b>2 Peter 2:8</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	torment
<b>Revelation 9:5</b>	<i>basanismos<sub>2</sub></i>	torment
<b>Revelation 9:5</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	torment
<b>Revelation 11:10</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	torment
<b>Revelation 12:2</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	torment
<b>Revelation 14:10</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	punish
<b>Revelation 14:11</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	punishment
<b>Revelation 18:7</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	punishment
<b>Revelation 18:10</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	punishment
<b>Revelation 18:15</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	punish
<b>Revelation 20:10</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	punish

## THE USE OF BASANISTĒS IN MATTHEW 18:34

The noun *basanistēs* occurs only in Matthew 18:34, and I quote verses 18:32-35:



<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘Wicked slave, I canceled all that debt for you, when you entreated me. <sup>33</sup> Ought you not, in turn, to have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> With that his master, provoked to wrath, delivered him to *the jailers* (*basanistēs*), until he should pay back all that was owing. <sup>35</sup> In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with YOU if YOU do not forgive each one his brother from YOUR hearts.”

Both NIV and NRSV use the word “jailers,” but I am surprised that so many Bible translations use “torturers” or a similar word here. A Bible translator should be careful not to read ideas into the translated text that are not found in the original text. This would mean that if a translator is certain regarding the meaning of a word, he should use this meaning. But when he is uncertain, and a word can have different meanings, he should rather use a general meaning than an uncertain specific meaning. In this instance, the meaning “jailer” is general. By using this word, the translator does not signal anything about the work of the *basanistēs*. He may be a torturer or an ordinary gaoler.

Can we be certain of the meaning of *basanistēs*? If all the words beginning with *basan-* referred to torment, the translator had good reason to translate *basanistēs* with torturer. But that is not the case, as we see in Table 10.6. As I have shown above, none of the eight occurrences of *basanos* in the Septuagint refer to any kind of torment or torture. The closest we come is the biblical word *‘āni* with the meaning “poor, afflicted, humble.”

In Modern Hebrew, “torture” is *‘annot* and “torturer” is *meanæ*. Neither of these words is found in the Hebrew text of the Bible, and I have not found them in Mishnah Hebrew either. The reason is that torture was against the law of Moses. So, Jesus could hardly have used the word “torturer” because such a Hebrew word did not exist, and those who claim that *basanistēs* means “torturer” should be able to tell which word Jesus used that Matthew translated with *basanistēs*.

But what could Jesus have said? The only place where a prison official is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures is in Genesis Chapters 39 and 40 in connection with Joseph and his sojourn in Egypt. I quote 39:21:

<sup>21</sup> However, Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept extending loving-kindness to him and granting him to find favor in the eyes of the chief officer of the prison house.

The expression “the chief officer of the prison house” is translated from *sar* (leader) *bebeit* (of the house) *sōbar* (of prison). There are three Greek words in the Christian Greek Scriptures that refer to prison officials: *basanistēs* (Matthew 18:34), *fyalktē* (Acts 16:23), and *desmofylaks* (Acts 16:26). It is not easy to distinguish the responsibilities of these persons. But if *basanistēs* is translated from *sar bebeit sōbar*, the slave may have been delivered to the leaders of the prison. In any case, there is no evidence that these people or other prison officials tormented those who were imprisoned.

We should also consider the words of Jesus in Mathew 18:35:

<sup>35</sup> In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with YOU if YOU do not forgive each one his brother from YOUR hearts.”

Not to forgive his brother is a minor sin compared to murder, sexual immorality, and other serious sins. Bible translators who translate *basanistēs* as “torturer” tell the readers that humans who are guilty of minor sins will be tortured when they die!

## THE VERB *BASANIZŌ* WITHOUT THE MEANING OF “TORTURE”

It is obvious that the slave who was jailed because he owed much money was not tortured — he was delivered to the jailers (gaolers).

A non-Jewish jailer often used torture, and therefore the word *basanistēs* could refer to the jailer even when he did not use torture. This shows that, if the context does not clearly indicate torture, we cannot determine whether the words *basanos*, *bazanizō*, and *basanistēs* refer to torment or torture or to something else. A comparison of a few passages will show this. I quote Matthew 14:24 (above), and Mark 6:48 (below):

<sup>24</sup> By now the boat was many hundreds of yards away from land, being **hard put** (*bazanizō*) to it by the waves, because the wind was against them.

<sup>48</sup> And when he saw them being **hard put** (*bazanizō*) to it in their rowing, for the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night he came toward them, walking on the sea; but he was inclined to pass them by.

In 14:24, the boat is neuter singular, and the verb *bazanizō* is present participle neuter singular. So, it was the boat and not the persons in it that were the subject of *bazanizō*. The boat could not be tortured, but it was tossed or hard pressed by the waves.

In Mark 6:48, *basanizō* is present participle masculine plural accusative. The subject is “they” which is 3rd person plural masculine accusative. The boat could not be tormented. But it was tossed by the waves. Neither were the disciples in the boat tormented. But they used a lot of force when they were rowing against the waves. Both passages show that *bazanizō* in these two cases does not mean torture.

There are also two examples of demons who spoke to Jesus and who used the verb *basanizō*. We read Matthew 8:29 (above), Mark 5:6, 7 (middle), and Luke 8:27-33 (below):

<sup>29</sup> And, look! they screamed, saying: “What have we to do with you, Son of God? Did you come here **to torment** (*basanizō*) **us** before the appointed time?”

<sup>6</sup> But on catching sight of Jesus from a distance he ran and did obeisance to him, <sup>7</sup> and, when he had cried out with a loud voice, he said: “What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I put you under oath by God not **to torment** (*basanizō*) **me**.”

<sup>27</sup> But as he got out onto land a certain man from the city who had demons met him. And for a considerable time he had not worn clothing, and he was staying, not at home, but among the tombs. <sup>28</sup> At the sight of Jesus he cried aloud and fell down before him, and with a loud voice he said: “What have I to do with you, Jesus Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not **torment** (*basanizō*) me.” <sup>29</sup> (For he had been ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For over a long time it had held him fast, and he was repeatedly bound with chains and fetters under guard, but he would burst the bonds and be driven by the demon into the lonely places.) <sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him: “What is your name?” He said: “Legion,” because

many demons had entered into him.<sup>31</sup> And they kept entreating him not to order them to go away into *the abyss* (*abyssos*).<sup>32</sup> Now a herd of a considerable number of swine was feeding there on the mountain; so they entreated him to permit them to enter into those. And he gave them permission.<sup>33</sup> Then the demons went out of the man and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed over the precipice into the lake and drowned.

The demons in all three instances spoke about the situation at the time when Jesus came along. Jesus would not torture the spirits in any way, and the demons would not expect that. There are two phrases showing the meaning of *basanizō*. According to Matthew 8:29, the demon asks Jesus not to *basanizō* them «before the appointed time», and according to Luke 8:31, the demon asked Jesus not to «order them to go way into the abyss».

When Jesus was in the grave parts of three days, Paul says that he was in the abyss, according to Romans 10:7. Thus, the abyss is the same as the grave, where there is no life. According to Revelation 20:2-3, the Devil (and his demons) will be thrown into the abyss before the thousand-year reign of Jesus starts. This is “the appointed time” for the demons to be bound in the abyss. In Luke 8:28 and 31, there is a parallel between “do not torment (*basanizō*) me” and “go way into the abyss.” So, the demon asked that Jesus should not throw him and the other demons into the abyss at that time, which would mean death — before the appointed time. This clearly shows that *basanizō*, in this instance and the other two we are discussing, means “to punish the demons with death” by throwing them into the abyss, not to torment them.

*Table 10.7 The words basanos and bazanizō without any element of torture in the Septuagint and in the Christian Greek Scriptures*

PASSAGES	HEBREW TEXT	SEPTUAGINT	MEANING
<b>Ezekiel 3:20</b>	<i>mikhsbōl</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 7:19</b>	<i>mikhsbōl ‘āwōn</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 16:52</b>	<i>kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment
<b>Ezekiel 16:54</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 32:24</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 32:30</b>	<i>nāsā kelimmā:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	punishment by death
<b>Ezekiel 12:18</b>	<i>de’āgā</i>	<i>basanos</i>	fear, anxiety
<b>1 Samuel 6:3</b>	<i>’āsham:</i>	<i>basanos</i>	guilt, guilt offering, compensation
PASSAGES		CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES	MEANING
<b>Matthew 18:34</b>		<i>basanistēs</i>	jailer
<b>Matthew 14:24</b>		<i>basanizō</i>	be hard pressed
<b>Mark 6:48</b>		<i>basanizō</i>	be hard pressed
<b>Matthew 8:29</b>		<i>basanizō</i>	punish by death
<b>Mark 5:7</b>		<i>basanizō</i>	punish by death
<b>Luke 8:28</b>		<i>basanizō</i>	punish by death

## THE WORDS *BASANOS*, *BASANISMOS*, AND *BASANIZŌ* MEANING “GRIEF” OR “FEELING PAIN”

The illustration of the rich man and Lazarus is found in Luke 16:23-28. Here the noun *basanos* occurs one time:

### Luke 16:19-31

<sup>19</sup> “But a certain man was rich, and he used to deck himself with purple and linen, enjoying himself from day to day with magnificence. <sup>20</sup> But a certain beggar named Laz’a·rus used to be put at his gate, full of ulcers <sup>21</sup> and desiring to be filled with the things dropping from the table of the rich man. Yes, too, the dogs would come and lick his ulcers. <sup>22</sup> Now in course of time the beggar died and he was carried off by the angels to the bosom [position] of Abraham.

“Also, the rich man died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> And in *Ha’des* he lifted up his eyes, *he existing in torments* (*basanos*), and he saw Abraham afar off and Laz’a·rus in the bosom [position] with him. <sup>24</sup> So he called and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Laz’a·rus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am *in anguish* (*odynaō*) in this blazing fire.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you received in full your good things in your lifetime, but Laz’a·rus correspondingly the injurious things. Now, however, he is having comfort here but you are in anguish (*odynaō*).

<sup>26</sup> And besides all these things, a great chasm has been fixed between us and YOU people, so that those wanting to go over from here to YOU people cannot, neither may people cross over from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> Then he said, ‘In that event I ask you, father, to send him to the house of my father, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers, in order that he may give them a thorough witness, that they also should not get into this *place of torment* (*basanos*).’ <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to these.’ <sup>30</sup> Then he said, ‘No, indeed, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

The Greek verb *odynaō* means “to be in pain.” And the same meaning is conveyed by the noun *basanos* in this context. We know from both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures that *hadēs*, which is mentioned in v. 23, is the grave, where there is no consciousness. The words of Jesus are an illustration that perhaps pointed to the Pharisees, who were fond of money (16:14), just as the rich man. If a person literally was tormented in a blazing fire, one drop of water would not be of much help for his thirst (verse 24).

In the illustration in Luke 15:11–32, death is used symbolically. Verse 32 says that “*your brother was dead but is alive.*” But the lost son was not literally dead. So, that death is used in a figurative way in connection with the rich and poor man would not be strange at all. We may also consider the account in Luke 15:1–13. If this were not an illustration, Jesus would condone unrighteous actions, because verse 8 tells that he commended the unrighteous steward. Illustrations are not literal accounts, but they are used to stress particular points. Therefore, we cannot use the words about the rich man and Lazarus to demonstrate that those who go to their grave (*hadēs*) will experience torment in a blazing fire.

## Matthew 8:5, 6

There is also one example of the verb *basanizō* with the meaning “to have pain” in the gospel of Matthew, in 8:5, 6:

<sup>5</sup> When he entered into Ca·per·na·um, an army officer came to him, entreating him <sup>6</sup> and saying: “Sir, my manservant is laid up in the house with paralysis, **being terribly** (*deinōs*) **tormented** (*basanizō*).”

The servant was ill, and the words *deinōs* and *basanizō* indicates that the servant had strong pains.

The last book in the Bible is the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John. In this book, the noun *basanismos* occurs 6 times, and the verb *basanizō* occurs 5 times. Revelation 1:1 says that the things that “**must shortly take place**” are “**presented in signs.**” So, the book is not a historical narrative, but the different messages are presented figuratively.

## Revelation 9:5, 6

<sup>5</sup> And it was granted the [locusts], not to kill them, but that these **should be tormented** (*basanizō*) five months, and the torment (*basanismos*) upon them was as **torment** (*basanismos*) by a scorpion when it strikes a man. <sup>6</sup> And in those days the men will seek death but will by no means find it, and they will desire to die but death keeps fleeing from them.

Because the illustration with the stings of a scorpion shows that the passive form of the verb *basanizō* indicates that the people were tormented, and the same is shown by the two examples of the noun *basanismos*.

## Revelation 11:10

<sup>10</sup> And those dwelling on the earth rejoice over them and enjoy themselves, and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets **tormented** (*basanizō*) those dwelling on the earth.

The word *basanizō* in this verse has the meaning “torment.” But this is not the literal torment of the body, but rather the torment of the mind because of the actions of the two prophets.

## Revelation 12:1, 2

<sup>1</sup> And a great sign was seen in heaven, a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon was beneath her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars, <sup>2</sup> and she was pregnant. And she cries out in her **pains** (*basanizō*) and in her agony to give birth.

In this verse, the verb *basanizō* refers to birth pains.



## THE WORDS *BASANISMOS* AND *BASANIZŌ* WITH THE MEANING “PUNISHMENT”

*It is clear that the two basic meanings of kolasis is “cutting off” and “judgment/punishment,” and it never means “torment.” Table 10.5 shows that basanos and basanismos can be synonyms with the same meaning. Therefore, there is solid linguistic evidence for translating both these nouns as well as the verb basanizō with “to judge/punish” and “judgment/punishment” and not with “torment.” Examples of this follow.*

There are three situations of judgment where almost all Bible translations consistently translate *basanizō* and *basanismos* with “torment” and “to torment.” But there are strong reasons to render the two words as “judgment/punishment” and “to judge/punish.”

### THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON THE GREAT

#### Revelation 18:7, 8, 10, 15

<sup>6</sup> Render to her even as she herself rendered, and do to her twice as much, yes, twice the number of the things she did; in the cup in which she put a mixture put twice as much of the mixture for her. <sup>7</sup> To the extent that she glorified herself and lived in shameless luxury, to that extent give her *torment* (*basanismos*) and *mourning* (*penthos*). For in her heart she keeps saying, ‘I sit a queen, and I am no widow, and I shall never see mourning.’ <sup>8</sup> That is why in one day *her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire*, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong.

<sup>10</sup> while they stand at a distance because of their fear of *her torment* (*basanismos*) and say, “Too bad, too bad, you great city, Babylon you strong city, because in one hour your judgment has arrived!”

<sup>15</sup> “The traveling merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of [their] fear of *her torment* (*basanismos*) and will weep and mourn.

Babylon the great symbolizes organizations, and organizations cannot be tormented. The words “render to her” in verse 6 are aorist imperative 2nd plural. So, the angel speaks to two or more angels who must give to Babylon the great what she has given to others. The word “give” in verse 7 is also aorist imperative 2nd plural. So, the Greek words *basanos* and *penthos* (verse 7), which are translated as “torment and mourning,” are something that others have inflicted on her.

The plagues of Babylon the great are described in verse 8 as, “death, mourning, and famine, and *she will be completely burned with fire*.” We note that torment is not mentioned among her plagues. Moreover, Babylon the great symbolizes organizations, and organizations cannot be tormented. Table 10:7 shows that *basanos* in five instances refers to judgment/punishment by death in the Septuagint, and in three instances it refers to judgment/punishment in the gospels. Therefore, I take the three occurrences



of *basanismos* in Revelation 18:8-15 as referring to judgment/punishment by death as well.

*Babylon the great symbolizes organizations, and organizations cannot be tortured. Therefore, the Greek word basanismos must have the meaning “punishment” and not “torment.”*

Depending on the context, a verb in the source language can be rendered by the corresponding noun in the target language, vice versa. I render verses 7, 10, and 15 in the following way. My changes are marked in red:

<sup>7</sup>To the extent that she glorified herself and lived in shameless luxury, to that extent **punish** (*basanismos*) **her and let her mourn**. For in her heart she keeps saying, ‘I sit a queen, and I am no widow, and I shall never see mourning.’

<sup>10</sup> while they stand at a distance because of their fear of **her punishment** (*basanismos*) and say, ‘Too bad, too bad, you great city, Babylon you strong city, because in one hour your judgment has arrived!’

<sup>15</sup> “The traveling merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of [their] fear of **her punishment** (*basanismos*) and will weep and mourn.

Of the 21 entries in Table 10.8 of expressions with *basan*-elements, 9 have meanings that do not include torment and 9 have meanings of pain or torment. The three that have question marks will be discussed in the next section.

**Table 10.8** *The use of basanos, basanismos, basaniastēs, and basanizō*

<b>Matthew 8:29</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>punish</b>
<b>Matthew 14:24</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>be hard pressed</b>
<b>Matthew 18:34</b>	<i>basanistēs</i>	<b>jailer</b>
<b>Mark 5:7</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>punish</b>
<b>Mark 6:48</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>be hard pressed</b>
<b>Luke 8:28</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>punish</b>
<b>Matthew 4:24</b>	<i>basanos</i>	<b>pain</b>
<b>Matthew 8:6</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Luke 16:23</b>	<i>basanos</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Luke 16:28</b>	<i>basanos</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>2 Peter 2:8</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Revelation 9:5</b>	<i>basanismos<sub>2</sub></i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Revelation 9:5</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Revelation 11:10</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Revelation 12:2</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	<b>torment</b>
<b>Revelation 14:10</b>	<i>bazanizō</i>	?
<b>Revelation 14:11</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	?
<b>Revelation 18:7</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	<b>punishment by death</b>
<b>Revelation 18:10</b>	<i>bazanismos</i>	<b>punishment by death</b>

<b>Revelation 18:15</b>	<i>basanismos</i>	<b>punishment by death</b>
<b>Revelation 20:10</b>	<i>basanizō</i>	?

## “THEY WILL BE TORMENTED FOREVER AND EVER “ — REVELATION 20:10

The 9 examples of words with the *basan*-element in table 10:8 have meanings that do not include pain or torment, and 9 examples include pain and torment. This shows that words beginning with the *basan*-element need not be translated by “torment.” The context must decide which translation is fitting. I quote Revelation 20:7-10:

<sup>7</sup> Now as soon as the thousand years have been ended, Satan will be let loose out of his prison, <sup>8</sup> and he will go out to mislead those nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Ma'gog, to gather them together for the war. The number of these is as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they advanced over the breadth of the earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup> And the Devil who was misleading them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulphur, where both the wild beast and the false prophet [already were]; **and they will be tormented** (*basanizō*) **day and night forever and ever.**

The tableaux in Revelation represent signs or symbols. But the words of the tableaux have a literal meaning. This means that if *basanizō* in 20:10 has the meaning “to torment,” this torment must be literal. Therefore, it is important to find the real meaning of *basanizō* in this text. I will show why *basanizō* in this verse cannot have the meaning “torment”

**First:** The verb is *basanizō* and the form is third plural passive indicative. This means that the grammatical object of the verb is plural. What is this object? The object is “the wild beast, the false prophet, and the Devil.” This shows that the meaning of the verb cannot be “torment” because organizations cannot be tormented.

**Second:** In order to be tormented forever, the wild beast, the false prophet, and the devil must exist forever. But the organizations will not last forever, and the Devil does not have intrinsic life that never ends.

**Third:** The personality of God, as we see it in the Bible, excludes any possibility that he will torment some of his creatures forever.

All three factors exclude the possibility that *basanizō* in verse 10 has the meaning “torment.” But what is the meaning of *basanizō* in verse 10?

As an illustration of the situation described in Revelation 20:10, I again quote Mark 5:6, 7 (above), Matthew 8:29 (middle), and Luke 8:27-33 (below):

<sup>6</sup> But on catching sight of Jesus from a distance he ran and did obeisance to him, <sup>7</sup> and, when he had cried out with a loud voice, he said: “What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I put you under oath by God not **to torment** (*basanizō*) **me.**”

<sup>29</sup> And, look! they screamed, saying: “What have we to do with you, Son of God? Did you come here **to torment** (*basanizō*) **us before the appointed time?**”

<sup>27</sup> But as he got out onto land a certain man from the city who had demons met him. And for a considerable time he had not worn clothing, and he was staying, not at home, but among the tombs. <sup>28</sup> At the sight of Jesus he cried aloud and fell down before him, and with a loud voice he said: “What have I to do with you, Jesus Son of the Most High God? I beg you, *do not torment* (*basanizō*) me.” <sup>29</sup> (For he had been ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For over a long time it had held him fast, and he was repeatedly bound with chains and fetters under guard, but he would burst the bonds and be driven by the demon into the lonely places.) <sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him: “What is your name?” He said: “Legion,” because many demons had entered into him. <sup>31</sup> And they kept entreating him not to order them *to go away into the abyss* (*abyssoi*). <sup>32</sup> Now a herd of a considerable number of swine was feeding there on the mountain; so they entreated him to permit them to enter into those. And he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup> Then the demons went out of the man and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed over the precipice into the lake and drowned.

The men who cried out were possessed by demons, and the demons were speaking. The demons spoke about the situation there and then — this is shown by the words “before the appointed time.” Jesus could expel the demons from the men who were possessed. But Jesus could in no way torment the demons, and therefore, they did not ask that he should not torment them. This is particularly clear in verses 28 and 31 where we see that the meaning of *basanizō* is not to torment but to order the demons “to go away into the abyss.”

When Jesus was in the grave for parts of three days, Paul says he was in the abyss (Romans 10:7). Thus, the abyss is the same as the grave, where there is no life. According to Revelation 20:2-3, the Devil (and his demons) will be thrown into the abyss before the thousand-year reign of Jesus starts. This is “the appointed time” for the demons to be bound in the abyss. In Luke 8:28 and 31, there is a parallel between “do not torment me” and “go way into the abyss.” So, the demon asked that Jesus should not throw the demons into the abyss at that time — before the appointed time. This clearly shows that *basanizō*, in this instance and the other two instances we are discussing, means “to punish” or “judge” the demons by throwing them into the abyss.

This situation relates to Revelation 20:10, because, according to Matthew 20:29, the demons ask Jesus not to *basanizō* them “before the appointed time.” What the demons expected of Jesus there and then was the same that they expected in the future at the final judgment mentioned in Revelation 20:10.

I take the future passive form of *basanizō* in Revelation 20:10 in the same sense as in the situation of the demons, as “punishment” or “judgment”:

<sup>10</sup> And the Devil who was misleading them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the wild beast and the false prophet were; *and their judgment* (*basanizō*) *will last day and night forever and ever.*

In the texts dealing with Babylon the great, I rendered *basanizō* as “punish” and *basanismos* as “punishment.” But I could have used “judge” and “judgment” as well. But in that situation, I think that “punish” was a better rendering than “judge.” In Revelation 20:10, the situation is different. If I used the translation, “and they *will be punished* (*basanizō*) day and night forever and ever,” that could imply that they were

alive and felt the punishment each day and night. Therefore, I use the noun “judgment” instead of the verb “to punish.”

But what can we say about the time factor “forever and ever”? The imagery of punishment in verse 10 has parallels in the Hebrew Scriptures. One example is the judgment of Edom according to Isaiah 34:9-10:

<sup>9</sup> And her torrents must be changed into pitch, and her dust into sulphur; and her land must become as burning pitch. <sup>10</sup> *By night or by day it will not be extinguished; to time indefinite its smoke will keep ascending.* From generation to generation she will be parched; forever and ever no one will be passing across her.

To show that Edom would be completely destroyed, with no hope of recovery, the text says the fire will burn day and night, and the smoke will rise forever.<sup>38</sup> And similarly, in order to show that the judgment of the wild beast, the false prophet, and the Devil was final, the words “forever and ever” are used.

### HE SHALL BE TORMENTED WITH FIRE AND SULFUR” — REVELATION 14:10

I start by putting verse 10 in chapter 14 in its context, and I quote 14:9-12:

<sup>9</sup> And another angel, a third, followed them, saying in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the wild beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, <sup>10</sup> he will also drink of the wine of the anger of God that is poured out undiluted into the cup of his wrath, and *he shall be tormented* (*basanizō*) *with fire and sulfur* in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And *the smoke of their torment* (*basanismos*) *ascends forever and ever*, and day and night they have no rest, those who worship the wild beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. <sup>12</sup> Here is where it means endurance for the holy ones, those who observe the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

The words of Revelation 14:10 relate to “the holy ones,” those with the heavenly calling, as we see in verse 14. These words are similar to Hebrews 10:26:

<sup>26</sup> *For if we practice sin* (*hamartanō*) *wilfully* (*ekousiōs*) after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left, <sup>27</sup> but there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a burning indignation that is going to consume those in opposition.

Christians with the heavenly calling had been declared righteous and anointed with holy spirit. In Revelation and in the Epistles and letters in the Christian Greek Scriptures the anointed ones are admonished to work hard to follow the laws and

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38. It is possible that the term “lake of fire” may have a relationship to the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah. The first stage involved fire and sulfur raining down from heaven, burning the cities to ashes. (Genesis 19:24, 25) This may have been caused by an explosion of oil or gas in an area with bitumen and tar and layers of sulfur and salt. In any case, the area where Sodom and Gomorrah had been situated subsided, and the Dead Sea overflowed and covered the places where the two cities had been. (Genesis 14:3) Thus, the cities were first destroyed by fire and sulfur, and then they were covered by the Dead Sea and completely annihilated. The two instruments of destruction could have been combined into the phrase “the lake of fire and sulfur,” and the meaning would be “the second death.” (Revelation 20:14)

principles of God. Hebrews 10:26 speaks of practicing sin *willfully*, and the same is true in Revelation 14:9, 10. Worshipping the wild beast and its image is not something an anointed servant of God does in a moment of weakness because of inherited sin. This is a conscious decision which is the same as practicing sin *willfully*.

The verb *basanizō* in this verse is future passive, as is the case in Revelation 20:10. So, the meaning of the verb must be the same as in 20:10. And the imagery is the same as in Isaiah 34:9-11, with sulfur and burning pitch and the smoke that is ascending forever, that is quoted above.

I translate the last part of verse 10 and verse 11 in the following way:

<sup>10</sup> ...and *his punishment* (*basanizō*) with fire and sulfur will be in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of *their punishment* (*basanismos*) ascends forever and ever. And day and night, they are having no rest, those who continue to worship the wild beast and its image, and who are taking the mark of its name.

My translation differs from NWT84 because I place a full stop after “ever,” since what follows is not connected to the previous judgment. All the verbs in the following text are Greek presents, which means that the lack of rest day and night is not something that occurs *after* taking the mark of the beast when persons are punished. But this lack of rest is experienced *when* people take the mark and continue to worship the wild beast.

The conclusion is that the meaning of *basanizō* and *basanismos* in Revelation 14:10, 11 has the meaning “judgment” and not “torment,” which was also the case in Revelation 20:10.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Almost all English Bible translations show that those who worship the wild beast and take its mark will be tormented, and that the wild beast, the false prophet, and the Devil will be tormented forever and ever.

The reason Bible translators consistently render words beginning with *basan-* as “torment” or similar words is that they slavishly follow Greek-English lexicons and have not researched the original text of the Bible to see how particular words are used. Moreover, many authors of Greek-English lexicons have neither conducted extensive research as to how each Greek word is used. But they often copy the meanings given in older Greek-English lexicons.

Words in the Biblical languages may have different meanings. At the beginning I used the Hebrew word *kāran* as an example. The basic meaning of this word is “horn.” But because the rays of the sun can be viewed as great horns at sunrise, *kāran* can also have the meaning “ray of light,” and the corresponding verb *kāran* can have the meaning “shine, send out rays.”

When Moses came down from the mountain with the tablets containing the ten commandments (Exodus 34:29), his face was radiant and emitted light rays. When Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate, he misunderstood the verb *kāran* as referring to “horn.” Therefore, he used the Latin noun *cornu* “horn” and the adjective *cornutus*

“horned.” Michelangelo read about Moses in the Vulgate and created a statue of him with two horns.

When Bible translations say that Babylon the great shall be tormented, and that the wild beast, the false prophet, and the Devil shall be tormented forever and ever, the translators have made the same kind of error as did Jerome. They have made translations “with horns,” so to speak, and they have misled their readers.



## GOD DIRECTED HIS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND HIS PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS — THEN HIS PEOPLE REJECTED HIS PLAN

*Chapter 2 shows that God's plan through the ages for the restoration of all things was understood by the Bible Students in the 1870s. They understood that the restoration means that the earth will become a paradise filled with Adam's descendants who are perfect and without sin. The following points were the basis for this belief:*

- 1) Jesus bought all Adam's descendants when he died, and this sacrifice will be applied to all humans without any condition of faith and obedience.*
- 2) All Adam's descendants, except those who have sinned against the holy spirit will get a resurrection.*
- 3) Imperfect humans with inherited sin are not qualified or competent to make a decision regarding their eternal future. Therefore, they must die as a penalty for their sins, be resurrected during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, and become perfect and without sin at the end of the thousand years. As perfect humans, they are now qualified to make a just and fair choice whether to serve God or not.*

We can take the year 1879 as the beginning of the Bible Students as an loosely organized group. This group continued to grow, and in 1931, they took the name "Jehovah's Witnesses." They continued to grow, and today Jehovah's Witnesses is a worldwide people consisting of about 9 million members who preach the message of the Bible.

Starting in 1924, the fundamental aspects of the ransom sacrifice and God's plan of restoration of all things were rejected. And during the 101 years since then, some aspects of God's plan were again accepted and then rejected as the following review shows:

1879 -1934: All human descendants of Adam will get the benefits of the ransom sacrifice without any conditions, such as faith and obedience.

1924-2025: *The rejection* of God's plan of restoration of all things. This meant rejecting the viewpoint that imperfect humans with inherited sin are not competent to decide their own eternal destiny, and that all Adam's descendants who die from inherited sin will get a resurrection during the thousand-year-long Judgment Day

1934-1965: *The rejection* of the view that the ransom sacrifice of Jesus includes *all* Adams descendants. It only includes those who have faith and are obedient to the laws of God.

1965-1988/2000: God's plan for the restoration of all things was *partially accepted*. The view was that *all* Adam's descendants who die due to inherited sin will receive a resurrection on Judgment Day. But God's plan was not fully restored because the belief was that the billions who die in the great tribulation will be everlastingly annihilated with no hope of a resurrection.

2000-2025: God's plan for the restoration of all things is again rejected, and that the ransom sacrifice includes *all* Adam's descendants is also rejected.

## THE BIBLE STUDENTS: ALL HUMAN DESCENDANTS OF ADAM WILL GET THE BENEFITS OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE WITHOUT ANY CONDITIONS (1879-1934)

The central idea of C.T. Russell and the Bible Students was The Divine Plan of the Ages, which refers to the full restitution or restoration of all Adam's descendants who have died because of his sin, to the perfect condition Adam had in the paradise of Eden before he sinned. The first volume of Russel's six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures* was entitled, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*.<sup>39</sup>

*I agree with the Bible Students that the central message of the Christian Greek Scriptures is God's purpose through the ages for the restoration of all things, based on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ — to give all Adam's descendants a just and fair chance to choose everlasting life.*

The only error of the Bible Students was their belief that Adam and Eve would also receive a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus. It is true that Adam was included in the ransom sacrifice. But because he sinned when he was perfect, he sinned against the holy spirit and will not get a resurrection.

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39. <https://biblestudentsdaily.com/2017/02/11/5-study-in-the-scriptures-the-six-volumes/>

I quote study IX (A149) in volume 1 of *The Divine Plan of the Ages* says: [A156]

The Restitution Guaranteed by the Ransom—Not Everlasting Life, but a Trial for it, Secured by the Ransom.

FROM the outline of God's revealed plan, as thus far sketched, *it is evident that his design for mankind is a restitution or restoration to the perfection and glory lost in Eden.* The strongest, and the conclusive, evidence on this subject is most clearly seen when the extent and nature of the ransom are fully appreciated. The restitution foretold by the apostles and prophets must follow the ransom as the just and logical sequence. According to God's arrangement in providing a ransom, *all mankind, unless they wilfully resist the saving power of the Great Deliverer, must be delivered from the original penalty*, "the bondage of corruption," death, else the ransom does not avail for all.

As the entire race was in Adam when he was condemned, and lost life through him, so when Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" his death involved the possibility of an unborn race in his loins. A full satisfaction, or corresponding [A156] price, for all men was thus put into the hands of Justice—to be applied "in due time," and he who thus *bought all* has full authority to restore all who come unto God by him.

On page 158, we read:

*Some have been blinded in part, and some completely, by the god of this world, and they must be recovered from blindness as well as from death, that they, each for himself, may have a full chance a full chance to prove, by obedience or disobedience, their worthiness or unworthiness of life everlasting.*  
(Italics in the original)

The important point here is that because of the sin inherited from Adam, his descendants do not have "a *full chance*" to prove obedience or disobedience. Their inherited sin prevents them from having this "*full chance*." Therefore, God has decided that the Judgment Day of a thousand years will come. And then, all those who have died because of Adam's sin, will, because of the ransom sacrifice, receive a resurrection. Then the ransom sacrifice will be applied to them to the effect that their inherited sin is removed, and at the end of the thousand years, all are perfect and without sin, just like Adam was. And now, they will have the "*full chance*" to show obedience leading to everlasting life.

This is the fantastic solution to Satan's rebellion, because everything will be restituted and restored, and all Adam's descendants will have the opportunity to serve Jehovah and receive everlasting life in the earthly paradise, which was Jehovah's original purpose. The situation will be exactly the same as if Adam had not sinned. This is an excellent expression of Jehovah's righteousness, love, wisdom, and might!

I will provide several quotations of The Watchtower from 1883 onward, illustrating how the Bible Students believed in various aspects of God's plan through the ages for the restoration of all things. (The cursive in the quotations are original; the colors used to stress important points are mine. Also, the headings in yellow script are mine.)

*A redeemer and his ransom sacrifice fully justify God's justice. All humans were bought, and all humans will be released from death.*

When we came to scrutinize God's dealings, we found that He showed no mercy on sin, but in justice condemned it and executed the penalty of death against all; that *justice* must be met and fully satisfied, before mankind could go free from that death penalty; and that God's *mercy* was displayed, not in opposing and setting aside his justice, but in providing a Redeemer or ransom price which *fully met* all the claims of His own just laws against us. *This convinced us that the various Scriptures which predicted the saving of all men from the curse—death—meant literally all they said: That when Paul said, "He gave himself a ransom [antilutron—equivalent price] for all" (1 Tim. 2:6), it involved the necessity of a release from death of all who were thus bought. ("Literally" in cursive in the original;)*

Then they would see the reasonableness of death as the penalty of sin and of the ransom from it, by the death of our Redeemer, who substituted his life for ours and died the just for the unjust. *Thus he bought for all the right to a return to life (resurrection—restitution)* when at the hands of the Royal Priesthood it shall be *testified to every man* that Christ died for all. (1 Tim. 2:6.)

(The Watchtower of August 1883, page 513, 536):

*All humans were ransomed, and all humans will be saved.*

GREAT WORK OF SAVING ALL THE WORLD.

All are to be saved, as *all were ransomed*. "The man Christ Jesus gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2:5, 6.) *As this salvation reaches now those who "have an ear to hear," so it will in the Millennial age reach all*—for the deaf ears shall be unstopped and the sin-blinded shall see, out of obscurity (Rev. 2:7; Isa. 29:18), the gracious provision God has made for all. And for *all* to be thus reached by the *knowledge, ability and opportunity* of salvation is for all to be *saved*: whether they make a good or a bad use of God's gift after it has reached them is another matter.

(The Watchtower of November 1890, page 8; 1265):

Praise God for such a full and free salvation, which in due time shall be witnessed *to every individual*, to equip them for a full escape from death.

(The Watchtower of November 1891, pages 154-158;1337):

They would find it in the words of all the holy prophets and apostles, as well as in our Lord's words: that as the man Christ Jesus gave himself a *ransom for all*, this glorious gospel must be testified to all in *due time* (1 Tim. 2:6), and that this "*due time*" is *coming* in which the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. (Isa. 11:9; 35:5) Then all that are in their graves shall obey the voice of the Son of Man and come forth—and they who then obey him shall *live* in a sense and to a degree that they never lived before—an everlasting life.

(The Watchtower of July 15, 1892, pages 216-218; 1424):

*All humans will receive a resurrection and will gradually be led to perfection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus.*

However, as already shown, it is the purpose of God that in “*due time*” these truths shall be so clearly testified to every man that all will have the fullest opportunity to believe and thus to come into Christ and through him inherit eternal life. See 1 Tim. 2:4-6.

*The time for fully realizing the special, actual salvation is the Millennial age:* the sense in which any possess it now is by faith; for “we walk by faith and not by sight” until the appointed time—the Millennial age. Then the faithful bride class will be perfected as spirit-beings like their Lord; and *thenceforth the reconciliation of the world will be accompanied by gradual restitution to human perfection*, which salvation, if they are worthy, at the close of the Millennium will become everlasting salvation.

(The Watchtower of August 15, 1892, pages 252-255; 1438):

### *The inhabitants of Sodom will get a resurrection.*

And, therefore, even the wicked Sodomites will hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth in due time; for “God our Saviour will have all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the truth. For there is one [just and merciful] God, and one mediator between [that just and true God [who cannot tolerate sin] and [fallen, sinful] men, the man Christ Jesus [the only begotten and well beloved Son of God, whom God gave to redeem us, because he so loved the world even while, they were yet sinners, and] who gave himself in accordance with the Father’s plan] a ransom *for all* [the Sodomites and all other sinners included],—to be testified in due time.” (1 Tim. 2:3-6) *And while this testimony was not given to the Sodomites in their day, it is just as sure that they shall have it in the coming age under the Millennial reign of Christ, when they shall come forth to judgment—to a shameful realization of their guilt, and to an opportunity for repentance and reformation.*

(The Watchtower of February 1, 1894, pages 46-48; 1618):

*The Watchtower of January 1895, for the first time, included ransom sacrifice and The Divine Plan of the Ages into the stated purpose of the magazine. These words were in the first issue of the Watchtower until the year 1928. The words are as follows:*

#### THIS JOURNAL AND ITS MISSION

THIS journal is set for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian’s hope now being so generally repudiated,—*Redemption through the precious blood of “the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all.”* (1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Tim. 2:6.) Building up on this sure foundation the gold, silver and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Pet. 1:5-11) of the Word of God, its further mission is to—“Make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which . . . has been hid in God, . . . to the intent that now might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God”—“which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.”—Eph. 3:5-9, 10.

#### To Us The Scriptures Clearly Teach

That the Church is “the Temple of the Living God”—peculiarly “His workmanship;” that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief corner stone of this Temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people,” and they find access to him.—1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29.



That meantime the chiseling, shaping and polishing, of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin, progresses; and when the last of these "living stones," "elect and precious," shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the First Resurrection; and the Temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8.

That the Basis of Hope, for the Church and the World, lies in *the fact that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," "a ransom for all," and will be "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," "in due time."*—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

That the Hope of the Church is that she may be like her Lord "see him as he is," be "partaker of the divine nature," and share his glory as his joint-heir.—1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; 2 Pet. 1:4.

That the present mission of the Church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests of the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1-6; 20:6.

*That the hope for the World lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's Millennial Kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam,* to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified Church—Acts 3:19-21; Isa. 35.

(The Watchtower of January 1, 1895, page 1):

### *Resurrection for all and restitution will occur in the millennial age.*

In the divine arrangement God has provided in the death of our Lord Jesus a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:5,6),—all the souls of the human family—for Adam and Eve, and all the souls begotten, generated, by them. Consequently, although the divine sentence is upon every soul of man unto death, in view of this atonement which God has provided we who have faith in the efficacy of the atonement and in the ultimate carrying out of the divine plan are permitted to speak of these dead souls as though they were not dead, but merely asleep—"them that sleep in Jesus." (1 Thess. 4:13, 14) All who were dead in Adam, having been bought by Jesus are not yet made alive by him, nor even in any measure resuscitated, but are spoken of as no longer extinct but reckonedly sleeping—*waiting for the Millennial morning, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth again to being and to the opportunities of a raising up, or restoration to all that was lost*—the process of raising up being betokened by the judgments of the Millennial age—rewards for those who will do well, chastisements for those who do ill, destruction if they persevere in ill doing, this judgment, in our common version Bible, is mistranslated "damnation."—John 5:29.

(The Watchtower of August 15, 1902, pages 242-243; 3063):

### *The passage of 1 Timothy 2:5, 6 shows that all humans have been redeemed.*

Question.—Kindly explain the following text, especially the forepart of it: "The Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."—1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

Answer.—Our Lord gave himself a corresponding price for all—a ransom. The application of this price will be made in due time. It has been, at the present time,



appropriated to the church, imputatively, on account of their turning from sin and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. *The next step in its application will be, not the imputation, but the actual giving of this to the world, bringing them up out of their imperfection, during the thousand years of the Mediatorial reign; bringing them back into that condition in which they shall be in harmony with God, even as Adam was in harmony with him before the fall.*

(The Watchtower of March 1, 1911, pages 77-79; 4780):

*The ransom work includes a literal resurrection from the grave, but also a gradual removal of human imperfection.*

## RANSOM PRICE AND RANSOM WORK

If we have established clearly what a ransom is, and that Jesus was the only One suitable to be a ransom for Father Adam, our next point is to show from the Bible that he did give himself as a ransom. We have the word of Jesus himself on the subject (Matthew 20:28) ; and also St. Paul's testimony, "the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2:6) This proves that the giving of the price sufficient to ransom Adam and all his race was accomplished in Jesus' death at Calvary.

*But the work of ransoming Adam and his race is much more than merely the providing of the ransom-price. The mere giving and appropriating of the price. It includes the recovery of Adam and his race from the power of sin and death.* Manifestly, this work has not yet been accomplished; indeed, it has scarcely begun. The only disposition thus far of the ransom, the merit, has been its imputation to the church, and this only by faith. The church is not yet glorified as a whole—not yet delivered from the power of sin and death completely.

*Manifestly, then, it will require the entire thousand years of Messiah's kingdom to ransom, deliver, to set free, from the power of sin and death, Adam and all his children.* Consequently, the ransom work, which began more than eighteen centuries ago, is still to be accomplished. There is no difficulty about the ransom-price; for that price has been in the hands of Justice for nearly nineteen centuries. *But it has been unapplied as respects the world and only imputed to the church that has been called out from the world during this Gospel age.* The full completion of the ransoming work will include what the Bible speaks of, saying "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." for there will still be a great resurrecting work to be done—a raising up out of imperfection of mind, morals and physique, to the full image of the likeness of God, lost through Adam's disobedience and redeemed by the precious blood at Calvary.

*(Hosea 13:14) Nor will the ransoming work be fully Accomplished when the last member of the race has been delivered from the power of the grave; for there will still be a great resurrecting work to be done—a raising up out of imperfection of mind, morals and physique, to the full image of the likeness of God, lost through Adam's disobedience and redeemed by the precious blood at Calvary.*

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1916, pages 88-89; 5873):

The quotations above illustrate different aspects of The Divine Plan of the Ages as it was understood during the lifetime of C.T. Russell. He died in 1916, and I will now show how the Bible Students, under the leadership of J.F. Rutherford, upheld The Divine Plan of the Ages for 11 years.

## *All men will be saved from death by the ransom sacrifice.*

In 1921, J.F. Rutherford wrote the book, *The Harp of God*. This book presents the basic doctrines of the Christian faith and discusses the ransom sacrifice and salvation. Chapter 5 is entitled “Ransom,” and I quote from page 136 above and page 141 below:

The apostle Paul makes it clear that *the death of Jesus was for the benefit of the entire human race* when he says: 'Jesus, ... by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Hebrews 2: 9; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

The inspired writer in the divine Word tells us that *it was the will of God that all men should be saved from death by the ransom-price* and then brought to an accurate knowledge of the truth, in order that they might accept the benefits of the ransom and live. In due time the knowledge of these great truths will be given to every one of Adam's race. (1 Timothy 2:3-6) The ransom-price was provided at the cross. The cross of Christ is the great pivotal truth of the divine arrangement, from which radiate the hopes of men. *When all men come to a knowledge of this fact and all the obedient ones have profited by the value of the ransom sacrifice, there will be great rejoicing amongst the human race.* When the grand finale is sung and all the harpers of heaven and earth unite in beautiful harmony, blending with the voices of all creatures perfected and happy, the great ransom-sacrifice will be recognized by all as one of the strings of the harp of God that will yield sweet music to every ear.

## *The ransom sacrifice includes Adam and all his descendants*

<sup>10</sup> Jesus declared that he came to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28) and that those who believed on him should not perish but have life. (John 3:16; 10:10) The irresistible conclusion is that without the ransom no one could have life. *Jesus gave his life a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2: 5, 6). which means that all must come to a knowledge of that fact and have a chance to accept or reject the ransom sacrifice.* <sup>11</sup> Jesus as a human being died in order that he might provide *the ransom price for Adam and all of his offspring.*

It was necessary for Jehovah to resurrect our Lord in order that he might carry out Jehovah's purposes. He was resurrected to the divine nature, and his resurrection is a guarantee that all men shall have an opportunity for life. (Acts 17: 31) Without the death and resurrection of our Lord there could be no hope for either the dead or the living.

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1924, page 148)

## *The salvation of the human family will occur on the earth*

<sup>5</sup> Because of the persistent wrong statements of orthodoxy it is constantly necessary to state that while the reward of the disciple of Jesus is to be in heaven, nevertheless *the salvation of the human family in general, which God will effect by Jesus, is to be realized on earth—in their restoration to perfect human conditions.*

(The Watchtower of January 15, 1927, page 30)

The harmonious witness of all these quotations is that Jesus died for Adam and all his descendants, and that the ransom sacrifice will be applied, so all humans will be saved from death by a resurrection, without any conditions of faith and obedience.

## THE REJECTION OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS (1924-2025)

The basic view of the Bible Students was that the paradise in Eden would be restored, and all Adam's descendants would be resurrected. The reason for the resurrection of all was that imperfect humans are not competent to make decisions about their eternal destiny; their inherited sin prevents them from receiving a fair and just chance.

*In 1924, this view was rejected.* The restoration during the millennium would be limited, and God would determine the eternal destiny of humans based on their actions as imperfect humans with inherited sin. I quote from The Watchtower of December 15, 2024, page 382:

Since the time when it pleased God to make the plan of the ages clear, and once again to set forth the “ransom for all” by the blood of his dear Son (1 Timothy 2:4-6) it is seen that neither Adam nor any of his sons are excluded from its benefits. *It came, therefore, to be commonly held that with the exception of the Church (those begotten of God to newness of life) everyone must have an actual resurrection from the dead in order to participate in the benefits of the ransom. It was further thought that none besides the Church could be subjected to final destruction until, in the resurrection, a full opportunity had been given to enter into obedience to Christ and into blessings of life. But clearly those views are not true to Scripture or to fact.*

It is not necessary that one should have received the gift of the holy spirit before he can be subject to the sentence of death; nor true, as some have thought, that no one could be amenable to the second death before the death of Jesus.

The death of Judas as the son of perdition is evidence sufficient against both suppositions. Who can think that if father Abraham had turned from God after the long experience which he had, God would be obliged to bring him forth in resurrection in order that he should have a full opportunity for knowing God?

*The ransom price accepted by God can not entail upon him a necessity to let each person die before giving him the benefit of the ransom, and that such opportunity can be given only in resurrection.* It does, however, appear to show that everyone must get an opportunity of freedom from the bondage of Satan, as well as from the power of death. It is God's own good pleasure to decide when he will give that opportunity. It seems evident that there are now some who, like Judas (the outstanding figure and representative of those who reject the way of God), see the purpose of God in Christ and reject it.

This quotation seems to be insignificant. But, in reality, it was the biggest revolution in the history of the Bible Students, because it pointed to a restricted restoration of “all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time,” and not a full restoration as Peter speaks about in Acts 3:19-21.

*The rejection of the view that imperfect humans with inherited sin cannot have a just and fair chance to decide their eternal destiny — only when they are perfect and without sin are they competent to make*

*this decision — was the biggest revolution in the history of the Bible Students.*

## **THE REJECTION OF THE BASIC SIDE OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE — THAT ALL DESCENDANTS OF ADAM ARE INCLUDED (1934-1965)**

In the late 1920s, some changes were made, which were the first steps in the direction of changing the view of the ransom sacrifice.

### **In 1928, THE VIEW OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE WAS UNDER REVISION**

The Watchtower of January 1, 1928, had some changes in “The Journal and its Sacred Mission” on the first page. The statement says: “It stands firmly upon the great ransom sacrifice as the fundamental doctrine by which all doctrines are measured.”

There is a change in the last point under the heading “To Us The Scriptures Clearly Teach.” I compare the words of January 1, 1927 (above) with the words of January 1, 1928, words which started on January 1, 1895 (below):

1927 That the hope for the World lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s Millennial Kingdom—*the restitution of all that was lost in Adam*, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified Church—Acts 3:19-21; Isa. 35.

1928 THAT THE HOPE of the peoples of earth is restoration to human perfection during the reign of Christ; that the reign of Christ will afford opportunity to every man to have a fair trial for life and those who obey will live on earth for ever in a state of happiness.

The value of the ransom sacrifice was stressed. And the new words do not introduce a new view of the application of the ransom sacrifice. But the deletion of the words “*the restitution of all that was lost in Adam*” suggests at least some change in the viewpoint of the application of the ransom sacrifice was under consideration.

The view that the ransom sacrifice was for all men was not rejected by 1929:

that he was thus God’s Lamb for sacrifice, a perfect man who could and did offer himself to God without spot, *to be a ransom for all men*.

(The Watchtower of February 1, 1929, page 42)

According to the Bible, *the entire race of mankind need to be ransomed*; and the reason is that they are in captivity, in bondage, in the bondage of sin and the captivity to death...

This same Jesus, who gave himself *a ransom for all*, was highly exalted at his resurrection and given all power in heaven and in earth, and has both the authority and the power to resurrect all the dead.

(The Watchtower of April 1, 1929, pages 107, 110)

*The view of the ransom sacrifice in The Divine Plan of the Ages is confirmed. The ransom sacrifice includes Adam and all his offspring.*

God has promised just such a resurrection and restoration, by all the prophets and apostles who have written the Bible. He has purposed that Jesus, the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45, 47), *shall first ransom the first Adam and all his posterity from the power of the grave*, as recorded in Psalm 49:15 and Hosea 13:14, and that then the second Adam shall recover *for the first Adam and his posterity just what the latter lost for himself and them, namely, the right to go on trial*, to pass other tests intended to prove their loyalty and obedience, and give them, if obedient, just what was promised Adam if he had obeyed in the first trial in Eden, namely, eternal life.

This is why Jesus could say: “I am the resurrection, and the life.” (John 11:25) Again, Jesus said: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) Now an excellent question is, What was lost? *And the Bible tells us in most unequivocal terms that Adam lost the right to live on earth.* This is what he will receive again, and his posterity will receive, at the hands of the second Adam.

(The Watchtower of May 15, 1929, page 154)

God therefore gave his beloved Son the title “The Son of the man”, which title signifies that he is entitled to everything to which the perfect man could hold title. This is another proof that when on earth he was a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less, and therefore possessed all the qualifications *to become the ransom of Adam and his offspring.*

(The Watchtower of November 15, 1932, page 350)

## THE FIRST REJECTION OF THE RANSOM SACRIFICE AS INCLUDING ALL ADAM'S DESCENDANTS

The expression “Bible Students” is not a name but a designation. God’s name “Jehovah” had been used from the early days of Russell. In 1931, the Bible Students officially adopted the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” As the last quotation above shows, was the ransom sacrifice, as it is presented in The Divine Plan of the Ages still a part of their faith in 1932.

The first change came in 1934, as we see in the quotation below.

—1 Tim. 2:4-7.

24 *This text [1 Timothy 2:4-7] does not say, and it does not mean, that the man Christ Jesus is mediator for all men.* What the text does say is this: that there is one God, who is Jehovah, and there is one mediator between God and men. What men? The men, that is, human creatures, who have exercised faith in Christ Jesus and agreed to do God’s will. Why should God appoint a mediator in behalf of men who defame his name and the name of Jesus Christ? The text shows that the apostle does not have in mind all the human family...

*It follows, therefore, that the word “men” used in verse five of the foregoing text does not refer to all men of the world but does refer to those who have made a covenant to do the will of God; and concerning all such it is the will of God that they be saved and come to*



*an accurate knowledge of the truth, and for all such there is a mediator in the covenant with God...*

25 The *Authorized Version* of the words of the apostle read: "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2: 6) *Some men have added to this text the words "to all", and manifestly for the purpose of trying to make this text apply to all the human race. Is such a conclusion warranted? It is certainly not warranted. It is true that Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for all, and all who accept Jesus Christ as such, and are obedient to him, may live;* but that is no reason why there should be added to this text the words *to all*, which words are not in the text at all.

(The Watchtower of April 1, 1934, page 104)

This text says that Jesus is not the mediator for *all* men. That Jesus died «for all», does not mean that he died for all Adam's descendants, and that all of them will get a resurrection without any condition of faith and obedience, as The Divine Plan of the Ages says. But the ransom sacrifice that Jesus provided when he died, only includes those who show faith and are obedient.

***The claim that "Some men have added to this text the words "to all" [in 1 Timothy 2:6] and manifestly for the purpose of trying to make this text apply to all the human race" is a false claim!***

In spite of this new view that Jesus died only for obedient people with faith, the two following quotes state the same view as C.T. Russell had:

Christ Jesus died upon the tree on Calvary and thereby gave himself *a ransom for all mankind* (1 Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 2:9)

(The Watchtower of December 1, 1934, page 104)

At the age of thirty then, he was perfect in body, perfect in mind, perfect under the law, in every respect an absolutely perfect human creature, *hence qualified to be the ransomer or redeemer of Adam, the perfect man, and of all Adam's offspring.*

(The Watchtower of November 15, 1936, page 350)

## **THE REJECTION OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE THROUGH THE AGES AND THE RANSOM SACRIFICE AS INCLUDING ALL ADAM'S DESCENDANTS**

*In 1924, the belief in The Divine Plan of the Ages was rejected, and in 1934, the view that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam's descendants was rejected. In 1937, the view that the ransom sacrifice only includes those who show faith and obedience, and not all Adam's descendants, was stressed.*

I bring some quotations from the Watchtower literature:



*Jesus died for many but not for all. Adam was not included. The ransom sacrifice is only for those who believe and are obedient.*

<sup>36</sup> When with his disciples, Jesus instructed them that all creatures that will receive everlasting life and the blessings of Almighty God must willingly and faithfully serve God. Then of himself he said: "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20: 27, 28) This shows that the man Jesus understood that it was the will of his Father Jehovah not only that he tells the truth and become the Vindicator of his Father but that *as a man he must die to provide the ransom or redemptive price "for many" of the human race. For how many of the human race: all or only a part? Not for all, because the redemptive price results beneficially only to those who believe on and obey God and Christ Jesus.*

Therefore he gave his life as a ransom for as many of the human race as take their stand on the side of God and Christ and maintain their integrity toward God when put to the test. It is written: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6: 23)

(The Watchtower of July 1, 1937, page 350)

There is no reason to believe that the ransom sacrifice was for the benefit of Adam, but *it was and is for the benefit of those of Adam's offspring who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and obey.*

(The Watchtower of August 15, 1937, page 244)

All who are thus saved must exercise faith in the humanity or life laid down by Jesus for the salvation of man. (John 6: 29-35) Therefore it is written: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20: 28)

*This scripture clearly means that the Lord Jesus gave his life a ransom for as many of the human race as will comply with the conditions by believing and obeying as commanded.*

The obedient ones of the human race are designated under the symbol of "sheep", and concerning which Jesus said: "I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10: 15) The disobedient ones are designated under the symbol of "goats". *Did not Jesus also lay down his life for the "goats"? He did not, for the reason that the ransom sacrifice is not provided for the disobedient, but only for the obedient ones;* as it is written: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3 : 36)

(The Watchtower of March 1, 1938, page 69)

I will later show that the word "many" in the expression in Matthew 20:28, that Jesus "died for many," has the all-inclusive meaning of "all." Thus, the word "many" does not restrict the number of persons who are included in the ransom sacrifice.

*A completely untenable interpretation is given of 1 Timothy 2:6 "who gave himself a ransom for all."*

<sup>13</sup> *Does not the ransom result beneficially to all of Adam's offspring, and include Adam himself? No; it results beneficially only to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and obey him.* (John 3 : 16, 17) *Adam could not be redeemed; for the reason that the judgment against him is final.* No judgment was entered against his offspring, and therefore such are subject to purchase or redemption; but such purchase does not result automatically for the benefit of everyone, but only for those who exercise their privilege of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and doing the will of God.

“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:35, 36) In harmony with this it is written: “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28)

*Therefore the indisputable conclusion is that Jesus gave himself a ransom for as many as believe on and obey him.*

<sup>16</sup> *But do not the Scriptures say that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time? No; the Scriptures do not so state. The words “to all” are not in the text, but have been added by commentators.* The text reads: “*Who gave himself a ransom in behalf of all*, the testimony in its own seasons; for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle, (I speak truth, I do not falsify,) a teacher of nations in faith and truth.” ( 1 Tim. 2: 6, 7, *Diaglott*)

*Otherwise stated, the life of Jesus was given as a ransom for all who believe and obey him*, and in due time the testimony thereof is given, and, as this text states, Paul was specifically given the privilege and obligation of so testifying this truth to others. (See *The Watchtower* 1934, pages 104, 105.)

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1938, page 150)

The untenable argument is that the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:6 is a ransom “in behalf of all” and not “to all.” Therefore, the ransom can be applied to all who show faith and are obedient, but it does not include all. This is both linguistically and grammatically completely wrong! The Greek preposition *hyper* in the text can only mean that the ransom includes all.

*The ransom sacrifice is devalued. God's plan through the ages for the restoration of all things builds on the view that the ransom for all humans is the pivotal doctrine by which others are measured. This is now rejected.*

## RANSOM

<sup>10</sup> *Is the ransom of man of first importance! And it is not the pivotal doctrine by which all others are measured? The answer must be negative; otherwise the salvation of man would be put before the vindication of Jehovah's name.* *ut by* The ransom is not the pivotal doctrine around which all other doctrines center. It is not the key by which all other doctrines are properly measured and the truthfulness thereof determined. The supremacy of Jehovah God is the pivotal truth, and his kingdom is the key by which all the doctrines are properly measured, because it is the kingdom that will

accomplish his purpose and vindicate his name. The ransom of man is incidental to the question of primary importance.

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1938, page 148)

Must we conclude that what The Watchtower says about the pivotal doctrine is correct? The answer is both yes and no. It is true that the most important issue is the supremacy of Jehovah and the sanctification of his name. But this is not stressed in The Christian Greek Scriptures. What is stressed in these Scriptures is that Jesus is the savior of mankind and the importance of the kingdom of God. The subject most often mentioned is the salvation of humans.

So, I agree with C.T. Russel's The Divine Plan of the Ages that the salvation of man is the pivotal doctrine by which all others are measured. The salvation of man culminates at the end of Jesus' thousand-year reign. And when this salvation is accomplished, the supremacy of Jehovah is magnified, and his name is sanctified.

The devaluation of the ransom sacrifice is seen in "The Mission" of the Watchtower magazine, which is printed at the beginning of each issue from January 1, 1939.

*The words at the beginning of the Watchtower from January 1, 1895 to January 1, 1927 (above), from January 1, 1928, to December 15, 1938 (middle), from January 1, 1939 (below):*

(1895) THIS journal is set for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian's hope now being so generally repudiated,—*Redemption through the precious blood of "the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all."*

To Us the Scriptures clearly teach:...

That the hope for the World lies in *the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's Millennial Kingdom*—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified Church—Acts 3:19-21; Isa. 35.

(1928) THIS journal is set for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian's hope now being so generally repudiated,—*Redemption through the precious blood of "the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all."* (1 Peter 1:19)

To Us the Scriptures clearly teach:...

THAT THE HOPE of the peoples of earth is restoration to human perfection during the reign of Christ; that the reign of *Christ will afford opportunity to every man to have a fair trial for life* and those who obey will live on earth for ever in a state of happiness.

(1939) THIS journal is published for the purpose of enabling the people to know Jehovah God and his purposes as expressed in the Bible. It publishes Bible instruction specifically designed to aid Jehovah's witnesses and all people of good will.

The Scriptures clearly teach:...

THAT JESUS was made human, and *the man Jesus suffered death in order to produce the ransom or redemptive price for obedient ones of mankind*; that God raised up Jesus divine and exalted him to heaven above every creature and above every name and clothed him with all power and authority.

We see that from January 1, 1939, there was no longer any mention that Jesus was “a corresponding ransom for all.” The view of Russell and the Bible students that each descendant of Adam would receive a fair chance to choose everlasting life by receiving a resurrection and becoming perfect at the end of the thousand years was now definitely rejected. The basic side of the ransom sacrifice was also definitely rejected. Jesus did not die for all humans but only for the obedient ones.

In this year, The Watchtower Society published the book Salvation.<sup>40</sup> It has a very fine description of several Greek words that relate to the issue of salvation. It discusses also in detail the new view of the ransom sacrifice, which does not include all of Adam’s descendants. I bring the following quotations from this book:

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The word anti/lytron appears only once in the Scriptures, and that in the following text, to wit: “Who gave himself a ransom in behalf of all [*whom God wills to be saved (verse 4)*], the testimony in its own seasons; for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle.” (1 Timothy 2:4-7, Emphatic Diaglott) According to Parkhurst: “Who gave himself a correspondent ransom.”

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“FOR ALL”

*Does not the ransom price of Jesus result to the everlasting benefit for all? Does not the scripture at 1 Timothy 2:6 above quoted prove that Jesus gave his life a ransom for all? And is not that a guarantee that all of the human race must have the full benefit of the ransom sacrifice or ransom price? No; such a conclusion is not correct.* Some of the human race, the offspring of Adam, are willfully wicked, and such are not benefited by the ransom. If they comply with God’s rules concerning the ransom they might become righteous, and then they would receive the benefit of the ransom price. Concerning this Jesus said: “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” —John 17: 2,

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Those persons who refuse to know God and Christ Jesus cannot receive life. *Many persons to whom the truth is presented and who are shown God’s provision for life and salvation spurn such truth and say, in substance: “I am — not at all interested. I am satisfied with what I have.”* There is no reason to expect Adam to receive life, because he was a willful and deliberate sinner; *nor is there any reason to expect any of Adam’s offspring to receive life who willfully refuse to hear of God’s provision for life.* To give

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40. <https://archive.org/details/salvationdisclos00ruth/page/176/mode/2up>

Adam the benefit of the ransom sacrifice would mean that God would thereby show that his judgment against Adam was not just; whereas the Scriptures plainly say: 'Justice is the foundation of God's throne.' (Psalm 89:14) To give Adam's offspring the benefit of the ransom sacrifice, which offspring spurn God's provision, is wholly inconsistent with God's purpose expressed in the Scriptures. The text at 1 Timothy two above quoted shows that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10: 34), and *hence the ransom is for the benefit of all who conform themselves to God's will or law*; and because \_ there is only one Almighty God, whose name is Jehovah, there is one mediator between God and men and that One is the man.

*Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for all, meaning, of course, as stated, all who God wills shall be saved and who comply with the requirements that God has laid down. There is no authority to say that the ransom sacrifice automatically operates for the benefit of all.*

There are many good arguments in the book entitled *Salvation*. But the arguments of a limited ransom are incredible indeed. The argument on page 176 and 180 that "*all*" in 1. Timothy 2:6 does not refer to *all* Adam's descendants, but only to "*all*" whom God wills save *is a deliberate distortion of the text of the Bible*.

Moreover, the reference to verse 4 as proof that "*all*" does not refer to all Adam's descendants is completely absurd, because the comment says the very opposite of what the text says. This verse says that God wills that *all humans* shall be saved, and therefore must "*all*" in verse 6 refer to *all Adam's descendants*, and not only to some of them.

On page 179, the argument that "*all*" does not mean "*all*" continues. *All* Adam's descendants cannot be included in the ransom sacrifice because some of them are wicked, is the argument. On page 180, there is an example of such people, those who refuse to hear the message about God's kingdom. However, according to Matthew 11:21-23, Jesus speaks about the inhabitants in Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. Jesus had preached to these people repeatedly and performed many miracles, but they had refused to believe in Him. Nevertheless, Jesus says that they will get a resurrection on Judgment Day — because of the ransom sacrifice.

J.F. Rutherford, the author of this book, missed the target completely. The basic point of Russell and the Bible students was that because of inherited sin, living humans have a huge handicap, so big that they cannot get a just and fair chance to decide whether to serve God or not while they live as sinners. Therefore, they will die, and because of the ransom sacrifice, they will receive a resurrection, becoming perfect and free from sin at the end of the thousand years. They are now exactly in the same position as Adam was before he sinned, and now they get a just and fair chance to choose to serve God or not.

Rutherford's view was that they will get a fair chance to serve God or not while they are sinners, and contrary to the words of Jesus, even such a petty sin as refusing to accept the kingdom message will disqualify them from getting a resurrection based on the ransom sacrifice. Russell's view was that humans can make a just and fair



decision only when they are perfect and sinless, like Adam. This is the view of those who wrote the Christian Greek Scriptures!

The view expressed in The Watchtower from 1934 onward, and in the book entitled *Salvation*, that the ransom sacrifice of Jesus does not include *all* Adam's descendants, continued to be the view of the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses after the death of Rutherford in 1942. I quote from The Watchtower of 1948:

The word combination *lytron anti* occurs at Matthew 20: 28 and Mark 10: 45. But the word *antilytron* appears only once in the Greek Scriptures, and that in the following verse, to wit: "Who gave himself a ransom [*antilytron*.] in behalf of all, the testimony in its own seasons; for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle." So 1 Timothy 2: 6, 7 reads according to *The Emphatic Diaglott*; but Parkhurst translates it to read: "Who gave himself a correspondent ransom."...

Those of Adam's offspring who accept God's provision for their purchase and who comply with God's fixed rules concerning the same, are privileged to receive the benefit of the ransom price. *By his own lifeblood Jesus ransomed or purchased life and the right to human life for those of Adam's offspring that are saved.* This, then, is the evident meaning of 1 Timothy 2:3-6 : That God desires all men to be saved and to come to an accurate knowledge of the truth who comply with his fixed and unchangeable provisions.

(The Watchtower of May 15, 1948, page 158)

*The statement that Jesus was a "corresponding ransom for all" must be understood in the light of other scriptures. His death does not benefit all of Adam's descendants irrespective of personal courses of action and personal attitudes. He did not pay the ransom price for persons who practice sin by willfully violating the laws of his heavenly Father.*

It is only for persons who appreciate the undeserved kindness God has shown them by providing a means for releasing them from bondage to sin and death. It is for those who acknowledge their need for a ransom and who exercise faith in it. Jesus himself limited the benefits of the ransom to such ones, saying: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Notice the qualification—"everyone exercising faith in him." *Thus the ransom sacrifice is for all who exercise faith, not for all who live.*

(The Watchtower of October 1, 1963, page 605)

The consequence of the view that the ransom sacrifice only includes those who show faith and obey is that billions of humans will be everlastingly destroyed without having had a full personal chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not. The belief in 1963 was that all those who died in the great flood, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and those who will die in the great tribulation, will be everlastingly destroyed without any hope of a resurrection:

*Since the supreme Judge never makes a mistake, there is no need for him to take under review any judgment that he has passed. His judgments are final. That means the people who perished in the flood of Noah's day will never be resurrected to stand trial again. The same is true with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah as well as Adam and Eve. All had their judgment day before the great Judge of the universe and all were sentenced to*



destruction. They will never have a conscious existence again. The same will be true of those in the present judgment period whom God will destroy at its conclusion...

What you are faced with today is a judgment for survival through the coming war of the great day of God the Almighty when he will carry out his long-standing promise to destroy this wicked world or system of things. You are in a position similar to that of the people who lived in the judgment period before the Flood. Like them you are under divine surveillance, with your conduct toward God's purposes and his kingdom ministers determining your judgment. Jesus pointed this out in a long-range prophecy recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. He there likened the present judging of mankind to a shepherd's separating sheep from goats...

*As the judgment period that ended with the Flood brought a permanent end to those people, so will the ending of the present judgment period permanently terminate the conscious existence of those who are judged adversely.* This is, therefore, a very serious time.

(The Watchtower of January 15, 1960, page 54)

*The discussion in this section reveals that the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses in the days of J.F. Rutherford, as well as in the years following his death in 1942, rejected The Divine Plan of the Ages presented by C.T. Russell and the early Bible Students. They also rejected the biblical view of the ransom sacrifice, which includes all Adam's descendants and guarantees a perfect chance for each one to choose to serve Jehovah or not. The new view is that the ransom sacrifice only includes those of Adam's descendants who show faith and obedience.*

We should not confuse *the value* of the ransom sacrifice with *the ultimate outcome* of the sacrifice's application. This is what the Watchtower literature often has done, and by doing so, the readers are misled. *This sacrifice includes all Adam's descendants, and it will be applied to all of them.* But not all will choose to serve Jehovah after the ransom sacrifice have been applied to them by a resurrection and through the thousand years of the reign of Jesus. Thus, the application of the ransom sacrifice does not guarantee everlasting life.

However, the references to "*the nations*" after the great tribulation in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 suggest that most of Adam's descendants who have received a resurrection will get everlasting life. This means instead of billions being eternally destroyed without having had a personal chance to serve Jehovah, billions of Adam's descendants will get everlasting life.

## **GOD'S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES WAS PARTIALLY RESTORED — 1965-1988/2000**

In the year 1963, The Watchtower literature expressed the view that the ransom sacrifice only included those who show faith and obedience, and that great numbers of humans will be eternally destroyed without having had a real chance to serve Jehovah, as the quotations above show.

After this article was published, it appears that leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses realized that much was wrong with its contents and began to consider the situation. As a culmination of their work, 12 articles on the resurrection were published in The

Watchtower in 1965, discussing everything the Bible says about this subject in an excellent manner.<sup>41</sup>

Now, the correct view of the ransom sacrifice was again presented. After showing that Adam and Eve will not get a resurrection, the article shows that the ransom sacrifice includes all of Adam's descendants:

<sup>14</sup> *So, just as all of us humans had to depend upon the first man Adam for the earthly life that we enjoy today, so now all of us who are dying have to depend, one and all of us, upon Jesus Christ*, “the last Adam.” There will not be another person on earth like Adam; so, if we desire to gain everlasting life on earth, we shall have to gain it through this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ.

<sup>42</sup> That the many descendants of Adam and Eve are to benefit from this “corresponding ransom” of Jesus Christ and are to have a resurrection from Sheol or Ha’des to an opportunity to gain human perfection on a Paradise earth, the Bible plainly teaches.

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1965, pages 167, 171)

<sup>6</sup> Consequently, it is Scripturally wrong to think that there is salvation through ignorance. *There will indeed be a resurrection of many ignorant people, the vast majority of dead mankind;* but their ignorance is not what makes them worthy of a resurrection and of eternal life.

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1965, pages 178, 179)

<sup>59</sup> Thus the one man Adam was counterbalanced by the Son of man, Jesus Christ. The effects of what Adam did are counterbalanced by what Jesus Christ has done. How could this be so? *It is so because Jesus Christ died as a ransom sacrifice for all of Adam's descendants, whom Adam had “sold” into slavery under sin with death as a penalty for such slavery.* Adam brought death upon all. All were dead. As the apostle Paul says, “the love the Christ has compels us, because . . . one man died for all; so, then, all had died.” (2 Cor. 5:14) For those who were dead through Adam, Jesus Christ died as a ransom sacrifice, just as it is written: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.”—1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

(The Watchtower of December 1, 1965, page 723)

The correct biblical view of the ransom sacrifice was that “the vast majority of dead mankind” would get a resurrection. This was the viewpoint in 1965 and throughout the whole 20th century:

The Bible's explanation as to how this is accomplished is both simple and profound—even as the problem of mankind's dying condition can be simply stated but is profoundly difficult to overcome. First, it should be recognized that at the time of Adam's sin and his being sentenced to death, his offspring or race were all unborn in his loins and so all died with him. (Compare Hebrews 7:4-19; Romans 7:9.) *Jesus as a perfect man, “the last*

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41. *The Watchtower* of 1965: “Worship the God of Resurrection”; “Death and Hades to Give Up the Dead,” “Part II”; “The Dead Who Are in Line for Resurrection,” “Part II”; “For Whom There Are Resurrection Hopes,” “Part II”; “Who Will be Resurrected from the Dead?,” “Part II”; “Who Will be Resurrected—Why?”; “Our Own Twentieth-Century Generation and the Resurrection”; “Earthly Opportunity Opened Up by Resurrection.” in *The Watchtower* of January 1, January 15, February 1, February 15, March 1, and March 15, 1965.

*Adam,” had a possible race of offspring unborn in his loins. And when he died innocently as a perfect human sacrifice, this potential human race died with him.* Jesus had willingly abstained from marrying and producing a family of his own. Jesus dying as a childless man, his unborn human offspring justly counterbalanced all the race that Adam had reproduced till now.—1 Cor. 15:45; compare Romans 5:15-17.

So, by giving his human life, together with the potential of having children of his own, Jesus Christ bought “parental” life rights that Adam lost. He holds “credit” for those of Adam’s family who desire to draw upon it.

To illustrate how this satisfies justice, we might use the case of a man who has died leaving a large debt on his estate. His children are unable to pay the debt. But a friend with sufficient money redeems the estate from the dead man’s creditors and then divides out portions thereof as inheritance to those who are worthy children. In Jesus’ case, of course, it is not land or other material possessions that he redeems and grants to worthy ones but life, perfect human life.

*By providing the “corresponding ransom,” Jesus repurchased all mankind descending from Adam so that they could become his family.* He did this by presenting the full value of his ransom sacrifice to the God of absolute justice in heaven. He “entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God” on behalf of the world of mankind.—Heb. 9:24.

(Awake! of October 8, 1978, page 23)

The words about Jesus’ unborn offspring are just an illustration, showing why Adam’s descendants who “were unborn in his loins” were included in the ransom sacrifice. The ransom sacrifice was only the body and blood of the perfect man, Jesus Christ, and not his possible unborn progeny.

The important point of the 12 articles presented was that all who die because of inherited sin will be resurrected. However, as I have shown previously, there are some persons who do not die because of inherited sin but because of their own wickedness. There is no ransom sacrifice for these, and they will not receive a resurrection. The articles showed in detail how the Bible states that humans will receive a resurrection, including wicked people.

However, in the heading, I mentioned one exception to the full restoration of The Divine Plan of the Ages by these 12 articles. This relates to those who die during the great tribulation, which, according to the view in 1965, will result in everlasting annihilation without any hope of resurrection.

<sup>2</sup> However, among our own generation there are many who will share the final destiny of Satan the Devil and his demons. These will be those whom Jesus Christ compared to goats. He gave a prophecy on the conclusion of this wicked system of things and closed this prophecy with his parable of the sheep and the goats. This parable or illustration is found in Matthew 25:31-46...

<sup>9</sup> *In other words, at the time of the execution of divine judgment the “goats” would be all those persons, young and old, who have not become “sheep” and who have not been gathered into the “one fold” under the “one shepherd,” where the small remnant of the Shepherd’s spiritual brothers are.*—John 10:16; Rev. 7:9-17...

<sup>12</sup> *Where do the executed “goats” go when sent out of the King’s presence? Not into Ha’des or Sheol*, where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and other faithful witnesses of Jehovah God are. No; they go into the symbolic “everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41) This “everlasting fire” is certainly not found down in Ha’des or Sheol. Even Jesus’ parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus does not prove that the Gehenna fire or the “fiery lake that burns with sulphur” is in Ha’des or Sheol. (Luke 16:19-31) *What, then, does this punishment with something everlasting mean? It means the very opposite of everlasting life. In other words, it means the everlasting punishment of endless destruction.* That it means such endless destruction is indicated by Jesus’ closing words regarding the unrighteous “goat” class:

<sup>13</sup> “And these will depart into everlasting cutting-off [or, everlasting punishment], but the righteous ones into everlasting life.”—Matt. 25:46, NW; AV.

(The Watchtower of March 15, 1965, page 174)

The pressing question now is: Because the correct view was that Jesus died for all Adam’s descendants and bought them all, so they could receive a resurrection to get a personal chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not, why should all those who would die in the great tribulation be everlastingly destroyed? Logically speaking, this is a clear contradiction of the fact that Jesus died for all Adam’s descendants. This is so because most of the 3,3 billion people who lived in 1965 and the 8 billion people who live today have not had a real chance to learn the truth and choose to serve Jehovah.

The real obstacle for the leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses was and is the interpretation of the illustration of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46, as we see from the mention of sheep and goats in the last quotation. When this illustration is applied to the world population, the logical conclusion is what the article said, that all who are not a part of the people of God are “goats” and will be everlastingly destroyed. In Chapter 8, I discussed this in detail, showing that the “goats” are people inside the Christian congregations who reject the ransom sacrifice and sin against the holy spirit, and not billions of people of the world population.

So, there is no need to take this illustration as a contradiction to the ransom sacrifice. This means that the 8 billion+ who lose their lives in the great tribulation, regardless of how they die, will receive a resurrection in the thousand-year reign of Jesus. The only exception is those who die because of their own wickedness and have sinned against the holy spirit.

## **GOD’S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES AND THAT THE RANSOM SACRIFICE INCLUDES ALL ADAM’S DESCENDANTS, ARE AGAIN REJECTED (1988/2000-2025)**

The correct view of the ransom sacrifice —that it includes each one of Adam’s descendants and that Jesus bought them all —was presented in the Watchtower literature from 1965 and throughout the whole 20th century.

The Watchtower of March 15, 2000, page 4, says:

When Adam sinned and was sentenced to death, his as yet unborn offspring were still in his loins and therefore died with him. The perfect man Jesus, “the last Adam,” willingly did not produce a family. (1 Corinthians 15:45) He had unborn offspring in his loins when he died as a perfect human sacrifice. Therefore, it might be said that the potential human race within his loins died with him. *Jesus took Adam’s sinful, dying family as his own. He gave up the right to have a family of his own. By sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus repurchased all mankind descended from Adam so that they could become His family, making Him their “Eternal Father.”*—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

These words are clear, indicating that the ransom sacrifice encompasses all of Adam’s descendants. However, in the year 1988, an article appeared that indirectly questioned whether the ransom sacrifice included all of Adam’s descendants. I quote from The Watchtower of June 1, 1988, page 31.

*Likewise, at the end of the present wicked system, will those whom God executes have had a final judgment? That is the indication of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9:* “It is righteous on God’s part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.”...

*Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction.*

These words show that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were not included in the ransom sacrifice. And they also contradict the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:15 and 11:24. This is also a clear rejection of The Divine Plan of the Ages, that all who die because of Adam will get a resurrection to become perfect and have a personal chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not.

Other articles during the rest of the 20th century stated that All Adam’s descendants are included in the ransom sacrifice.

Rejection of the view that the ransom sacrifice includes all Adam’s descendants and that he bought them all is seen in The Watchtower of July 15, 2014, page 30 (above) and in the online article, “How is Jesus ‘a ransom for all’”<sup>42</sup> (below):

As Jesus explained, he came, “not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matt. 20:28) **The “many” who would benefit from Jesus’ ransom were not to be limited to repentant Jews. Rather, it is God’s will that “all sorts of people should be saved,”** since the ransom “takes away the sin of the world!”—1 Tim. 2:4-6; John 1:29.

**Correspondence.** Jesus’ sacrifice corresponds exactly to what Adam lost—one perfect human life. (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 46) The Bible says: “Just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] many were made sinners, so also through the

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42. <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/502016129#h=15:0-15:549> (seen July 25, 2025).



obedience of the one person [Jesus Christ] many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19) This explains how the death of one man can pay the ransom for many sinners. *In fact, Jesus’ sacrifice is “a corresponding ransom for all” those who take the steps necessary to benefit from it.*—1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

The first quotation refers to the deliberate distortion of the text of 1 Timothy 2:4 in NWT84 and NWT13 by the rendering “all sorts of people” instead of “all people.” The second quotation takes up the idea of Rutherford and the leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses from 1934, that the ransom sacrifice is only for those who will be saved.

## THE WORD MANY REFERS TO ALL ADAM’S DESCENDANTS

I start with the comparison two passages, Matthew 20:28 (above) and 1 Timothy 2: 5, 6 (below):

<sup>28</sup> Just as the Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom *in exchange for many (polys)*.

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself a corresponding *ransom for all (pas)*—[this is] what is to be witnessed to at its own particular times.

How can we harmonize the expressions “in exchange for *many*” and “a ransom for *all*,”? The Watchtower of March 15, 2000, page 3, applies the word “*many*” as a reference to *all* Adam’s descendants. This is a correct reference, as I will show.

Jesus came to the earth “to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28) A ransom is the price paid to buy back, or to bring about the release of, someone or something. The verb form of the Hebrew word rendered “ransom” conveys the idea of covering, or atoning, for sins. (Psalm 78:38) The Greek word, such as that found at Matthew 20:28, was used particularly to refer to the price paid to ransom prisoners of war or to release slaves. To satisfy the demands of justice, one thing is given in exchange for another of corresponding value.

When Adam sinned and was sentenced to death, his as yet unborn offspring were still in his loins and therefore died with him. The perfect man Jesus, “the last Adam,” willingly did not produce a family. (1 Corinthians 15:45) He had unborn offspring in his loins when he died as a perfect human sacrifice. Therefore, it might be said that the potential human race within his loins died with him. Jesus took Adam’s sinful, dying family as his own. He gave up the right to have a family of his own. *By sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus repurchased all mankind descended from Adam so that they could become His family, making Him their “Eternal Father.”*—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

The point here is that The Watchtower applies the words “a ransom in exchange for many” to “all mankind descended from Adam.” But the article does not tell us why it juxtaposed the words “many” and “all.”

The new view of rejecting that all Adam’s descendants are ransomed shines through in the article in The Watchtower of July 15, 2014, page 30:



<sup>7</sup> Events on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E. proved that Jehovah had graciously accepted the value of Jesus' perfect human sacrifice as an atonement, or a covering, for sin. (Heb. 9:11, 12, 24) As Jesus explained, he came, "not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many." (Matt. 20:28) *The "many" who would benefit from Jesus' ransom were not to be limited to repentant Jews. Rather, it is God's will that "all sorts of people should be saved,"* since the ransom "takes away the sin of the world!"—1 Tim. 2:4-6; John 1:29.

According to this article, the word "*many*" does not refer to *all* Adam's descendants but to "*all sorts of people*." One way to lead people astray is to confuse (1) the ransom price and how many are bought with the ransom, and (2) the final result of the application of the ransom. This is done in *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 2, page 791:

**Some Not Resurrected.** *While it is true that Christ's ransom sacrifice was given for mankind in general, Jesus indicated that its actual application nevertheless would be limited when he said: "Just as the Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Mt 20:28)* Jehovah God has the right to refuse to accept a ransom for anyone he deems unworthy. Christ's ransom covers the sins an individual has because of being a child of sinful Adam, but a person can add to that by his own deliberate, willful course of sin, and he can thus die for such sin that is beyond coverage by the ransom. (The word "many" is in italics in the original)

This is a clearly incorrect application, suggesting that the ransom sacrifice is limited and not applicable to all. We know that not all of Adam's descendants will get everlasting life. Applying the word "*many*" to those who finally get everlasting life, is a rejection of the value of the ransom sacrifice.

As the first volume in the series *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, A149, rightly says:

"The Restitution Guaranteed by the Ransom—Not Everlasting Life, but a Trial for it, Secured by the Ransom.

The ransom guarantees that each individual of Adam's descendants who has died because of Adam's sin will get a resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, so he or she finally will become perfect without sin and have a just and fair personal chance to choose to serve Jehovah or not. This is rejected by the words in the quotation from *Insight on the Scriptures*.

That the words "*for many*" do not refer to those who will get everlasting life, is seen by the word "exchange." The Greek word translated "in exchange of" is *anti*, which has the meaning "for, in place of, instead of." Because Jesus was a perfect man like Adam, he ransomed or bought Adam and all Adam's descendants who had inherited sin. He did not give his life in exchange for a part of Adam's descendants.

I will now show that the word "*many*" can be used in the same sense as "*all*." The sense of "many" must be construed from the context and the viewpoint of the author. The word *polys* ("*many*") does not have the lexical meaning "*all*." Its lexical meaning is "great in magnitude or quantity, much, large, many." But in some contexts, it can refer to *all* members of a group.

One situation where Paul uses *polys* (“*many*”) with reference to *pas* (“*all*”) is Romans 5:15. Here, Paul uses the word *polys* (“*many*”) both for *all* the descendants of Adam who will die and for *all* that are included in the ransom sacrifice:

<sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by one man’s trespass *many* (*polys*) died, how much more did the undeserved kindness of God and his free gift by the undeserved kindness of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to *many* (*polys*)!

It is clear from verse 15 that the “*many*” who died refers to “*all*” Adam’s descendants who die because of inherited sin. The meaning of the expression “*many* died” (aorist active) is also seen in verse 17, where we read, “for if by the trespass of one man death ruled as king through that one.” *All* Adam’s offspring were subjected to death, and *all* these are referred to as “*many*” in verse 15. The Watchtower of August 1, 1973, page 465, has some interesting comments on the use of the word *polys*:

<sup>9</sup> This teaching of the ransom brings to our attention two families—the family of Adam and the family of Jesus Christ. Both families are described as being “many.” (Rom. 5:15) There is no special requirement for becoming one of Adam’s sinful family. All are born into it by the natural procreative process. But, concerning what Jesus did, it is written: “For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28) *How “many”? As we have already seen, he gave himself “a corresponding ransom for all.”* He tasted death “for every man.” (1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 2:9) During the past six thousand years, Adam’s family has multiplied into the billions. Christ purchased them all.

On the background of the words of Paul, we see that *polys* (“*many*”) in Matthew 20:28 does not refer to a group that is less in number than “*all*,” but it refers to *all* Adam’s descendants.

## THE GOVERNING BODY’S PLAY FOR THE GALLERY

During the 64 years since I became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, one question has been posed repeatedly by many different Witnesses: How can it be just that billions of persons who die in the great tribulation will be everlastingly annihilated? This question is particularly important because we know that most of these will not have had the chance to hear the good news of the kingdom.

The view that the members of the Governing Body have presented to the Witnesses in the 21st century is that Jehovah’s Witnesses will survive the great tribulation, and all others who die because of Jehovah’s judgment will be everlastingly annihilated. Many Witnesses think it is not just that billions of people will be everlastingly annihilated without having had a chance to serve God.

*Because of this, the members of the Governing Body have recently put a smokescreen over this issue by publishing statements that mislead their readers.*

They have done this in two ways, 1) They have written articles that lead readers to believe that the standpoint of the Governing Body is different from what it really is, and 2) they plead ignorance of important issues to conceal viewpoints that many find unjust.

## CHEATING WITH THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

I use the latest comments on the illustration of the sheep and the goats to show how the Witnesses are misled. For many years, the view was that the separation of the sheep and the goats was caused by the preaching work after 1914, when God's kingdom was established, and before the great tribulation. In 1995, a new view emerged that God separates all nations into two groups —sheep and goats —during the great tribulation.

The Watchtower of October 15, 1995, pages 22-27, says:

<sup>23</sup> The parable, though, depicts the time when Jesus judges the people of “all the nations” who are then alive and facing the execution of his judicial sentence...

<sup>10</sup> So the sheep must be ones who over a period of time have come to the aid of—actively supporting—Christ's brothers and have exercised faith to the extent of receiving a righteous standing before God.

<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, vast numbers out of “all the nations” will have proved themselves to be like stubborn goats. They “will depart into everlasting cutting-off.” What a relief for the earth!

The Watchtower of August 15, 1998, page 20, says:

<sup>17</sup> All nations will shortly be examined by Christ so that he can “separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25:31-33)

The present view is that all the nations of the world will be gathered before God when the great tribulation comes, and they will be separated into two groups: All the inhabitants who are not “sheep” are “goats.”

The book *Pure Worship of Jehovah Restored at Last!* (2018), pages 178-180, makes the mentioned distinction clearer by directly claiming that only baptized Jehovah's Witnesses (and their children) will survive the great tribulation, and all others will be killed.

<sup>17</sup> *To survive the coming destruction, individuals need to prove their faith now... They need to react favorably to the preaching work that is being done today, to continue putting on a Christlike personality, to get baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah, and to support Christ's brothers loyally. (Ezek. 9:4; Matt. 25:34-40; Eph. 4:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:21) Only those who pursue such a course now—and who enter the great tribulation as pure worshippers—will be in a position to be marked for survival.*

*Then, during the war of Armageddon, Jesus will lead the heavenly executional forces, which will include the holy angels and all his 144,000 co-rulers, against this wicked world, destroying it utterly and delivering pure worshippers into a righteous new world.—Rev. 16:14-16; 19:11-21.*

The conclusion from this quotation is that all human beings who are not baptized Witnesses are “goats” and *will be utterly destroyed* in the war of Armageddon. *The Watchtower* of May 2022, article 21, paragraphs 8 and 10, uses even stronger words for the destiny of the “goats”, namely, “*total annihilation*”:

*Will this result in a flood of new ones deciding to turn to worship Jehovah? No. To the contrary...*<sup>10</sup> *What is the outcome of this war [Armageddon]? The total annihilation of all humans and organization opposing Jehovah!*—Read Revelation 19:19-21.

## THE VIEW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY AT PRESENT IS THAT ALL HUMANS ON THE EARTH WHO ARE NOT BAPTIZED JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES WILL BE EVERLASTINGLY ANNIHILATED WITHOUT THE HOPE OF A RESURRECTION IN THE ARMAGEDDON WAR.

Many people, both inside and outside Jehovah’s Witnesses, find the belief that billions of people, most of whom have not had the possibility of serving God, will be everlastingly annihilated abhorrent and abusive. Because of this, the members of the Governing Body have tried to sugarcoat this message in the article, “Are you heeding the warnings?” in *The Watchtower* of September 2024:

<sup>1</sup> WE LIVE in a climactic time! *Soon, Jesus will judge every living person.*

<sup>2</sup> Jesus provided helpful warnings by means of three parables. These are the parables of the sheep and the goats, the discreet and the foolish virgins, and the talents. *Each parable helps us to understand how a person’s behavior will affect the way he will be judged.* As we review these parables, let us identify the lessons and how we can apply them. The first parable we will discuss is that of the sheep and the goats.

<sup>3</sup> *In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus described the judgment of people who have had the opportunity to respond to the good news and to support his anointed brothers. (Matt. 25:31-46)* During the “great tribulation,” he will render this judgment right before Armageddon. (Matt. 24:21) *Just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, Jesus will separate those who loyally support his anointed followers from those who do not.*

The normal situation among Jehovah’s Witnesses is that the members of the Governing Body often change their minds regarding a Bible subject. This new viewpoint is written in *The Watchtower* or in a book, and everything that was written about this subject previously is null and void.

If we followed this procedure in connection with the articles in *The Watchtower* of September 2024, which is quoted above, what is written in *The Watchtower* of October 1995, the book *Pure Worship of Jehovah Restored at Last!* (2018), and *The Watchtower* of May 2022, regarding the sheep and the goats and the great tribulation would be null and void. But this is clearly not the case.

We have very good reasons to believe that the words in *The Watchtower* of September 2024, “*In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus described the judgment of people who have had the opportunity to respond to the good news and*

*to support his anointed brothers,”* do not represent a new interpretation of the illustration of the sheep and the goats. But these words are written to whitewash the view of the members of the Governing Body that billions who have never heard the truth of the Bible and had the opportunity to serve God will be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation. We see this from the words that the separation of sheep and goats, according to the illustration, only relates to those “*who have had the opportunity to respond to the good news.*”

If the “goats” who will be everlastingly annihilated are persons who have had the opportunity to serve God but who have refused to do so, most Witnesses will not view this as unjust on the part of God. But if people who have never had the opportunity to serve God will lose their lives forever, this will be viewed as unjust by many.

How can we know that the words I have quoted above are not new light but are written to mislead the readers? This is already seen in the first line of the article:

<sup>1</sup>WE LIVE in a climactic time! *Soon, Jesus will judge every living person.*

These words show that not only those who have had the opportunity to respond positively to the good news are judged as “sheep” and “goats,” but every living person.

If the illustration of the sheep and the goats, “*describes the judgment of people who have the opportunity to respond to the good news,*” there will be three groups when the great tribulation starts, 1) Jehovah’s Witnesses who have positively responded to the good news and are “sheep,” 2) those who have had the opportunity to positively respond to the good news, but have refused to do so, and who are “goats,” and 3) those who have not had the opportunity to respond positively to the good news.

Group 3) will include most people. I show below that at least 6 billion of the 8 billion living on the earth do not have any opportunity to respond to the good news. So, if only people who have had this opportunity are judged as “sheep” and “goats,” there is a group of at least 6 billion who are neither judged as “sheep” nor “goats.” What will happen to them when Armageddon comes?

What I have shown above are the consequences if only persons who have had the opportunity to respond positively to the good news are judged as “sheep” and “goats.” But the members of the Governing Body do not teach that there are three groups when the great tribulation comes. They believe that all who are not “sheep” are “goats.”

The words “*the judgment of people who have had the opportunity to respond to the good news*” in The Watchtower of September 2024 are the same as pulling wool over the eyes of the readers. The members of the Governing Body try to convince readers that they teach differently from what they actually teach, because what they actually teach is viewed as unjust by many readers of the Watchtower.



*The article “Are you heading the warnings?” represents a conscious cheating of the readers by the members of the Governing Body, regarding who will be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation.*

## MORE DIVERTING MANEUVERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE “GOATS”

In our days, there has been a focus on the rights of different groups of people. And the general public is aware of the just and unjust treatment of different individuals. I assume that the Governing Body has received many letters with questions about the destiny of the people of the world in the great tribulation. This was evidently the reason for the article in The Watchtower of September 2024, as well as in The Watchtower of May 2024, which I will now discuss.

I will show how the members of the Governing Body consciously deceive the readers by analyzing three paragraphs:

<sup>8</sup> Thus, a question arises: *What about those who may not have a chance to hear the good news before the great tribulation strikes?* How will Jehovah and his Son, whom he has entrusted to do the judging, deal with them? (John 5:19, 22, 27; Acts 17:31) The theme text of this article states that Jehovah “does not desire anyone to be destroyed.” Instead, he wants “all to attain to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4) *That said, we must acknowledge that Jehovah has not yet revealed to us what he will do in answer to this question.* Of course, he is not obligated to tell us anything about what he has done or will do.

<sup>10</sup> *Will all who die during the events of the great tribulation be destroyed forever with no hope of a resurrection? The Scriptures make it clear that outright opposers whom Jehovah and his forces will destroy at Armageddon will not be resurrected.* (2 Thess. 1:6-10) *But what about others, for example, who may die from natural causes, from accidents, or at the hand of other humans? (Ecc. 9:11; Zech. 14:13) Could some of these people be among the “unrighteous” who will be resurrected in the new world? We simply do not know.*

<sup>15</sup> *It is also reasonable to conclude that a person’s eternal future does not depend on where he happens to live. It is unthinkable that Jehovah would automatically label as “goats” millions of people who live in lands where they never had an opportunity to respond to the Kingdom message.* (Matt. 25:46) The righteous Judge of all the earth cares even more about these individuals than we ever could. We do not know how Jehovah will maneuver events during the great tribulation. *Perhaps some of these people will have the opportunity to learn about Jehovah, put their faith in Him, and take their stand on Jehovah’s side when He himself before all nations.* —Ezek. 38:16. (The word “where” is in italics in the original.)

**The first trickery:** The reference to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 as evidence that “*outright opposers*”...will not be resurrected.” (paragraph 10)

Few readers will analyze the mentioned verses. If they did, they would discover that those who “will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction” (verse 9) are not “outright opposers” but “those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.” When we understand that those who will “undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction” are



ignorant people who do not know God and therefore do not obey the good news, then we understand that the readers are hoodwinked!

Chapter 9 demonstrates that the words that are translated «everlasting destruction» (*olethros aiōnion*), linguistically speaking, do not have the meaning “everlasting annihilation without hope of a resurrection.” Christians who know God are certain that God will not annihilate humans forever who are ignorant and who have not had the possibility of choosing to serve God.

When the members of the Governing Body say that those who experience «everlasting destruction» (*olethros aiōnion*), according to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, are “outright opposers,” they are cheating the readers!

***The second trickery:*** The claim of ignorance, according to the following quotations:

*8 What about those who may not have a chance to hear the good news before the great tribulation strikes? ... That said, we must acknowledge that Jehovah has not yet revealed to us what he will do in answer to this question.* (paragraph 8)

*15 It is also reasonable to conclude that a person's eternal future does not depend on where he happens to live. It is unthinkable that Jehovah would automatically label as "goats" millions of people who live in lands where they never had an opportunity to respond to the Kingdom message.* (paragraph 15)

The two quotations say that the members of the Governing Body do not know the eternal destiny of persons who have not had a chance to hear the good news. However, they interpret the words of 2 Thessalonians 1:9, “These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction,” to mean that the mentioned people will not get a resurrection. And as shown above, these people are “those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.” ***This means that in paragraphs 8 and 15 they say that they do not know the eternal destiny of those who do not know God, and in paragraph 10 they say, in reality, that those who do not know who God will be everlastingly annihilated.***

However, Jehovah has revealed what will happen to those who have not had the chance to choose to serve God. First John 1:22 says that Jesus Christ is a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, which includes all Adam’s descendants, and 1 Corinthians 15:22 says that all who are dying in Adam will be made alive in the Christ. This also includes all Adam’s descendants. If the members of the Governing had told the readers what the texts in the Bible say about the ransom sacrifice and the resurrection, they could not have pleaded ignorance. But instead they try to whitewash their teachings that are repugnant.

***The third trickery:*** The creation of a third group in addition to the sheep and the goats.

Those who have not had the opportunity to hear the good news have not had the possibility to support Christ’s brothers. By saying that they do not know the destiny of those who have not heard the good news, the members of the Governing Body open up the possibility that there is a third group when the great tribulation comes.

The groups are: 1) Those who have supported Christ's brothers and who are "sheep," 2) Those who are outright opposers who have not supported Christ's brothers and who are "goats," and 3) those who have not heard the good news and therefore have not supported Christ's brothers, who are not necessarily goats, but whose destiny is unknown.

The problem for the members of the Governing Body is that the illustration of the sheep and the goats mentions only two groups: sheep and goats. And the illustration is clear. All who do not support Christ's brothers are "goats." By saying that *"It is unthinkable that Jehovah would automatically label as 'goats' millions of people who live in lands where they never had an opportunity to respond to the Kingdom message,"* they contradict the illustration and are again misleading the readers.

Creating this third group is the same as putting wool over the eyes of the readers. The sense of righteousness of most people tells them that the belief of the members of the Governing Body that 8 billion+ people, most of whom have not heard the good news, will be everlastingly annihilated, is completely wrong. In order to hide this horrendous teaching, the members of the Governing Body plead ignorance: We do not know what will happen to those who have not heard the good news.

Most of the 8 billion+ people who live when the great tribulation starts have not supported Christ's brothers. That does not mean that I advocate that 8 billion+ humans will be everlastingly destroyed in the great tribulation. I show in Chapter 8 that the illustration of the sheep and the goats can only be applied to the Christian congregations where Christ's brothers are. And the "goats" are members of these congregations who refuse to support Christ's brothers and therefore have sinned against the holy spirit. These persons will be everlastingly annihilated.

The quotation above in brown does not only say the very opposite of what the book *Pure Worship of Jehovah Restored at Last!* (2018), pages 178-180 (quoted above), says, that only baptized Witnesses will be classified as sheep and survive the great tribulation. But it also contradicts the Governing Body's pleading of ignorance of the destiny of those who have not had the chance to serve God. The members of the Governing Body say that it is unthinkable that those who have not had the opportunity to respond to the good news will be classified as goats. But at the same time, they say that these people will be eternally annihilated.

The words in the quotation represent a conscious attempt to lead readers to believe that the Governing Body teaches something different from what it really teaches.

*The articles in the Watchtower of May 2024 use different kinds of trickery to lead the readers to believe that the members of the Governing Body do not teach that 8 billion+ people will be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation. But this is exactly what they teach!*

## DIVERTING MANEUVERS IN CONNECTION WITH DEAD PEOPLE

Previously, I quoted from an article in the Watchtower of January 15, 1960, page 54, stating that those who died in the flood in Noah's day and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah will never receive a resurrection.

This violates the sense of justice of many because we know that these people did not have the opportunity to serve Jehovah. In the Watchtower of May 2024, a new interpretation was presented, evidently with the motive of whitewashing the viewpoints of the Governing Body.

The Watchtower of May 2024, page 3, says:

<sup>5</sup> In the past, our publications have considered the question of what happens to those whom Jehovah judges as unrighteous. We have said that for such individuals as those in Sodom and Gomorrah, there is no hope of a future resurrection. But further prayerful study has raised the question, Can we really say that with certainty?

<sup>6</sup> Consider a number of related questions. Several Bible accounts describe Jehovah's judgments against unrighteous people, *such as the unknown numbers who died in the Flood* or the seven nations in the Promised Land that Jehovah ordered his people to devote to destruction or the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers slain by an angel of Jehovah in a single night. (Gen. 7:23; Deut. 7:1-3; Isa. 37:36, 37) *In these cases, does the Bible give us enough information to determine that Jehovah sentenced all those individuals to eternal destruction, with no hope of a resurrection? No, it does not. Why can we say that?* (The word "eternal" is in bold letters in the original.)

<sup>7</sup> We do not know how Jehovah judged each individual; nor do we know whether those who were killed had an opportunity to learn about Jehovah and to repent. *In regard to the time of the Flood, the Bible does say that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Pet. 2:5) But it does not say that while he was building a colossal ark, he was also attempting to reach every individual on earth who would face destruction in the Deluge.* Similarly, in the case of the nations of Canaan, we do not know if all those wicked people had an opportunity to learn about Jehovah and change their ways. (The word "not" is in bold letters in the original.)

<sup>8</sup> *What of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah?* A righteous man named Lot lived in their midst. But do we know that Lot preached to all of them? No. They were certainly wicked, but did they all know any better? Recall that a crowd of men in that city sought to rape Lot's guests. The Bible says that the mob ranged "from boy to old man." (Gen. 19:4; 2 Pet. 2:7) Do we really know that the merciful God, Jehovah, condemned each one to death with no hope of a resurrection? Jehovah assured Abraham that there were not even ten righteous men in that city. (Gen. 18:32) So they were unrighteous, and Jehovah justly held them accountable for their actions. *Can we say for certain, then, that none of them will rise in the "resurrection of . . . the unrighteous"? No, we cannot say for sure!* (The word "none" is in bold letters in the original.)

These quotations show how far away the present members of the Governing Body have departed from The Divine Plan of the Ages. As I demonstrated in the last section, God has given us enough information about who will be resurrected; I showed this in Chapter 3. Jesus said, according to John 5:28, 29, that *all* who are in

the memorial tombs will receive a resurrection. And Paul says, according 1 Corinthians 15:22, that *all* who die in Adam will get a resurrection. This includes all who died in the great flood and in Sodom and Gomorrah, *not possibly some of them*, as the quotation above says. In addition, Revelation 20:13 says that the sea gave up the dead, which includes those who died in the great flood.

These quotations also show that the members of the Governing Body do not believe in texts in the Christian Greek Scriptures that contradict their own beliefs. To cover their tracks, they have claimed ignorance of issues where the Christian Greek Scriptures have given clear answers.

The Bible Students believed the expressions in the Bible, which show that imperfect humans with inherited sin are not competent to make a just and fair decision in connection with serving Jehovah or not. This is prevented by their inherited sin. The ransom sacrifice guarantees that every human who dies because of Adam's sin will receive a resurrection during the thousand years, to become perfect and free from inherited sin. At that time, each one will have the same capacity as Adam to make a just and fair decision to serve Jehovah or not.

The words in paragraph 7 above (in green) illustrate how far the present members have deviated from the truth. They believe that if Noah preached to a person who did not accept the message, that person will not receive a resurrection.

It is simply ridiculous to claim that if a person listens to a positive message about God one or a few times and does not accept this message, then his or her eternal fate is sealed. This is particularly so in view of the situation with the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida, which I have referred to several times. On many occasions, Jesus preached to the inhabitants of these cities and performed many miracles there. Yet the inhabitants opposed him and did not accept his message. But Jesus said that the inhabitants of these cities will get a resurrection on Judgment Day (the thousand-year reign of Jesus). We read in Matthew 11:21-24:

<sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Cho·ra'zin! Woe to you, Beth·sa'i·dal! because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Si'don that took place in YOU, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> Consequently I say to YOU, It will be more endurable for Tyre and Si'don on Judgment Day than for YOU. <sup>23</sup> And you, Ca·per'na·um, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Ha'des you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sod'om, it would have remained until this very day. <sup>24</sup> Consequently I say to YOU people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sod'om on Judgment Day than for you.”

The conclusion to this section is that the new views of the members of the Governing Body regarding the *possible* resurrection of some who died in the great flood and when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed were made to sugarcoat their false view that so many billions of Adam's descendants will be everlastingly annihilated.

## THE REAL BELIEF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY REGARDING THE RESURRECTION

In spite of their attempts to hide what they really believe, the members of the Governing Body have shown that they believe that a great part of the about 30 billion people who have lived on the earth will be everlastingly annihilated. This includes billions who have never had the opportunity to learn how to serve Jehovah. Let us examine the situation that will lead to the great tribulation.

Today, there are 8 billion inhabitants on the earth. Of these, there are 2 billion children below 14 years and 800 million persons with mental health disorders. These constitute 35% of the world population, and most of them neither have had the chance nor the capacity to accept or reject the ransom sacrifice.

When we examine the report of Jehovah's Witnesses, we see that there are relatively few preachers in India and China, both of which have populations of 1.4 billion. In Asia, there are 4.6 billion inhabitants, most of whom have not heard the good news of the kingdom. If we add to this number the 1 billion children and 400 million persons with mental health disorders from other parts of the earth, we get the number of 6,0 billion. This is 75% of the world's population, and most of them have not had the chance to accept or reject the ransom sacrifice or to be acquainted with the brothers of Jesus.

In Europe, Australia, and America, there has been much preaching of the kingdom. How will the situation develop toward the great tribulation? The world population increases by 140 million persons each year, and Jehovah's Witnesses increase by about 300,000 persons. This means the ratio of the Witnesses to the world population increases each year. Therefore, the number of those who today have not had the chance to be acquainted with the brothers of Jesus increases each year until the great tribulation comes, because the ratio between the preachers of the kingdom and the world population will all the time increase.

Thus, more than 6 billion (75%) of the humans who live on the earth when the great tribulation comes will be ignorant regarding the ransom sacrifice and the way to get everlasting life, and they will not know anything about the brothers of Jesus. Of the other 2 billion+ people who are living, only a small fraction will survive, according to the members of the Governing Body. This means that 8 billion+ will die in the great tribulation.

Jehovah's Witnesses are a tiny fraction of the world's population. The members of the Governing Body apply the illustration of the sheep and the goats to the world population, and because the requirement to survive the great tribulation is to support the brothers of Jesus, this means that the present members of the Governing Body believe that 8 billion+ people will be everlastingly annihilated in the great tribulation.

Regarding people who have lived in the past, the members of the Governing Body claim ignorance as to the destiny of dead people. But the belief that the eternal destiny of humans will be decided by what they do as imperfect sinners, and because

they dispute that the ransom sacrifice guarantees a resurrection for all who die because of Adam's sin, we must conclude that the members of the Governing Body believe that the major part of Adam's descendants will be everlastingly annihilated.



## UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC TIMES OF GOD'S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

*When Jesus started his preaching work, he said, “The appointed time (*kairos*) has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near.” When Daniel asked about the meaning of the final part of his prophecies, the angel said that “the words are made secret and sealed up until the time of the end.”*

*There are three prophetic time periods that are of particular importance for God's plan through the ages for the restoration of all things:*

- 1) The prophetic time that was fulfilled at Jesus' first coming.*
- 2) The prophetic time that was fulfilled at Jesus' second coming.*
- 3) The prophetic time that will be fulfilled at Jesus' coming as judge in the great tribulation, and the beginning of Jesus' thousand-year reign, which is the time for the restoration of all things.*

*In this Chapter I will discuss points 1) and 2) in detail.*

### INTRODUCTION

The focus of this book is on the restoration of all things, and passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures indicate that there is a prophetic time period marking the beginning of that restoration. I quote Acts 3:19-21 (above) and Ephesians 1:10 (below):

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times* (*kairos*) *for the refreshing rest* (*anapsysis*) may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one *chosen beforehand* for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one *until* the times (*ekchronos*) *for* the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets *through the ages*.

<sup>10</sup> for an administration at the full limit of *the appointed times* (*kairos, plural*), namely, to gather (*anakefalaioō*) all things (*pas*) together *again* in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. [Yes,] in him.

I discussed these scriptures in detail in Chapter 2, including their words that a specific number of appointed times will be fulfilled at the beginning of the restoration of all things, when there again will be unity the heavens and on the earth through Jesus Christ.

In this Chapter, I will discuss in detail the specific prophetic times that were fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus and at his second coming. In the next chapter, I will discuss the specific prophetic times that will be fulfilled at the coming of Jesus as judge in the great tribulation and the beginning of the restoration of all things, and how the chronology of the Jubilee in Israel was a prophetic type of the time for the restoration of all things.

The main points are:

- 1) The prophetic times of Jesus' first coming were fulfilled in the year 29 CE.
- 2) The prophetic times of Jesus' second coming (his presence) were fulfilled in the year 1914 CE.
- 3) The second coming of Jesus began in 1914 CE. Then followed his invisible presence. At the end of his presence, he will come as the judge in the great tribulation. His coming as judge in the great tribulation and the beginning of his following thousand-year reign, which is when the restoration begins, are also marked by specific appointed times.
- 4) The Jubilee in Israel was a prophetic type of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. It will start within a generation from the year 1914.

## THE PROPHETIC TIMES LEADING TO THE FIRST COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

I have already quoted the words of Mark 1:15. When Jesus started his preaching work, he said, "The appointed time (*kairos*) has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near." The appointed times (*kairos*) leading to the coming of Jesus Christ are found in Daniel 9:24-27:

<sup>24</sup> *There are seventy weeks that have been determined upon your people and upon your holy city*, in order to terminate the transgression, and to finish off sin, and to make atonement for error, and to bring in righteousness for times indefinite, and to imprint a seal upon vision and prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

<sup>25</sup> And you should know and have the insight [that] from the going forth of [the] word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Mes·si'ah [the] Leader, *there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks*. She will return and be actually rebuilt, with a public square (*rehob*) and moat (*haruts*), but in the straits of the times.

<sup>26</sup> "And after the sixty-two weeks Mes·si'ah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. "And the city and the holy place the people of a leader that is coming will bring to their ruin. And the end of it will be by the flood. And until [the] end there will be war; what is decided upon is desolations.

<sup>27</sup> “And he must keep [the] covenant in force for the many for one week; and at the half of the week he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease. “And upon the wing of disgusting things there will be the one causing desolation; and until an extermination, the very thing decided upon will go pouring out also upon the one lying desolate.”

Who is this Anointed One (the Messiah), the Leader, who is mentioned in verse 25? I will first analyze the words. The word *mashiah* is an adjective with the meaning “anointed,” and *nāgid* is a substantive meaning “leader; ruler.” It is clear that the adjective does not modify the substantive, thus giving it the meaning “the Anointed Leader,” because the adjective occurs before the substantive and not after it. Thus, *nāgid mashiah* represents an appositional phrase, “Messiah, the Leader.”

Corroborating this is the fact that in verse 26, *mashiah* occurs alone. The word *mashiah* occurs 38 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In eleven instances, *mashiah* is followed by Jehovah, so the meaning is “Jehova’s anointed.” In four instances, *mashiah* is preceded by *kōhēn* (“priest”), so the meaning is “the anointed priest.” In 21 instances *mashiah* is modified by “my,” “his,” or “your,” with the pronouns referring to God.

Only in Daniel 9:25, 26 is *mashiah* standing alone without any determination. The word *nāgid* occurs 43 times, and in most cases, it refers to the ruler over God’s people. The word can also refer to a person who is a leader of a lower rank, for example, in charge of the temple. According to 1 Samuel 10:1, Jehovah’s anointed (*māshah*, the verb corresponding to the substantive *mashiah*) Saul was to become ruler (*nāgid*) over his people. In the versions we find the following renderings of *nāgid mashiah*:

Theodotion: *kristou* = Christ.

The Latin *Vulgate*: *Christum ducem* = Christ, leader.

The Ethiopic translation: *Krestos negus* = Christ (as a proper name), king.

The Syriac *Peshitta*: *meshihā malkā* = the anointed, king.

Regarding the identity of the Anointed One, the Leader, we should keep in mind that although the word *mashiah* can be applied to any person who is anointed to an office, and thus it can refer both to priests and kings, there is just one person in the Hebrew Scriptures, apart from Melchizedek, who is both priest and king (Psalm 110:1, 4; Zechariah 6:13), and that is the coming Messiah. Corroborating this is the fact that *mashiah* in Daniel 9:25, 26 is unqualified and therefore does not refer to *one* who is anointed, but to *the* Anointed One.

The Messiah would arrive after the sixty-ninth “week,” according to Daniel 9:26. Most commentators agree that the “weeks” each represent seven years, which means that 69 weeks are 483 years.<sup>43</sup> What would mark the beginning of these years? Daniel 9:25 says that the starting point was “the issuing of the word to restore and build Jerusalem.” After this starting point the city would “be restored and built with streets (*rehōb*) and trenches (*hārūts*).” I will analyze these words.

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43. J. Wood, *The Book of Daniel*, 252. Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1385, has the definition “a week of years,” and the lexicon refers to *The Community Rule*, earlier called *The Manual of Discipline*, 10:7, 8, which speaks of “seasons, years, weeks of years.” This was the document dealing with the organization of the Qumran community.

The word *rehōb* comes from a root meaning “wide; broad.” It occurs 43 times in the Hebrew Bible, and it often refers to a broad plaza or an open area inside the city gate used as a marketplace. Alternatively, the word could be used with a collective meaning, referring to the city’s streets.

For example, Esther 4:6 says that the servant of Esther went to Mordecai in the square (*rehōb*) of the city. But according to 6:9, Morecai was led on horseback through the streets (*rehōb*) of the city. The context in Daniel chapter 9 suggests that the single *rehōb* refers to the streets of the city. There were many plazas or squares in Jerusalem before the city was destroyed, and the city would not be restored by building a single square. Therefore, because “rehob” is used in connection with the verbs “restore” and “build,” it is evidently used in a collective sense, indicating the restoration of either the squares or the streets of the city.

The verb *hārats* means “to cut,” and the substantive *hārūts* literally means “the cut” (“what is cut”). Because *hārūts* occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible, its reference is not clear. In the Aramaic Zakkur inscription (800–775 BCE) a deep trench (*hārūts*) is connected with the building of a wall. Such a trench was cut into the rock outside the city wall to increase its height. Regarding Jerusalem, Montgomery says: “The great cutting in the natural rock along the northern wall of Jerusalem is a marked feature of the city’s defenses.”<sup>44</sup>

For the Hebrew word *hārūts*, the Theodotion translation of Daniel uses the word *teikhos*, which refers to a wall, particularly to the city wall. The Latin Vulgate uses *murus*, which also means “wall.” Because of these renderings, and because *hārūts* is connected with a wall in Aramaic, I take the word *hārūts* as a collective, referring to the trenches that were cut in the rock outside the walls to make them higher. So, the prophecy speaks of a complete restoration of the streets and plazas within the city, and of the city walls and their outer trenches. When these were restored, the city would be more difficult to conquer.

I will return to the beginning of the period of 70 weeks and ask: When did the word “to restore and build Jerusalem” go forth? Could it be the decree of Cyrus in 538/37 BCE? This decree said that a temple for the God of the heavens should be built, but it does not mention the city of Jerusalem. According to Ezra 7:8, 9, Ezra went up to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artaxerxes, and this year has also been suggested as the starting point. However, the word from Artaxerxes I related to the beautifying of the house of Jehovah, as seen in Ezra 7:27, and not to the restoring and building of Jerusalem and its walls.

The real starting point must be related to Nehemiah. Hanani told Nehemiah that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates were burned with fire. According to Nehemiah 2:5, Nehemiah asked King Artaxerxes I for permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. The verb used is *bānā*, and many translations render it as “rebuild.” But the meaning of the verb is “to build.”

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44. J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 380.

This is the same verb that is found in Daniel 9:25. Nehemiah 2:8 shows that Nehemiah asked for timber to build the gates of the castle belonging to the temple, for the walls of the city, and for the house where Nehemiah would stay. There was also a need for work to build the city as a whole, because in 2:17, Nehemiah says that “Jerusalem is devastated.”

Thus, the work of Nehemiah fulfills the words of Daniel 9. The journey from Shushan to Jerusalem would take about four months, and Nehemiah’s words to start the building work could have been spoken at the beginning of the 5th Jewish month. This must be the time when the 70 weeks began.<sup>45</sup>

Which year corresponds to the 20th year of Artaxerxes I? According to the traditional chronology, this is the year 445/44. However, dated cuneiform tablets from the reigns of Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I, and various Greek and Egyptian sources indicate that Artaxerxes I started his reign ten years earlier, in 475/74 and not in 465/64. This means that the 20th year of Artaxerxes I is 455/54 BCE. The evidence is as follows: There are 3 cuneiform tablets with celestial positions that are connected with the reign of Artaxerxes I.<sup>46</sup>

The tablet BM 33478 was dated in year 24 of Artaxerxes I by Sachs and Hunger, but they admit that the celestial positions do not fit that year. A study of the celestial positions in all the regnal years of Artaxerxes I, Artaxerxes II, and Artaxerxes III reveals a perfect fit of the positions on BM 33478 only in 465/64.

According to the traditional chronology, this is year 21 of Xerxes and the accession year of Artaxerxes I. The cuneiform tablet BM 33478 tells that in the year when the celestial positions were observed, there was an intercalary Addaru (an extra month 13). However, the accession year of Artaxerxes I did not have an intercalary Addaru. Therefore, this tablet suggests that the traditional chronology is wrong, and 465/64 was not the accession year of Artaxerxes I.

However, the 10th year of Artaxerxes I had an intercalary Addaru, and this may suggest that 465/64 was the 10th year, and not the 1st year of the reign of Artaxerxes I. The cuneiform tablet BM 32235 mentions the year in which Xerxes died, which was his 21st year. Two lunar eclipses are also mentioned on the tablet, one whose position in relation to the constellation Sagittarius is described, and the other is said to have occurred in month VIII, and its magnitude is described. There were two lunar eclipses in the years 465/64 and 475/74, respectively, and it is interesting that the eclipses of 475/74 fit the description on the tablet perfectly, but that is not the case with the eclipses of 465/64, where the fit is only approximately correct. This suggests that 475/74 was the accession year of Artaxerxes I, and that his twentieth year was 455/54.<sup>47</sup>

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45. Jerome used Nehemiah’s 20th year as the starting point; G. L. Archer Jr., *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 97.

46. Sachs and Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*, 1:56–60.

47. The evidence in favor of a coregency between Xerxes and Darius I is discussed in Furuli, *Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian Chronology, Persian Chronology and the Length of the Babylonian exile of the Jews*, Second edition pages 192–238; the evidence for the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes I

Based on the 20th year of Artaxerxes being the year 455/54, the first seven weeks (49 years) it took to build the city ended in 406/405, and the 62 weeks, at the end of which the Messiah would appear, ended in the year 29/30 CE. This fits exactly the time when Jesus Christ started his work.

*Most lexicons and textbooks point to 445/44 BCE as year 20 of Artaxerxes. This is a tradition that simply has been repeated over and over again from scholar to scholar. I have studied all the astronomical cuneiform tablets with their celestial positions from the reigns of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, Artaxerxes II, and Artaxerxes III.*

*My conclusion, as my short presentation above illustrates, is that Artataxerxes I began his reign ten years earlier than the textbooks indicate and that his year 20 corresponds to 455/54.*

*A detailed study of this material is found in my book mentioned in note 47. The parameters for the celestial positions of the cuneiform tablets I mentioned are in this book, and the positions can be checked using an Astro-program.*

*No other scholar than I have published a study of a comparison of all the mentioned cuneiform tablets, the historical Persepolis tablets, and relevant Egyptian and Greek material as a basis for calculating the regnal years of Artaxerxes I. Thus, the information I have provided cannot be found anywhere else.*

The mothers of John the Baptist and Jesus were relatives, and according to Luke 1:36, John was six months older than Jesus. This has a bearing on the time when Jesus began his public ministry, as Luke 3:1-2 dates the start of John the Baptist's work to the 15th year of Emperor Tiberius. Tiberius had a joint rule of the provinces with Augustus, probably from October 12 CE. Augustus died on August 19, 14 CE (Julian calendar),<sup>48</sup> and on September 17, 14 CE (Julian calendar),<sup>49</sup> the senate named Tiberius emperor; thus, the 15th year of Tiberius can be counted from three different dates.

Because Luke 3:1 uses the words "**Emperor** Tiberius," and the title "Emperor" was first applied to Tiberius after the death of Augustus, we can exclude October 12 CE as the date to count from, so we are left with August 19, or September 17 of the year 14 CE. John the Baptist began his mission in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, which corresponds to a period between August 28, 28 CE, and August 29, 29 CE. Because John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus, and assuming that both Jesus and John began their service at 30 years old, Jesus began his public service between February/March 29 CE and February/March 30 CE.<sup>50</sup> This is 483 years after the 20th year of Artaxerxes I.

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in 475/74 is discussed on pages. 239–295.

48. Augustus died on August 17, 14 CE, Gregorian calendar.

49. Tiberius was named emperor on 15 September 14 CE, Gregorian calendar.

50. Luke 3:23 says: "And Jesus himself was **about thirty years** when he began [his service]." The



Table 12.1 lists the rulers mentioned in the 15th year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1), and their regnal years show that the prophecy in Daniel 9:24–27 was fulfilled in the year 29/30 CE. A person who is able to write in detail and correctly about the future must have been directed by God, and he must be an honest person. When such a person dates the different visions of his book, we must accept these dates as correct.

*Table 12.1 The fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius*

15th year of Tiberius Caesar	Aug./Sept. 28 CE to Aug./Sept. 29 CE
Pontius Pilate, governor in Judea	26–36 CE <sup>51</sup>
Herod Antipas, governor in Perea and Galilee	4 BCE–39 CE <sup>52</sup>
Philip, governor in Iturea and Trachonitis	4 BCE–34 CE <sup>53</sup>
Lysanias, governor of Abilene	Unknown <sup>54</sup>
Annas, high priest	6–15 CE
Caiaphas, high priest	18–36 CE <sup>55</sup>

Could ordinary people in the days of Jesus understand the prophecy about the 70 weeks? The obvious answer is Yes. The basic principle for understanding the time prophecies in the Bible is that every account in the Scriptures is included with a specific purpose and meaning.

There are many prophecies about the coming Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures. And the prophecy in Daniel 9:25–27 is written so that those who studied the Scriptures could calculate the time when the Messiah would arrive. If the people

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meanings of the particle *bōsei* are “like, as, about.” Most Bible translations use “about” in this verse. Does Luke imply that Jesus could have been 29 or 31 years, as well as 30 years? No, because Luke uses *bōsei* in a more specific way, as the following examples show: Acts 13:18 says that Israel was “about forty years in the desert.” In this text Luke uses the particle *bōs*, which is a synonym to *bōsei* and has the meaning “about” as well. So, the word “about” does not mean that the time could be 39 or 41 years (Numbers 14:34; Deuteronomy 2:7). It means “40 years,” but not necessarily exactly 40 years to the very day. Luke 23:44 says that darkness came over the earth when Jesus was fastened to the pole “about (*bōsei*) the sixth hour.” This does not mean that the darkness came in the fifth or the seventh hour, but not exactly when the sixth hour began. This is what Matthew 27:41 and Mark 15:33 say. From Luke’s use of the word “about,” we must conclude that Jesus was 30 years old when he began his service, but not necessarily on the very day that he rounded 30 years. John was of the tribe of Levi, and Levites started their service when they were 30 years old. (Numbers 4:46, 47)

51. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 456.

52. Ibid., 457; W. E. Filmer, *The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great*, 283–298.

53. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 457.

54. Lysanias, son of Ptolemaus, “king” of Chacus and Coele-Syria, was killed by Mark Antony in 36 BCE. This is not the Lysanias that Luke refers to. Josephus refers to another Lysanias, “Abila, which had been the Lysanian tetrarchy.” (Josephus 20.7.1 § 138). J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 457.

55. Filmer, *The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great*, 298.

could not understand or calculate it, this prophecy was included in the Scriptures for no purpose.

Supporting that the prophecy could be understood are the words of Luke 3:15; we read:

<sup>15</sup> Now as the people were in expectation and all were reasoning in their hearts about John: “May he perhaps be the Christ?” <sup>16</sup> John gave the answer, saying to all: “I, for my part, baptize YOU with water; but the one stronger than I am is coming, the lace of whose sandals I am not fit to untie. He will baptize YOU people with holy spirit and fire.

John the Baptist began baptizing six months before Jesus began preaching the good news of the kingdom. At this time, the people were in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. It is very likely that the reason for this was the prophecy in Daniel chapter 9.

The expression “the appointed times of the nations” appears only once in the Bible, in Luke 21:24, in Jesus’ great prophecy about his return. I will consider the focus of Jesus’ great prophecy,

## THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWING PRESENCE

We find the question of the disciples the presence of Jesus in Matthew 24:3:

<sup>3</sup> While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: “Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be *the sign of your presence* (*parousia*) and of *the conclusion of the system of things* (*synteleias tou aionos*)?”

Jesus had told the disciples that he would go away and then come back. The disciples spoke Hebrew, and which words did they use in their question? It is likely that they said something like *mā ’ōt pānekhā weqets ha ’ōlam?* Literally it means, *mā (what) ’ōt (sign) pānekhā (your presence/face) weqets (and conclusion) ha ’ōlam (the system of things)?*

Matthew translated *pānekhā* with the Greek words *tēs sēs parousias* (“the your presence”). The reason why the disciples did not use the Hebrew words *bō’kēā* (“your coming”) and Matthew did not use the Greek word *erchomai* (“to come”) may be implied in Matthew 24:23-27:

<sup>23</sup> “Then if anyone says to YOU, ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There!’ do not believe it. “Then if anyone says to YOU, ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There!’ do not believe it. <sup>24</sup> For false Christs<sup>+</sup> and false prophets will arise and will give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones. <sup>25</sup> Look! I have forewarned YOU. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, if people say to YOU, ‘Look! He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out; ‘Look! He is in the inner chambers,’ do not believe it. <sup>27</sup> For just as the lightning comes out of eastern parts and shines over to western parts, so the presence (*parousia*) of the Son of man will be.

The disciples expected that Jesus would return as a man in Israel. If he were to come to another place in the country than where they were, they wanted to know the

sign indicating that he had returned. So, they could start looking for him, just as the quoted verses imply.

The Mishna is a Jewish book which presents the sayings of different rabbis from the time before the common era to the middle of the third century CE, when this book was written. Here we find the belief about *‘ōlam habbā*, (“the coming system of things”) where peace and happiness would exist.

According to Luke 18:30, Jesus spoke of “the coming system of things” (*‘ōlam habbā*), and in Luke 20:34, 35, he contrasts “this system of things” with “that system of things,” which is connected with the resurrection. The disciples evidently believed in the coming system of things” (*‘ōlam habbā*) as other God-fearing Jews did, and they connected this coming system of things (*‘ōlam habbā*) with the presence of Jesus.

We note that Jesus, according to verse 27, used the same word that the disciples used (Hebrew: *pānā*, Greek *parousia*). This shows that the disciples posed an understandable question. But Jesus shows that he would not return as a man. But his presence would be heralded just like lightning. But no person would be seen.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PRESENCE (PAROUSIA) AND COMING (ERKHOMAI) OF JESUS

It is important not to confuse the two Greek words *parousia* (“presence”) and *erkhomai* (“to come”). Both words play an important role in the great prophecy of Jesus. But they refer to different sides of Jesus’ second coming. One example of the difference is found in Matthew 24:37-42:

<sup>37</sup> For just as the days of Noah were, so **the presence** of the Son of man will be. <sup>38</sup> For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; <sup>39</sup> and they took no note until the flood **came** (*erkhomai*) and swept them all away, so **the presence** of the Son of man will be.

<sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken along and the other be abandoned; <sup>41</sup> two women will be grinding at the hand mill: one will be taken along and the other be abandoned. <sup>42</sup> Keep on the watch, therefore, because YOU do not know on what day YOUR Lord **is coming** (*erkhomai*).

Jesus compares his presence (*parousia*) with the days of Noah before the flood, when Noah built the ark and preached to the people (2 Peter 2:5). The presence of Noah before the flood ended when “the flood came (*erkhomai*) and swept them all away,” and Jesus said, “So the presence of the Son of man will be.”

This means that Jesus would return and be present, and at the end of his presence, he **will come** (*erkhomai*), which results in a situation similar to the flood. Verses 40 and 41 further develop the illustration of Jesus. Just as Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives were taken into the ark and survived the flood, similarly, at the end of Jesus’ presence (*parousia*), one will be taken along, and one will be left. Please note that this situation, which Jesus compares with the flood, is said to be when “YOUR lord **is coming** (*erkhomai*).”

Thus, Jesus returns and is present; during his **presence** (*parousia*), different things will happen, just as before the flood. At the end of his presence, he will **come** (*erkehomai*) in a similar way as the flood came (*erkehomai*) and with a similar result.

The important point that Jesus' **coming** (*erkehomai*) occurs at the end of his **presence** (*parousia*) is expressed by verses 29, 30:

<sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they will see (*horaō*) the Son of man **coming** (*erkehomai*) on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and the tribes of the earth **will see** (*horaō*) the Son of man coming (*erkehomai*) on the clouds of heaven. The Greek word *horaō* can refer to seeing with one's eyes or understanding something. In Romans 1:20, we find the Greek word *horaō* with the prefix *kat-*, and what is “seen” are the **invisible** qualities of God. These **invisible** qualities “are seen” indirectly, by “what he has made (created).” In a similar way, the Son of man “is seen,” or understood, because of “the sign of the Son of man.”

The point in our context is that “the coming (*erkehomai*) of the Son of man occurs when he will judge the people at the end of his presence (*parousia*)

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAD DRAWN NEAR WHEN JESUS WAS ON THE EARTH

The kingdom of God/of the heavens is mentioned only four times in Jesus' great prophecy: in Matthew 24:14, 25; 25:1, 34; and Luke 21:31. Yet, the kingdom of God is the setting of this prophecy. To understand this, we need to examine Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God. The first examples of this are Matthew 3:2 (above); Mark 1:15 (middle), Luk 10:9 (below)

<sup>2</sup> “REPENT, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near (*eggizō*).”

<sup>15</sup> and saying: “The appointed time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near (*eggizō*).

<sup>9</sup> and cure the sick ones in it, and go on telling them, “The kingdom of God has come near (*eggizō*) to YOU.”

In our context, the verb *eggizō* (“draw near”) is important. When it stands without an object, as is the case in these verses, the meaning is, “to approach, draw near; to be at hand.” (Mounce). The corresponding substantive *eggys* has the meaning “near as to place; near as to time; close at hand.” (Mounce).

What did Jesus mean when he said, “The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near”? The nation of Israel, with kings in the line of David, was God's kingdom in the past. This kingdom was destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem in 607 BCE. From that time, God did not have a kingdom on earth.

I showed above that Daniel 9:24-27 describes the appointed time from the year 20 of Artaxerxes I, which was 455 BCE, until 29 CE, when Jesus began his preaching and presented himself as the promised Messiah. According to Mark 1:15, which is quoted above, Jesus referred to this appointed time and said that when this time was fulfilled, it meant that “the kingdom of God has drawn near.”

God’s kingdom is in the heavens, and therefore, it is also called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the heavens. This means that God’s kingdom is not on the earth. This is a real kingdom, because according to Matthew 18:3, Jesus spoke about those who enter the kingdom of the heavens, and according to 8:11, he spoke about those who will feast in the kingdom of the heavens.

In view of this, how can we understand that the kingdom of God has drawn near here on earth? We can understand this by reading Luke 11:20, 21 (above) and 17:20 (below):

<sup>20</sup> But if it is by means of God’s finger I expel the demons, *the kingdom of God has really overtaken* (*fithanō*) YOU.

<sup>20</sup> But on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said: “The kingdom of God is not coming with striking observableness, <sup>21</sup> neither will people be saying, ‘See here!’ or, ‘There!’ For, look! *the kingdom of God is in YOUR midst.*”

God’s finger refers to his spirit, and the point in 11:20 is that when Jesus expelled demons with the help of God’s spirit, this showed that he had and used the power of God’s kingdom. This meant that God’s kingdom had “overtaken” them. The Greek word *fithanō* means “advance, make progress, to come up with, come upon.” (Mounce). So, the meaning of Jesus was that his use of God’s power showed that God’s kingdom had come upon them; it was a reality.

According to Luke 17:20, 21, the kingdom of God was among the Pharisees because Jesus, the king of this kingdom and one who demonstrated its power, was in their midst. This accords with the words of Mark 1:15, which have been quoted above; that now, when the appointed time had been fulfilled, the kingdom of God had drawn near.

*The words “the kingdom has drawn near” meant that the king of the kingdom, Jesus Christ, was in their midst, and he and his disciples used the power of the kingdom to expel demons and heal sickness.*

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL AGAIN DRAW NEAR

The question of the apostles was what the sign of the presence of Jesus and the conclusion of the system of things (= the time of the end) was. I have already argued that the setting and theme of the great prophecy of Jesus is the kingdom of God. Jesus told one prophetic illustration that stresses this point. We read Luke 19:11-15:

<sup>11</sup> While they were listening to these things he spoke in addition an illustration, because he was near Jerusalem and they were imagining that the kingdom (*basileia*) of God was going



to display itself instantly.<sup>12</sup> Therefore he said: “A certain man of noble birth traveled to a distant land to secure kingly power (*basileia*) for himself and to return.<sup>13</sup> Calling ten slaves of his he gave them ten mi’nas and told them, ‘Do business till I come.’<sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him and sent out a body of ambassadors after him, to say, ‘We do not want this [man] to become king over us.’<sup>15</sup> “Eventually when he got back after having secured the kingly power, he commanded to be called to him these slaves to whom he had given the silver money, in order to ascertain what they had gained by business activity.

Why did the disciples expect that the kingdom of God “was going to display itself instantly”? Evidently, because such a situation was described in the book of Daniel, which they knew, where prophecies about God’s kingdom abound. The disciples most likely had Daniel 7:13, 14 in mind:

<sup>13</sup> “I kept on beholding in the visions of the night, and, see there! with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One.<sup>14</sup> And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin.

Daniel spoke of “the Son of man,” and Jesus had several times referred to himself as the Son of man. The quotation shows that the Son of Man will get kingly power over all the nations. And the disciples evidently expected that this would happen instantly.

Jesus corrected his disciples’ view and spoke about his future coming. He was of “noble birth,” and he travelled to a distant land, to heaven. When he had received kingly power (literally: “the kingdom”), he would return and settle the accounts with his servants. This illustration indicates that Jesus’ presence signifies the receipt of kingly power and the establishment of God’s kingdom.

In addition to the book of Daniel, the book that speaks mostly about God’s kingdom is Revelation. And the accounts of the kingdom in this book parallel the illustration of Jesus. This book was written shortly before the start of the second century CE, and its first verse states that its prophecies refer to the future.

I quote Revelation 11:15-17 (above) and 12:7-12 (below):

<sup>15</sup> And the seventh angel blew his trumpet. And loud voices occurred in heaven, saying: *“The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever.”*<sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who were seated before God upon their thrones fell upon their faces and worshiped God,<sup>17</sup> saying: “We thank you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, the One who is and who was, *because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king.*

<sup>7</sup> And war broke out in heaven: Mi’cha’el and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled<sup>8</sup> but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven.<sup>9</sup> So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.

<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven say: *“Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser*



*of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God!*

<sup>11</sup> And they conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing, and they did not love their souls even in the face of death.

<sup>12</sup> On this account be glad, YOU heavens and YOU who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, *because the Devil has come down to YOU, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.*

Revelation 11:15 shows that at a particular time after the year 98, when Revelation was written, the kingdom of the world became the kingdom of Jehovah God and his Son Jesus Christ. This shows that Jesus did not have the power of the kingdom of the world when he was on the earth. This aligns with the word in his illustration that he had to go to heaven to receive kingly power. Jehovah God has always been omnipotent with all power, but now, 11:16 says that God “has taken your great power” in connection with the humans on the earth.

Revelation 12:7-12 shows that Satan, the Devil, at a particular time, is thrown out of heaven. And now Jesus Christ has the authority in the kingdom of God, according to verse 10. We also note that Satan was thrown out of heaven and Jesus got the authority in the kingdom of God, “a short time” before Satan is bound in the abyss. (Revelation 20:1-3)

The important point in our context is that Jesus says his second coming means he will receive kingly power, and that throwing the Devil out of heaven coincides with the moment Jesus gains kingly power. Because Jesus will judge his enemies and bind the Devil at the end of his presence, the mentioned “short time” must refer to the same period as the presence of Jesus.

## **THE GREAT PROPHECY OF JESUS SHOWS THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS DRAWN NEAR**

I have previously shown that the presence (*parousia*) of Jesus begins when he receives kingly power, and that at the end of his presence, he comes (*erkehomai*) to act as judge over the humans of the earth and the Devil and his demons. I will now show that the setting of the great prophecy of Jesus is that the kingdom of God has drawn near. I quote from Matthew 24:32-36 (above), Mark 13:28-32 (middle), and Luke 21:29-33:

<sup>32</sup> “Now learn from the fig tree as an illustration this point: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and it puts forth leaves, YOU know that summer is near (*eggys*).<sup>33</sup> Likewise also YOU, when YOU see all these things, know that *he is near (eggys) at the doors*.<sup>34</sup> Truly I say to YOU that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.<sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.<sup>36</sup> “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.

<sup>28</sup> “Now from the fig tree learn the illustration: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and puts forth its leaves, YOU know that summer is near (*eggys*).<sup>29</sup> Likewise also YOU, when YOU see these things happening, know that *he is near (eggys), at the doors*.<sup>30</sup> Truly I say to YOU that this generation will by no means pass away until all these

things happen. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. <sup>32</sup> “Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father.

<sup>29</sup> With that he spoke an illustration to them: “Note the fig tree and all the other trees: <sup>30</sup> When they are already in the bud, by observing it YOU know for yourselves that now the summer is near (*eggys*). <sup>31</sup> In this way YOU also, when YOU see these things occurring, know that *the kingdom of God is near* (*eggys*). <sup>32</sup> Truly I say to YOU, This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

Let us compare the three important sentences:

Matthew 24:33: *he is near* (*eggys*), *at the doors*.

Mark 13:29: *he is near* (*eggys*), *at the doors*.

Luke 14:31: *the kingdom of God is near* (*eggys*).

The similarity in all three instances is the substantive *eggys*, which I have shown means “be near; be at hand.” According to Matthew and Mark, what is near or is at hand is “he,” and the reference must be to the closest person that was previously mentioned. This is “the Son of man,” and Matthew and Mark say that the Son of man is near at the doors.

In Matthew 25:10, in the illustration about the five wise and five foolish virgins, the word *thyra* “door” is used in the sense of entering a room. So, what Matthew and Mark say is that the Son of man is present before the doors — which must be a reference to his presence (*parousia*), and he is ready to go through the door — which he will do at his coming (*erkehomai*).

Luke does not refer to the Son of man, but to the kingdom of God.

***When the Son of man is “near at the doors” — is present — this means that the kingdom of God is near.***

When Jesus was on the earth and said that “the kingdom has drawn near (*eggizōō*, the verb corresponding to the substantive *eggys*)” the meaning was that he, the king in the kingdom of God, was in their midst using the power of the kingdom. However, as the quotations from Revelation 11:15-17 and 12:7-12 show, the heavenly kingdom with power over all other kingdoms would first be established in the distant future, compared with the days of Jesus on the earth.

The three phrases that I am discussing show that the presence of the Son of man is the same as the establishment of the kingdom of God. Or, expressed with different words: The second coming of Jesus means that the kingdom of God becomes established — Jesus Christ is now present, and the kingdom of God is present.

This aligns perfectly with the illustration in Luke 19:11-15 about the man of noble birth who would travel to a land far away. And when he had received kingly power, he would return.

The setting of the three sentences that I have discussed is the illustration of the fig tree. When the leaves come, we know that the warm season is near; it is at hand (*eggyr*). What we can learn from the leaves of the fig tree is expressed in the following way:

Matthew 24:33:

Likewise also YOU, when YOU see all these things, *know* that he is near at the doors

Mark 13:29:

Likewise also YOU, when YOU see these things happening, *know* that he is near, at the doors.

Luke 21:31:

In this way YOU also, when YOU see these things occurring, *know* that the kingdom of God is near.

The keyword in all three sentences is “know.” And the point stressed by all three evangelists is that when the followers of Jesus would see all the events that fulfill the sign Jesus described, then they would know that Jesus had returned and was present and that the kingdom of God had been established.

Matthew wrote some words that support Luke’s assertion that the kingdom of God has drawn near, albeit from a different perspective. We find the words in Matthew 24:14:

<sup>14</sup> And *this* (*boutos*) *good news of the kingdom* will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end (*telos*) will come.

We note that “*this* good news of the kingdom” that would be preached as a part of the sign is determined by the demonstrative pronoun *boutos* (*this*). A demonstrative pronoun must refer back to something, so to what does “*this*” refer? There was a difference between the preaching of the kingdom by Jesus and his disciples while he was on earth and that of the kingdom after he ascended to heaven.

Matthew 4:17 tells that Jesus preached that “the kingdom of the heavens *has drawn near*”, and he instructed his apostles to preach the same message. As I have already demonstrated, Luke 17:21 shows that the reason for this preaching was that Jesus, the king in God’s kingdom, was in their midst.

Matthew 4:17

<sup>17</sup> From that time on Jesus commenced preaching and saying: “Repent, YOU people, for *the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near*.”

Matthew 10:7

<sup>7</sup> As YOU go, preach, saying, *‘The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.’*

Luke 17:20, 21

<sup>20</sup> But on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said: “The kingdom of God is not coming with striking observableness,<sup>21</sup> neither will people be saying, ‘See here!’ or, ‘There!’ For, look! *the kingdom of God is in YOUR midst.*”

However, when Jesus had ascended to heaven, his followers could not preach that the kingdom of God had drawn near because he was not among them. From the five quotations from Acts below, which refer to the time after Jesus’ ascension, we see that his followers only preached about the coming kingdom of God, not that the kingdom had drawn near. What did they preach?

According to 2 Timothy 4:1, the followers of Jesus knew that the kingdom of God would come in the future because the coming of the kingdom is connected with the future manifestation of Jesus. Second Peter 1:11 shows that one important aspect of preaching the kingdom of God was that persons who repented and began to serve God could gain entrance into the kingdom of God:

Acts 8:12

<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip, who was *declaring the good news of the kingdom of God* and of the name of Jesus Christ, they proceeded to be baptized, both men and women.

Acts 19:8

<sup>8</sup> Entering into the synagogue, he spoke with boldness for three months, giving talks and *using persuasion concerning the kingdom.*

Acts 20:25

<sup>25</sup> “And now, look! I know that all of YOU among whom *I went preaching the kingdom* will see my face no more.

Acts 28:23

<sup>23</sup> They now arranged for a day with him, and they came in greater numbers to him in his lodging place. And he explained the matter to them by *bearing thorough witness concerning the kingdom of God* and by using persuasion with them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Acts 28:31

<sup>31</sup> *preaching the kingdom of God to them* and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with the greatest freeness of speech, without hindrance.

2 Timothy 4:1

<sup>1</sup> I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is destined to judge the living and the dead, *and by his manifestation and his kingdom.*

2 Peter 1:11

<sup>11</sup> In fact, thus there will be richly *supplied to YOU the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Now we can understand the demonstrative pronoun “this” that is connected with “the good news of the kingdom” in Matthew 24:14. It was Jesus who gave the sign. **This** good news of the kingdom was the good news of the kingdom that Jesus preached: “the kingdom has drawn near”; “the kingdom is in your midst.” This good news — that the kingdom was established — should again be preached as a part of the sign of his presence and the conclusion of the system of things. And, as we have seen, this is supported by Luke 21:31:

*<sup>31</sup> In this way YOU also, when YOU see these things occurring, **know that the kingdom of God is near.***

When the followers of Jesus saw all the events that together constituted the sign, they would know that the kingdom of God was near. And this message was what they would preach.

*Table 12.2 The presence and coming of Jesus*

	The presence ( <i>parousia</i> ) of Jesus	The coming ( <i>erkehomai</i> ) of Jesus
Matthew 24:14	Preaching this good news of the kingdom.	The end ( <i>telos</i> ).
Luke 21:31. 32	The kingdom is near.	All these things occur.
Matthew 24:33	He is near at the doors.	(He is entering) the doors.
Matthew 24:37, 39	His presence ( <i>parousia</i> ) like the days of Noah.	The coming ( <i>erkehomai</i> ) of the Son of man.

The contrast in Matthew 24 is between the presence (*parousia*) of Jesus and his coming (*erkehomai*) at the end of his presence. During his presence, **this** good news of the established kingdom will be preached, and “the end” (*telos*) is the same as his coming. Luke 21 shows that the kingdom is near during his presence — the kingdom has been established. When the last of “all these things” occurs, then the end (*telos*), which is his coming (*erkehomai*), has come.

During his presence, Jesus is “near at the doors,” and his coming (*erkehomai*) means that he enters the doors. The presence of Jesus is similar to the days before the flood. Just as the flood took away all those who were not in the ark, the coming (*erkehomai*) of Jesus will take away the people who are not serving God.

*The setting of Jesus’ great prophecy is the kingdom of God, and that this kingdom has been established. When the disciples of Jesus would see the fulfillment of the composite sign, they would know that Jesus was present and that God’s kingdom was established. One of the things that the disciples should see and understand was “the appointed times of the nations.” The meaning of this will be discussed below.*

The expression “the appointed times of the nations” is found in Luke 21:24, in the great prophecy of Jesus about his presence and his coming as the judge of all the nations. I quote Luke 21:24, 29-33 (above) and Matthew 24:36 (below):

<sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until *the appointed times* (*kairos*) *of the nations are fulfilled.*

<sup>29</sup> With that he spoke an illustration to them: “Note the fig tree and all the other trees: <sup>30</sup> When they are already in the bud, by observing it YOU know for yourselves that now the summer is near. <sup>31</sup> In this way YOU also, when YOU *see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near.* <sup>32</sup> Truly I say to YOU, *This generation will by no means pass away* until all things occur. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

*“Concerning that day and hour nobody knows,* neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.

Jesus says that when his followers see “these things occurring,” which includes the sign consisting of events in the world and the fulfillment of the appointed times of the nations, they should know that “the kingdom of God is near.” But they should not know the day and hour for the coming (*erkehomai*) of the Son of man. We should have this in mind when we now study the expression, “the appointed times of the nations.”

**ON MY WEBSITE, THERE ARE ARTICLES OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE SIGN SHOWING THAT JESUS IS PRESENT**

The sign 1: “This generation will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:34)  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2025/06/28/the-sign-1-this-generation-will-by-no-means-pass-away-matthew-2434/>)

The sign 2: “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:7)  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/08/24/nation-will-rise-against-nation-and-kingdom-against-kingdom-matthew-247/>)

The sign 3: The setting and timeline of the great prophecy of Jesus  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/08/30/the-sign-the-setting-and-time-line-of-the-great-prophecy-of-jesus/>)

The sign 4: The abomination that desolation that causes desolation (Matthew 24:15)  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/01/the-sign-4-the-abomination-that-causes-desolation/>)

The sign 5: The faithful and discreet slave (Matthew 24:45-47)  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/08/sign-5-the-faithful-and-discreet-slave-2/>)

The sign 6: The Governing Body and divine inspiration



(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/10/the-sign-6-the-governing-body-and-divine-inspiration/>)

The sign 7: God's administration — his channel of communication  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/13/the-sign-7-gods-administration-his-channel-of-communication/>)

The sign 8: the illustration and prophecy of the sheep and the goats  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/14/sign-8-the-illustration-and-prophecy-of-the-sheep-and-the-goats/>)

The sign 9: Cutting short the days of the great tribulation on account of the chosen ones (Mathew 24:22)  
(<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2025/07/02/the-sign-9-cutting-short-the-days-of-the-great-tribulation-on-account-of-the-chosen-ones-matthew-2422/>)

## FINDING THE REFERENCE OF “THE APPOINTED TIMES”

The key to understanding the Holy Scriptures is the belief that every account in the Scriptures is included with a specific purpose and meaning. This includes the expression “the appointed times of the nations (*kairoi ethnōn*). In addition to this basic principle, Jesus said that his followers should understand this expression, as I have shown above.

There are many clues in Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13, and Luke chapter 21 for the understanding of the different expressions, particularly that the same things often are expressed with different words from different angles. But there is nothing in these three chapters that can throw any light on the meaning and fulfillment of “the appointed times of the nations.”

Because this expression should be understood, the next step is to search for the Greek words *kairos* (“appointed time”) and *ethnos* (“nation”) in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The word *kairos* occur 80 times. But only two places are the word connected with a particular time period that is fulfilled, in Mark 1:15 (above), and Revelation 12:14 (below).

<sup>15</sup> and saying: “**The appointed time** (*kairos*) has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Be repentant, YOU people, and have faith in the good news.”

<sup>14</sup> But the two wings of the great eagle were given the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place; there is where she is fed for **a time** (*kairos*) and **times** (*kairos*) and **half a time** (*kairos*) away from the face of the serpent.

The words in Mark evidently refer to the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 about the 69 weeks until the Messiah should come. This appointed time was fulfilled in the year 29,

and therefore, they cannot refer to the appointed times of the nations, which, according to the context, would last after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

The first verse in Revelation says that the prophecies of this book refer to a time after the book was written, about 98 CE. Therefore, the mentioned 3 1/2 appointed times cannot refer to “the appointed times of the nations, which, according to Luke 21:22-24, would include the situation in Jerusalem in the last part of the first century CE.

This means that we cannot find any clues in the Christian Greek Scriptures regarding the meaning and reference of the appointed times of the nations. Therefore, we must look for clues in the Hebrew Scriptures. And let us do some reasoning.

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus urged readers to exercise discernment regarding “the disgusting thing that causes desolation.” Jesus may or may not have made some comments regarding the identity of this disgusting thing (Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20, 21), but Jesus exhorted his followers to use discernment. To do that, disciples who did not hear the Hebrew words of Jesus at the time he uttered them had to rely on the later recorded Greek translation of his words, *bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*, while those who heard Jesus’ words could look for the Hebrew or Aramaic words he used.

How could they come to an understanding of these words and use discernment? By looking up similar words in the Septuagint, or, if Hebrew was their mother tongue, by looking for Hebrew words with a similar meaning. In both cases, only three passages containing a reference to ‘disgusting thing(s)’ can be identified, namely, Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. By reading these passages in context, an identification of the abomination could be possible.

This is an important principle: When prophetic words are used in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we must look to the Hebrew Scriptures to see whether they are taken from one of the Hebrew books. This is particularly important when there are few clues in the Christian Greek Scriptures as to the meaning of particular prophetic words.

In his great prophecy, Jesus referred to the book of Daniel several times. In Matthew 24:21, he referred to the great tribulation, which is mentioned in Daniel 12:1. In Mathew 24:30 and 25:31, he refers to the Son of man, who is mentioned in Daniel 7:13. Moreover, the Kingdom of God is the principal theme of Daniel, as it is also the theme in the great prophecy of Jesus. (Matthew 24:14; 25:31) And there are some words in the Greek text of Matthew 24 whose equivalents are found in the Hebrew text of Daniel, such as *synteleia* (“conclusion”; Hebrew, *qēts*), which is used 23 times in Daniel and one time in Matthew 24:3. There can be no doubt that Jesus had Daniel in mind when he uttered his great prophecy.

*Jesus referred to the book of Daniel several times in his great prophecy. Daniel can also help us understand the reference of “the appointed times of the nations.”*

## THE LINGUISTIC PARALLELS BETWEEN LUKE 21:24 AND DANIEL CHAPTER 4

The words of Jesus in Luke 21:24, *kairoi ethnōn*, have no other clues in Luke except that the subject is “Jerusalem.” Therefore, if these words are to have any meaning for us, we have to look for clues in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The first question to ask is in which language the words were uttered. Jesus either used Hebrew or Aramaic, and the evidence suggests that he spoke Hebrew to his disciples. However, the evangelists show that Jesus could also use Aramaic words. If Jesus spoke Hebrew, he most likely used the plural form of *mō‘ēd* where Luke has *kairoi*. Both the word *mō‘ēd* and the word *kairos* refer to a specific time, an appointed time. If we look at the passages where this word is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, we find that it is stipulated by numbers indicating specific times only once, in Daniel 12:7: “one appointed time, appointed times and a half.” Both the Greek Septuagint and Theodotion use *kairos* in this passage.

In the Aramaic text of Daniel 7:25, we find the same numbers mentioned, and the Aramaic word used is *‘iddān*, which indicates that *‘iddān* in Aramaic and *mō‘ēd* in Hebrew both refer to an appointed time. Interestingly, both the Septuagint and Theodotion use *kairos* both in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. The Aramaic word *‘iddān* is also stipulated by numbers in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32. Thus, we see that there are only three chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures where the Hebrew or Aramaic word for “appointed time” is stipulated or qualified by a particular number.

If Jesus spoke Aramaic, he would have used *‘iddān* in Luke 21:24, but because people in his day understood both Hebrew and Aramaic, regardless of which language Jesus used, the three mentioned chapters in Daniel would be the only ones that could be antecedents of *kairoi ethnōn* in Luke 21:24. While the Hebrew *mō‘ēd* of Daniel 12:7 and the Aramaic *‘iddān* of 7:25 are translated by *kairos* in the Septuagint and in Theodotion, the four examples of *‘iddān* in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 are translated by the plural form of *etos* (“year”) in the Septuagint and by *kairos* in Theodotion. The rendering *etos* in the Septuagint is an interpretative translation, which deviates from the usual rendering of *kairos* for *‘iddān*. Moreover, the Greek translation of Theodotion, which is much closer to the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of Daniel than the Septuagint, and which is the one that is quoted by the writers in the Christian Greek Scriptures, has *kairos* also in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

Thus, one or more of the three mentioned passages must have been what Jesus had in mind in Luke 21:24. But which one? The contexts of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 indicate that the mentioned time periods are fulfilled during the time of the end, during the presence of Jesus Christ. Because the appointed times of the nations include events from the first century CE, Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 cannot be the antecedent of the appointed times of the nations. This means that Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, and 32 serve as the basis for Jesus’ words about the appointed times of the nations.

Whether Jesus used the Hebrew word *mō'ēd* or the Aramaic word *'iddān*, the natural Greek equivalent for a writer of the Christian Greek Scriptures to choose would be *kairos*. This indicates that there is a definite *linguistic* link between Luke 21:24 and Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

*There is a linguistic parallel between “the appointed times” in Luke 21:24 and the seven times in Daniel chapter 4: The Aramaic word 'iddān means “appointed time” just as the Greek word kairos. Thodotion's Greek translation of Daniel uses kairos in Daniel chapter 4 where the Aramaic text has 'iddān.*

In Luke 21:24, the city of Jerusalem is connected with the appointed times of the nations. Jerusalem would be trampled on by the nations during the appointed times of the nations. But what is the reference of “Jerusalem”?

### THE REFERENCE OF “JERUSALEM” IN LUKE 21:24

Most people would take the word “Jerusalem” as a reference to the city of Jerusalem, which is mentioned in the context. But that is not necessarily the case.

In the Bible, a city can have at least three references: 1) the inhabitants of the city, 2) the material part of the city (houses, walls, and brickwork), and 3) what the city represents or stands for. The city as a geographical place is referred to in Matthew 2:1, and the inhabitants are referred to when “Capernaum” is used in Matthew 11:23. The most important use in our context is 3), so let us look at some examples. Second Kings 23:19 speaks of “the towns of Samaria.” But “Samaria,” which itself was a town, evidently represented or stood for the whole Northern Kingdom; the same is true in Ezekiel 16:46.

On this basis, when we find the word “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24, we cannot at the outset know what it refers to. When we look at the use of cities in prophetic contexts in the Hebrew Scriptures, what the prophets evidently had in mind, in most cases, is what the city represented. This suggests that “Jerusalem” in Jesus’ prophecy in Luke 21:24 refers neither to the people of Jerusalem nor to the city as a geographical place, but rather to Jerusalem in its representative sense.

Against this, it can be argued that the literal destruction of the city Jerusalem was in the mind of Jesus, as shown in Luke 21:20, and in this verse, “Jerusalem” must refer to the city and its inhabitants. So, if “Jerusalem” in verse 24 does not refer to the literal city of Jerusalem, then the single word “Jerusalem” must be used in two different senses in the near context of verses 20 and 24. But is this natural?

Taking Biblical patterns into account, there is nothing strange or uncommon in such use. In Matthew 2:1, “Jerusalem” refers to the city as a geographical area, but in verse 3, “Jerusalem” refers to the inhabitants of the city. In Matthew 11:23, 24, Jesus first uses “Sodom” to refer to the city, but “the land of Sodom” refers to its inhabitants. It is even possible to use a single definite substantive in two different senses within the context of the same thought or sentence.

In John 2:19, Jesus says: “In answer Jesus said to them: “Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Grammatically the pronoun “it” must refer to “this temple” (the literal temple), but in verse 20, it is stated that he referred to “the temple of his body.” This means that “the temple” that should be broken down was the literal temple in Jerusalem, but the temple that should be raised up was a spiritual one. The references of words can also change in prophecies.

## **DIFFERENT USES OF “JERUSALEM” AND “ISRAEL”**

If Jesus in Luke 21:24 had the literal city Jerusalem in mind, this would require that the Jews continued to be God’s chosen people, or at least that they would become his chosen people again at the end of the appointed times of the nations. However, this is contradicted by the Scriptures. Exodus 19:5, 6 shows that the Jews would not always be the people of God, but only if they fulfilled the condition of obeying Jehovah’s laws. The people did not do that, and at a certain point in time, they received their last chance to repent during a period of seventy weeks. (Daniel 9:24–27) When they did not repent, they were rejected. On this basis, it would be strange if Jesus uttered a prophecy alluding to a restoration of the literal city of Jerusalem at the end of those “appointed times of the nations”.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, it is shown that “Israel” can be applied to two different groups. In Galatians 6:16, Paul speaks about “the Israel of God,” which implies there is another Israel that does not belong to God. The same is implied by the words “Israel in a fleshly way” in 1 Corinthians 10:18, and it is explicitly stated in Romans 9:6–8.

It is interesting to see how this difference between the two Israels or Jerusalems is expressed in the prophecies. For example, in Isaiah chapter 60 there is a prophecy regarding Zion or Jerusalem (v. 14). The words of this prophecy are not applied to fleshly Jews or to the literal Jerusalem, but rather to the “New Jerusalem,” as the following parallels show:

*Table 12.3 Different uses of “Jerusalem”*

Isaiah 60:1–2, 19	Revelation 21:23
Isaiah 60:3	Revelation 21:24
Isaiah 60:11, 20	Revelation 21:25
Isaiah 60:5	Revelation 21:26

Jeremiah 31:31 has a prophecy about a new covenant “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” These words are quoted in Hebrews 8:7–13, and it is implied that the law covenant would be abolished. Then the words of Jeremiah are quoted in Hebrews 9:14, 15, and it is shown that “Israel” and “Judah” in the prophecy do not refer to the literal “Israel” and “Judah,” but to “the ones (anointed Christians) who have been called.” Based on the passages above, we must conclude that it is extremely unlikely that the prophetic use of “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24 refers to the literal city Jerusalem or its inhabitants.



## JESUS' USE OF FIGURATIVE WORDS IN HIS GREAT PROPHECY

In Matthew 24:2, Jesus speaks about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The disciples connected this with the return and presence of Jesus and the conclusion of the system of things. Jesus described a sign of events that would occur in the first century, down to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE. This sign would have a bigger fulfillment in the time of the end.

I compare Matthew 24:15-21 and Luke 21:20-24:

<sup>15</sup> “Therefore, *when YOU catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation*, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, (let the reader use discernment,) <sup>16</sup> *then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains*. <sup>17</sup> Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house; <sup>18</sup> and let the man in the field not return to the house to pick up his outer garment. <sup>19</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and those suckling a baby in those days! <sup>20</sup> Keep praying that YOUR flight may not occur in wintertime, nor on the sabbath day; <sup>21</sup> *for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again*.

<sup>20</sup> “Furthermore, *when YOU see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near*. <sup>21</sup> *Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains*, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her. <sup>22</sup> because these are days for meting out justice, that all the things written may be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup> Woe to the pregnant women and the ones suckling a baby in those days! For there will be great necessity upon the land and wrath on this people; <sup>24</sup> *and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations*; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.

I will now compare some events of the sign that literally were fulfilled in Judea and its environments, and that has a bigger, and often figurative fulfillment in the time of the end.

In the year 66 CE, the armies of the Roman general Cestius Gallus encircled Jerusalem and conquered parts of the city, including parts of the temple area. When the armies were on the point of conquering the whole city, they retreated, and the city was no longer surrounded. Now the followers obeyed Jesus's words and fled from Judea to the mountains when they saw the city no longer was surrounded by armies.

Let us connect this situation with the prophecy of Jesus. If we compare Matthew 24:15 with Luke 21:20, we understand that the abomination causing desolation was the Roman armies — seeing the disgusting thing and the surrounding armies should cause the same reaction of fleeing to the mountains. These armies were disgusting because in 66 CE, they stood on the holy temple area with their banners, which they venerated as if they were divine. The Roman armies caused desolation when they returned to Jerusalem in 70 CE and destroyed the city.

The fulfillment of all the parts of Jesus' prophecy in the first century was literal; it happened in Judea, and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. However, the prophecy would have a larger fulfillment in the time of the end, in the 20th and 21st centuries. And this fulfillment must be both literal and figurative. Let us see.



I have showed that the disgusting thing that causes desolation in the time of the end is the organization, the United Nations, represented with the wild beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation chapter 17.<sup>56</sup> Can we draw a parallel with the Roman armies of the 1st century CE? In the first century, the Roman armies represented a political entity that would cause the destruction of a religious entity, Judea and the city of Jerusalem. In our time, the United Nations is the political entity representing all nations of the world. Its image, the wild beast, will cause desolation of a religious entity, Babylon the Great, all the false religions of the world, that is also mentioned in Revelation chapter 17. The United Nations is a disgusting thing because the idea is that this organization is the only hope for mankind for peace and security. Thus, it is a rival to the established God's kingdom.

When the followers of Jesus saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies, those who were in Judea should flee to the mountains. The figurative use of this is that when the United Nation ascended from the abyss in the year 1945, those who saw this should act in a similar way as those who were in Judea in the first century CE. How so?

The religious entity that corresponds to Judea and Jerusalem is Babylon the Great, which will be desolated and destroyed by the United Nations. Fleeing to the mountains during the time when the United Nations is visible is expressed in Revelation 18:4:

<sup>4</sup> And I heard another voice out of heaven say: "Get out of her, my people, if YOU do not want to share with her in her sins, and if YOU do not want to receive part of her plagues.

The followers of Jesus who were in Judea and Jerusalem in the first century CE, and who did not flee to the mountains, probably lost their lives. Those who do not get out of Babylon the great will experience "death and mourning and famine" according to 18:8.

The last clauses of the quotation above from Luke 21:24 say:

and *Jerusalem* will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.

The reason for my long discussion above of the literal and figurative application of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, is to find the meaning and reference of "Jerusalem" in verse 24. What does "Jerusalem" refer to at the point of time when the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled?

In the literal fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in the first century, Judea was a literal district, and Jerusalem was a literal city from which those who saw the Roman armies should flee. In the broader figurative sense, Judea and Jerusalem represent Babylon the Great, from which people who recognize and understand the United Nations's function must flee.

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56. The sign 4: The abomination that desolation that causes desolation (Matthew 24:15). (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/09/01/the-sign-4-the-abomination-that-causes-desolation/>)

In a similar way, the destruction in 70 CE was of the literal city of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, literally speaking, would “fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations,” as Luke 21:24 says. But the word “Jerusalem” at the end of the appointed times of the nations does not refer to the literal city of Jerusalem, or to the literal district in the Middle East. But as I will show in the next section, the word “Jerusalem” refers to the kingdom of God, the setting and basic theme of the great prophecy of Jesus.

## THE WORD “JERUSALEM” AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

When we reject a literal interpretation of “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24, we need to find a definition of its prophetic use. Jehovah gave a promise to David about an everlasting kingdom (1 Chronicles 17:11–15), and this kingdom was connected with Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 29:23; Isaiah 24:23; Jeremiah 3:17) Jerusalem is called “the town of the grand King” (Psalm 48:1, 2), and Jesus applies these words to Jerusalem in his day, even though there was no human king in the city. (Matthew 5:35) The prophecies in Isaiah chapter 60 about Jerusalem, which I have quoted above, are applied to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is God’s kingdom, in Revelation 21:23–26.

Hebrews 11:10 refers to “a city,” which Abraham waited for, and in 12:22, this city is called “heavenly Jerusalem.” In Hebrews 12:28, we learn that this city represents “a kingdom that cannot be shaken,” and this kingdom must be God’s kingdom. The difference between the literal Jerusalem and “the one to come” is also mentioned in 13:14. On the basis of all these passages, I conclude that the name “Jerusalem” stands for the Kingdom of God.

## THE TRAMPLING OF “JERUSALEM”

The word “until” in Luke 21:24 indicates that the trampling of “Jerusalem” (the kingdom of God) would end at a certain point of time, when “the appointed times of the nations” ended. Thus, a restoration is implied in the words of Luke 21:24, and this restoration is prophetically mentioned in many places in the Bible, including in Acts 3:21. Taking this restoration as a point of departure helps us to see that “Jerusalem” stands for the kingdom of God and also helps us to understand how this Kingdom was trampled upon during the appointed times of the nations.

A restoration is mentioned in Acts 15:15, 16, namely, “to rebuild the booth of “David”. (Amos 9:11, 12)<sup>57</sup> What is this “booth of David”? *The Watchtower* of 1949, page 281, answers that it is “the royal house of David made up of the heirs to the kingdom covenant,” and this is a good explanation. The first members of this royal house were connected with the Christian congregation from the day of Pentecost in 33 CE.

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57. See also Psalm 78:67–70, which indicates that a “tent” or “booth” may represent a dynasty of kings.

The prophecy about the booth of David and its restoration parallels Luke 21:24 because David's booth represents the kingdom of God or Jehovah's throne on the earth, and this dynasty of kings is connected with Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 29:23) Thus, the restoration of "Jerusalem" after "the appointed times of the nations" have ended is another way of speaking about the rebuilding of "the booth of David". This "booth" did not fall in 70 CE when Jerusalem was destroyed (its destruction being implied in Luke 21:20–23), but it fell when the last king of David's dynasty, Zedekiah, lost his kingdom in 607 BCE. (Ezekiel 21:26, 27)

## THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAMPLING

The Greek verb *pateō* ("tread on; trample") is rendered by Bible translations with future tense: "and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations." Would not the future tense contradict the view that the trampling had already begun some time ago and had continued for many years by the time Jesus gave the prophecy? Not necessarily.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the future tense of verbs occurs 1,625 times, of which 18 are periphrastic futures, i.e., constructions with a finite verb in the future tense followed by a participle. In Luke chapter 21, we find 26 examples of simple future and three examples of periphrastic future. So, the question is whether there is a difference in meaning between simple future and periphrastic future in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

When we consider this question, we should keep in mind that rarely can we say something like: "Because of the use of this particular tense, this author *must* mean . . ." We can better say: "The use of this particular tense *corroborates* this meaning . . ." Simple future and periphrastic future *can* have about the same meaning, and they *can* have different meanings as well. In Luke 21, the words of Jesus are quoted, and which form of the Hebrew or Aramaic verb could he have used in Luke 21:24?

Because Luke only used periphrastic future in 2.6 percent of instances with future reference, i.e., Luke makes an exception in his default use of tense and deliberately shifts to periphrastic future, it is logical that the Hebrew or Aramaic verbs used in these instances had a different meaning compared with the verbs used in the other 97.4 percent instances.

We find an example that is a good parallel in 2 Samuel 7:16:

And your house and your kingdom will certainly be steadfast (The Septuagint: simple future) to time indefinite before you; your very throne will become (The Septuagint: future + perfect participle) one firmly established to time indefinite.

The important point in this passage is that at the time of writing, David had already ruled as a king for many years. Nevertheless, the passage says that his kingdom "will be steadfast" and "will become firmly established" for an indefinite time. This shows that both the Greek simple future and the periphrastic future can refer to a future situation, which is already in place and has held for some time. Why did the Greek translator choose a periphrastic future in this verse? Probably because the Hebrew or Aramaic text has an imperfect of the verb "to be/become" plus a passive participle.

We also find an interesting example in Isaiah 47:7: “And you kept saying: To time indefinite I shall prove to be (The Septuagint: future + present participle) the mistress, forever.” The daughter of the Chaldeans was already the mistress, but her wish was that this should continue forever. This is expressed in the Septuagint by a periphrastic future, but the Hebrew text has no participle, but only an imperfect of the verb “to be/become.” This indicates that both Hebrew imperfect and imperfect plus participle and Greek simple future and periphrastic future can refer to a situation that both had already existed for some time and will continue into the future.

The problem in both languages is that there is no single verb form that can unambiguously convey that a situation has existed for some time and will continue into the future. This means that to signal such a thought, either two verbs (one referring to the past/present and one to the future) must be used, or the context, together with the use of one verb or a combination of one finite verb and a participle could also signal that situation.

A situation that has existed for a long time and will continue into the future is a special circumstance. The easiest way to signal such a situation would be to use a verb construction that is special (or rare) as well. The use of imperfect + participle is very rare in Hebrew, so when such a construction occurs, the reader may rightly expect something unusual. The same is true in Greek, where a future plus participle is rare.

Thus, the rare use of a periphrastic future in Luke 21:24 would be a great way to signal that the trampling upon “Jerusalem” had lasted for some time and would continue into the future — instead of using a simple future. And because the periphrastic future is so rare in Greek, it is most likely a translation of a Hebrew imperfect plus participle.<sup>58</sup>

We also have some interesting examples in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In Acts 13:10, we read:

And Paul said: “O man full of every sort of fraud and every sort of villainy, you son of the Devil, you enemy of everything righteous, will you not quit distorting (future plus participle) the right ways of Jehovah?”

Clearly, the actions described by the periphrastic future in this verse do not refer solely to the future, because this man had evidently distorted the ways of Jehovah for some time.

In Mark 13:13, we read: “and you will be objects of hatred (future plus present participle) by all people on account of my name.” The disciples had already been an object of hatred when these words were uttered. And in Acts 6:4 we read: “but we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Most manuscripts have a simple future in this verse, but Codex Cantabrigiensis (D) has future plus present participle. The twelve had already “devoted themselves to prayer,” and they would continue to do so into the future as well.

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58. If Jesus spoke Aramaic where imperfect plus participle is used more often than in Hebrew, the same argument would hold.

The passages above demonstrate that a periphrastic future may describe a situation that has already lasted for some time, while also indicating that the situation will continue into the future. This shows that the expression “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations,” which is expressed by a periphrastic future, need not only refer to the future, but the trampling may have been occurring for some time already when Luke wrote his book.

*The use of periphrastic future in the clause “and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations” may indicate that the trampling was going on already and would continue into the future.*

## THE TREE IN DANIEL CHAPTER 4 AND JERUSALEM IN LUKE 21:24

The book of Daniel is the only biblical book where the time of the conclusion (“end”) is mentioned, and nations coming and going on the world stage are put into a temporal frame relative to the kingdom of God. (Daniel 2:36-45; 7:3-12; 8:3-25; 11:2-45; 12:7-13) The time of the coming of the Messiah, the king of God’s kingdom is also mentioned (9:24-27), and so it would be fitting if the time of the coming of the Messiah in the power of the kingdom and the elevation of the booth of David would be mentioned as well.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar II was given at a critical time in the history of God’s people when the Davidic dynasty was cut down, and the person who received the dream was the one who executed this as the acting servant of Jehovah. The subject of the dream is, according to Daniel 4:17:

that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind.

Clearly, the dream relates to the kingdom of God!

Trees, and twigs, and stumps are often used to symbolize kingdoms and dynasties of kings. (Ezekiel 17:1-24; particularly v. 23) Isaiah 10:33-11:10 shows how trees that represent kingdoms will be cut down, but a twig out of the stump of Jesse will be sprout. Also, in Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 6:12-13, the Messiah is depicted as a sprout. In Isaiah 53:3, 7-9, the Messiah is portrayed as “the lowliest of mankind (cf. Matthew 11:29), which fits the description of “the lowliest of mankind,” whom God “sets up over” the kingdom. (Daniel 4:17)

Just as a city that is the capital of a kingdom can symbolize the whole kingdom; similarly, a tree can symbolize a kingdom. I quote Daniel 4:10-17 (above) and Luke 21:24 (below):

<sup>10</sup> “Now the visions of my head upon my bed I happened to be beholding, and, look! *a tree in the midst of the earth, the height of which was immense.* <sup>11</sup> The tree grew up and became strong, and its very height finally reached the heavens, and it was visible to the

extremity of the whole earth.<sup>12</sup> Its foliage was fair, and its fruit was abundant, and there was food for all on it. Under it the beast of the field would seek shade, and on its boughs the birds of the heavens would dwell, and from it all flesh would feed itself.

<sup>13</sup> “I continued beholding in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, look! a watcher, even a holy one, coming down from the heavens themselves.<sup>14</sup> He was calling out loudly, and this is what he was saying: “*CHOP the tree down, and cut off its boughs. SHAKE off its foliage, and scatter its fruitage.* Let the beast flee from under it, and the birds from its boughs.<sup>15</sup> However, LEAVE its rootstock itself in the earth, even with a banding of iron and of copper, among the grass of the field; and with the dew of the heavens let it be wet, and with the beast let its portion be among the vegetation of the earth.<sup>16</sup> *Let its heart be changed from that of mankind, and let the heart of a beast be given to it, and let seven times* (Aramaic: *‘iddanin*, Greek: *kairos*) *pass over it.*<sup>17</sup> By the decree of watchers the thing is, and [by] the saying of holy ones the request is, *to the intent that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind.*”

<sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until *the appointed times (kairos) of the nations are fulfilled.*

I have already argued that “Jerusalem,” which is mentioned in Luke 21:24, stands for Gods kingdom. The last words of Daniel 4:17 indicate that the tree also stand for the kingdom of God. It was Nebuchadnezzar who lost his mind and ate grass like an animal. But the words “the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of mankind” refer to Jehovah God, and he gives the kingdom of mankind to whom he wants and puts the lowliest one of mankind over it. This could not refer to Nebuchadnezzar.

Based on the discussion above, we are now in the position that we can outline the parallels between Daniel 4:10–17 and Luke 21:24.

*Table 12.4 Parallels between Daniel 4 and Luke 21*

<b>Jerusalem = the Kingdom of God.</b>	<b>The tree = the Kingdom of God.</b>
<b>Jerusalem is trampled on.</b>	<b>The tree is cut down.</b>
<b>The trampling occurs during the appointed times of the nations.</b>	<b>The stump of the tree is without sprouts during a period of seven appointed times.</b>
<b>Jerusalem will no longer be trampled upon after the appointed times of the nations have ended.</b>	<b>The stump of the tree will sprout after seven appointed times.</b>

It is important to note that there is both a topical and a linguistic parallel between Daniel chapter 4 and Luke 21:24. The topical (thematic) parallel is seen in Table 12.4, and the linguistic parallel is seen in the word *kairoi* (Aramaic *‘iddānīn*) in Luke 21:24, which parallels *kairoi* —(Aramaic *‘iddānīn*) in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

*There is both a linguistic and a topical (thematic) parallel between “the appointed times” in Luke 21:24 and the “seven times” in Daniel chapter 4. This suggests that when Jesus spoke about “the appointed times of the nations,” he had in mind the words of Daniel 4.*



Because Luke 21:24 is a part of a prophecy, where only half of what we need is written, we must always be open for the possibility that our interpretation (the half we need to find ourselves, i.e., the intended application) is wrong.

However, the words of Jesus that his followers should understand his great prophecy also include “the appointed times of the nations.” There are only three instances in the Hebrew Scriptures where “appointed time” is qualified by a number. And only the four instances of the Aramaic word *‘iddānīn* (Greek, *kairoi*) in Daniel chapter 4 occur in a chapter where God’s kingdom is mentioned.

Therefore, because there is both a linguistic and a topical (thematic) parallel between Luke 21:24 and Daniel chapter 4, our application of the appointed times of the nations to the seven appointed times in Daniel chapter 4 has a strong backing.

## CALCULATING THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE NATIONS

I will start with a comparison between two important time prophecies, namely, Mark 1:15 and Luke 21:24:

<sup>15</sup> and saying: “**The appointed time has been fulfilled** (*pleroō*, fill), and the kingdom of God has drawn near.

<sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until **the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled** (*pleroō*, fill).

The verb translated as “fulfilled” is *pleroō*, with the meaning “to fill, make full, fill up.” When Jesus spoke about “the appointed time,” he referred to the 69 weeks, or 483 years, from year 20 of Artaxerxes, which is 455 fvt., to year 29, when Jesus began his public ministry as the promised Messiah. These 483 years had now been filled, just as a jar is gradually filled by water.

The same verb *pleroō* is also used in the prophecy about the appointed times of the nations. This suggests that these appointed times in a similar way must be filled, just as a jar gradually is filled by water. Jesus speaks about the time period as “time” in the singular, looking at the 483 years from a collective viewpoint. In his great prophecy he speaks of “times” in the plural. By this he stresses that there are a specific number of times that must be filled before the end of the appointed times of the nations come. Because the same verb is used, we can conclude that “the appointed times of the nations” should be calculated in the same way as the 69 weeks, or 483 years to the first coming of the Messiah.

If we accept that the “seven times” in Daniel chapter 4 represent “the appointed times of the nations,” first we must know how many days seven times represent. Revelation 11:2, 3 shows that 42 months represent 1,260 days, which is 30 days per month. In seven years, there are 84 months, which represent 2,520 days.

However, since the Davidic line of kings who represented the Kingdom of God was not restored a mere 2,520 days after Zedekiah was removed in 607 BCE, we must apply the prophetic rule that one day represents one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6)

so that the 2,520 days can scripturally have a greater fulfillment. In keeping with this, the seven appointed times would prophetically amount to 2,520 years. We have seen in the discussion above that “the appointed times of the nations” is the time from the destruction of Jerusalem, when the last king of the dynasty of David reigned, until God’s heavenly kingdom is established.

But how do we find the right starting point? Almost all lexicons and textbooks tell the readers that Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 (or 586) BCE. If we count 2,520 years from this time, we arrive in 1934 (or 1935) when nothing unusual happened. However, if we start with 607 BCE and calculate 2,520 years, we arrive at the year 1914, which was the year of the start of World War I.

There is a common problem or tradition that we see in Academia, namely, that a conclusion that was drawn by a scholar 50, 100, or even 200 years ago is authoritatively repeated from generation to generation without ever being reexamined or scrutinized for accuracy. Please consider the following example:

“Spinach is good for your health because of its high iron content!” This claim has been repeated over and over again in nutrition books and health magazines in a great part of the 20th century. Cartoonists have made use of it for humorous design, and children have been fed, more or less against their will with this green. Yet the claim turns out to be wrong; its basis is a misunderstanding. Due to a typographical error by a printer of the decimal-point location in the 1920s, the iron content was placed ten times too high. The error was not discovered, because no one made an inquiry, until 1979 when G. W. Lohr of the University of Freiburg routinely checked the old numbers and found that they were wrong. It may be added that the iron of spinach is not in the form that the body easily can absorb.<sup>59</sup>

The primary piece of evidence in favor of the year 587 is the Babylonian astronomical diary VAT4956. A German article calculating astronomical positions on this tablet appeared in 1915,<sup>60</sup> and these calculations suggested that Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE. For the next 70 years, the conclusions of Neugebauer and Weidner were used in all lexicons and textbooks, and no one published an article showing that they had made an independent translation of the tablet and checked the astronomical positions obtained in 1915. In 1988, an English translation of the tablet was published by H. Hunger.<sup>61</sup> This English translation made by Hunger was close to the German translation made 73 years earlier, but the volume has no astronomical calculations. From the comments at the end of the entry, it appears that the calculations made by Neugebauer and Weidner were accepted by Hunger.<sup>62</sup>

In 2005, I visited the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. I collated the tablet, and I took electronic pictures of its signs. I studied the tablet based on a magnification of each sign, and several signs were not clearly identifiable. Particularly many of the celestial bodies that were connected with the planets were difficult to

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59. *Science Digest*, February 1979:16.

60. P.V. Neugebauer and E.F. Weidner, “Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnesars II (567/566).”

61. A. J. Sachs and H. Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts From Babylonia*, Volume I, (1988).

62. Hunger has never collated the tablet VAT4956; he made his translation based on black and white pictures of the tablet taken before World War II.

identify. I discovered that Neugebauer and Weidner had made all their calculations starting one day wrong, and the comments of Hunger shows that he had followed suit. A one-day difference in the calculation of lunar positions gives very different results.

On the basis of my study of VAT4956 and several other relevant astronomical tablets, I wrote a book dealing with the Neo-Babylonian Chronology.<sup>63</sup> I calculated the 14 lunar positions on VAT4956, and my conclusion for the year 568/567, which is the year pointed to by Neugebauer and Weidner and Hunger, is that seven of the positions have an excellent fit, five do not fit at all, and two are inaccurate. But all the 14 lunar positions have an excellent fit twenty years earlier, in the year 588/87.<sup>64</sup> This suggests that Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Jerusalem in 607 BCE and not in 587 BCE.

*The excellent fit of the 14 lunar positions on VAT4956 in the year 588/87, which is year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar II, suggests that year 18 of Nebuchadnezzar II, when Jerusalem was destroyed, is 607 BCE.*

I have also studied cuneiform business tablets dated to the kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. And 90 of these tablets have dates indicating that each Neo-Babylonian king reigned longer than the traditional chronology allows. This means that the traditional chronology is destroyed, and the dated tablets support the view that the Neo-Babylonian Empire is 20 years longer than the chronology found in lexicons and textbooks.

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63. R.J. Furuli, *Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian Chronology*, II:45–249; 342–416.

64. The parameters of each lunar position are listed in my book so that they can be checked by any Astro-program.

## Chapter 13

# THE ANTITYPICAL JUBILEE AND THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

*Jehovah God is the great timekeeper. When he created the sun and the moon, he said that “they must serve as signs and for seasons and for days and years.” (Genesis 1:14) In the books of Daniel and Revelation, several specific time periods that would be fulfilled in relation to the people of God are mentioned, 1,260 days, 1,290 days, 1,335 days, and 2,300 evenings and mornings.<sup>65</sup>*

*In connection with the restoration of all things, three specific time periods of specific lengths are mentions in the Holy Scriptures:*

- 1) The first coming of Jesus: 483 years from 455 BCE to 29 CE*
- 2) The second coming of Jesus as king: 2,520 years from 607 BCE to 1914 CE*
- 3) The coming of Jesus as judge in the great tribulation: 6,000 years from the creation of Eve to the antitypical Jubilee and beginning of the restoration of all things.*

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65. How these time periods are fulfilled in modern times is discussed in the articles:

- 1) “Prophetic time periods identify the people of God.” (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/10/16/prophetic-time-periods-identify-the-people-of-god/>)
- 2) “The holy place being brought into its right condition — then relapsing to a wrong condition (I)” (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/10/21/the-holy-place-being-brought-into-its-right-condition-then-relapsing-to-a-wrong-condition/>)
- 3) “The holy place being brought into its right condition — then relapsing to a wrong condition (II)” (<https://mybelovedreligion.no/2024/10/23/the-holy-place-being-brought-into-its-right-condition-then-relapsing-to-a-wrong-condition-part-ii/>)

*This chapter will discuss point 3) and the antitypical Jubilee.*

## THE APPOINTED TIMES LEADING UP TO THE BEGINNING OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that there were appointed times related to Jesus' first and second comings. The appointed times were expressed by the Greek word *kairos* and led to Jesus' first and second comings. In this section, I will show that there are appointed times, expressed by the word *kairos*, that lead up to Jesus' coming as judge in the great tribulation and the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. These appointed times can also be calculated.

The apostle Peter used the Greek word *kairos* ("appointed times") several times, and I quote 1 Peter 4:17 (above), 1:10-12 (middle), and 1:3-5 (below):

<sup>17</sup> For it is *the appointed time* (*kairos*) for the judgment to start with the house of God. Now if it starts first with us, what will the end be of those who are not obedient to the good news of God?

<sup>10</sup> Concerning *this very salvation* a diligent inquiry and a careful search were made by the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for YOU. <sup>11</sup> They kept on investigating what particular *season* (*kairos*, "*appointed time*") or what sort of [season "*appointed time*"] the spirit in them was indicating concerning Christ when it was bearing witness beforehand about *the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these*. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that, not to themselves, but to YOU, they were ministering the things that have now been announced to YOU through those who have declared the good news to YOU with holy spirit sent forth from heaven. Into these very things angels are desiring to peer.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for according to his great mercy he gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for YOU, <sup>5</sup> who are being safeguarded by God's power through faith for *a salvation ready to be revealed in the last period of time*, *kairos*, ("appointed time").

The words in 4:17 show that at the appointed time (*kairos*) the house of God (anointed Christians) will be judged. I have quoted these words to show that *kairos* refers to a specific appointed time and not just to time in general.

The words in 1:10-12 show that the prophets spoke about the salvation of humans. They prophesied about "the suffering for Christ and about the glories that would follow these." And they inquired and searched to understand the appointed time (*kairos*) related to these things. Even the angels were interested in understanding this. The point here is that both the prophets and the angels knew there was an appointed time or appointed times (*kairos*) for the suffering of Jesus and for the salvation (glories) that these sufferings would lead to.

The words in 1:3-5 speak of the salvation of those to whom Peter addressed his letter. They were anointed Christians who looked forward to reigning with Jesus Christ in heaven. The nature of their salvation was clear, but *when* their salvation (their resurrection) would happen, should be revealed in the last *appointed time* (*kairos*). The words “the last appointed time (*kairos*)” must either refer to the appointed time (*kairos*) ending with the great tribulation and the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, or to the last part of this appointed time, which is the time of the end, aka “the conclusion of the system of things, aka the presence of Jesus.”

The important point is that Peter demonstrates the existence of appointed times (*kairos*) decided by God regarding Christ and the blessings that would come later.

## THE APPOINTED TIMES BEING FULFILLED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Peter describes what will happen at the end of these appointed times in Acts 3:19-21 (my translation):

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times* (*kairos*) of *the refreshing rest* (*anapsyxis*) may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one *chosen beforehand* for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one until the times (*khronos*) of restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets *through the ages*.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that the Greek word *anapsyxis* can have the meaning “refreshing rest.”<sup>66</sup> The word *anapsyxis* stands parallel with the Greek word *apokatastasis* (“restoration”). I also showed that the Greek words *kairos* and *khronos* both refer to appointed times. Because both “the refreshing rest” and “restoration” refer to the restoration of all things, this scripture shows that there are specific appointed times that will be fulfilled at the beginning of the restoration of all things.

### Acts 3:19-21: appointed times —> the restoration of all things

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, that Paul also referred to the restoration of all things, though presenting the situation from a different perspective than Peter did. I quote Ephesians 1:10:

<sup>10</sup> for an administration at the full limit of the *appointed times* (*kairos*, *plural*), namely, to gather (*anakefalaioō*) all things (*pas*) together *again* in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. [Yes,] in him.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, there was unity in heaven and earth. Paul shows that this unity will again be established by Jesus Christ, and this is the same as the

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<sup>66</sup> . A prophetic time period can be viewed collectively (in the singular), as Jesus viewed the 69 weeks to his first coming in Mark 1:15. Or it can be viewed distributively (in the plural), as he viewed “the appointed times of the nations” in Luke 21:24. This means that if *kairos* is plural, it always refer to units of time; if it is singular, it can refer to one or several units of time.



restoration of all things. Paul shows that there are appointed times that will be fulfilled when this unity is established.

### **Ephesians 1:10: appointed times —> unity in the heavens and the earth**

Paul uses the words *kairos* when he writes about the manifestation (*epifaneia*) of Jesus Christ. I quote 1 Timothy 6:13-15:

<sup>13</sup> I give you orders <sup>14</sup> to observe the commandment in a spotless and irreprehensible way until the **manifestation** (*epifaneia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which the happy and only Potentate will show (*deiknym*) in **its own appointed times** (*kairos*). He is the King of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords.

The manifestation of Jesus can be connected with the beginning of the restoration of all things: I quote 2 Timothy 4:1:

<sup>1</sup> I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his **manifestation** (*epifaneia*) and his Kingdom.

The beginning of the judgment of the living of the dead starts in the great tribulation This is shown in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:

<sup>7</sup> But you who suffer tribulation will be given relief along with us at the **revelation** (*apokalypsis*) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels <sup>8</sup> in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.

The words of “manifestation” and “revelation” refer to the same event. They refer to the coming of Jesus Christ as the judge in the great tribulation. The restoration of all things begins immediately after the great tribulation, which will be short. (Matthew 24:22)

### **1 Timothy 6:15: appointed times —> the manifestation of Jesus**

I have argued that the second coming of Jesus occurred in the year 1914. His presence (*parousia*), which should not last longer than a generation started at that time. At the end of his presence, Jesus would come (*erkehomai*) as the judge in the great tribulation. This coming is also described as his manifestation (*epifaneia*) and his “revelation” (*apokalypsis*). The great tribulation will remove the wicked age or system of things. This marks the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Jesus and the restoration of all things.

Three passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures show that there are appointed times of a predetermined length that will be fulfilled at the beginning of Jesus’ thousand-year reign, which also marks the beginning of the restoration of all things.

The discussion above has shown that just as there were appointed times of a predetermined length being fulfilled at the first and second comings of Jesus, there are appointed times of a predetermined length that will be fulfilled at the beginning of the restoration of all things. The important question now is where in the Holy

Scriptures we can find the length of these appointed times. Even the prophets of ancient times and the angels were interested in knowing the answer to this question. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

## THE JUBILEE IN ISRAEL WAS A PROPHETIC TYPE OF THE TIME PERIOD OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

When Paul and others say that “it is written,” or they refer to “the Scriptures,” they refer to the 39 books in the Hebrew Scriptures. In his letter to the Romans, he referred to these Scriptures and said, according to Romans 15:4:

<sup>4</sup> For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.

When Paul wrote these words, the Christian laws and principles were followed, and the law of Moses was no longer valid. How could the five books written by Moses instruct the Christians? The words in Hebrews 10:1 illuminate this question:

<sup>1</sup> For since the Law has *a shadow* (*skia*) of the good things to come, but not *the very substance* (*eikōn*) of the things, [men] can never with the same sacrifices from year to year which they offer continually make those who approach perfect.

The word “shadow” (*skia*) indicates that there is a material image or substance (*eikōn*) that is casting the shadow. The law of Moses was the shadow (*skia*) or typical representation, and the material image (*eikōn*) that was casting the shadow came with Jesus Christ. The quotation above shows that the sacrifices in the temple that were offered according to the Law were prophetic types (*skia*) of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, which was the antitype or the material image (*eikōn*). The Holy compartment and the Most holy compartment and the curtain between them in the tabernacle were also prophetic types, as we see in Hebrews 8:5:

<sup>5</sup> but which [men] are rendering sacred service in a *typical representation* (*hypodeigma*) and *a shadow* (*skia*) of the heavenly things; just as Moses, when about to make the tent in completion, was given the divine command: For says he: “See that you make all things after [their] pattern that was shown to you in the mountain.”

The word *hypodeigma* means “a visual form designed to be imitated or copied — model, pattern.” (Louw and Nida) How the priests and the tabernacle were prophetic types whose antitypes were found in the Christian arrangement is discussed in Hebrews chapters 9 and 10.

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul discusses prophetic types and their antitypes that are important in connection with the appointed times leading up to the restoration of all things. I quote Colossians 2:16, 17:

<sup>16</sup> Therefore let no man judge YOU in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; <sup>17</sup> for those things are *a shadow* (*skia*) of the things to come, but *the reality* (*sōma*) belongs to the Christ.

Hebrews uses the words “shadow” and “typical representation” with reference to different sides of the law that were prophetic types, and Colossians uses “shadow” and “the reality” for the antitypes in the Christian arrangement.

Paul shows that the Jewish festivals and sabbaths were prophetic types (shadows), and the body (*sōma*) or antitype casting the shadow came with the Christ. Moses was given a pattern of the tabernacle, and all the details had antitypical meaning. Therefore, according to Exodus 26:30, Jehovah instructed him to make everything exactly as the pattern he was shown. These words were quoted in Hebrews 8:5.

The sabbaths in Israel, according to Paul, were prophetic types of antitypes that would come with Jesus Christ. This includes the quintessence of the sabbath arrangement which was the seven sabbath years and the fiftieth sabbath year —the Jubilee.

*I will demonstrate that the arrangement of the Jubilee represents prophetic types showing the length of the appointed times that will be fulfilled at the beginning of the restoration of all things.*

## THE JUBILEE AS A PROPHETIC TYPE —AND THE ANTITYPE

The 49th year in Israel was a sabbath year when all the land rested, and the same was true with the 50th year, the Jubilee. I will now present the basic characteristics of the Jubilee, and I quote Leviticus 25:8-10:

<sup>8</sup>“You will count off seven sabbath years, seven times seven years, and the days of the seven sabbath years will amount to 49 years. <sup>9</sup>You will then sound the horn loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement, you should cause the sound of the horn to be heard in all your land. <sup>10</sup>*You must sanctify the 50th year and proclaim liberty (deror) in the land to all its inhabitants. It will become a Jubilee for you, and each of you will return to his property and each of you should return to his family.*

The Hebrew noun translated as “liberty” is *deror*, and its meaning is “freedom; liberty.” (Kohlenberger and Mounce) The liberty or freedom mentioned in verse 10 was particularly applied in two areas:

- 1) All Hebrew slaves were set free, regardless of how long they had been slaves.
- 2) Any land and possessions that had been sold, usually because of poverty, were returned to the original owners without compensation.

There was liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. The entire year was a festival, a year of liberty for all Jews, and the whole land had a complete rest, as in the sabbath year. *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 2, page 122, has the following fine description of how all the inhabitants experienced liberty:

The wonderful provision of the Jubilee year can better be appreciated when one considers not only the beneficial results to the individual Israelites but especially the effect on the nation as a whole. When the Jubilee arrangement was properly observed, the nation was

restored in the Jubilee year to the full and proper theocratic state that God purposed and established at the beginning. Government was on a sound basis. The national economy would always be stable, and the nation would have no crushing debt. (De 15:6) The Jubilee brought about a stable standard of land values and also prevented a great internal debt and its resultant false prosperity that brings inflation, deflation, and business depression.

There can be no doubt that the Jubilee was a unique year with special significance. No other nation in the ancient world had an arrangement similar to the Jewish Jubilee.

How can we find the antitype of a situation described in the Hebrew Scriptures? In some instances, several sides of the antitype are directly mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures, such as in the case with the priesthood and the sacrifices that are discussed in Hebrews chapters 8, 9, and 10. In other instances, only a few traces or similarities can be found showing what the antitypes are.

As examples, I quote 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 (above) and Hebrews 10:22 (below):

<sup>7</sup> Clear away the old leaven, that YOU may be a new lump, according as YOU are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. <sup>7</sup> Consequently let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth.

<sup>22</sup> let us approach with true hearts in the full assurance of faith, having had our hearts sprinkled from a wicked conscience and our bodies bathed with clean water.

The first example shows that the Passover Festival was a type, and there was an antitypical celebration of this festival. We also learn that the lump of dough and the unleavened bread that were used were prophetic types with an antitypical fulfillment. Based on these keywords, we can identify the antitypes of the festival's basic elements. In a similar way, the Festival of Pentecost and the Festival of Booths were also prophetic types.<sup>67</sup>

Before the priests would serve in the temple, they had to bathe their bodies in clean water. These words indicate that the Hebrews were antitypical priests and that this bathing had an antitypical meaning.

*When we look for antitypes in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we can see if we find the same words that are used in the prophetic type or similar words or similar ideas. Or we can look for similar situations.*

## **THE JUBILEE AS A PROPHETIC TYPE OF THE TIME OF RESTORATION AND REFRESHING REST**

As I have demonstrated above, the restoration of all things begins at “the full limit of the appointed times,” as stated in Acts 3:19-21 and Ephesians 1:10. The end of

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67. Two interesting articles showing how types and antitypes should be treated are “Joyful festivals” and “Festival illumination” in The Watchtower of February 15, 1980. I highly recommend these articles.

these appointed times coincides with the manifestation of Jesus Christ at the end of his presence, according to 1 Timothy 6:15.

We note that these appointed times (*kairoi*) are in the plural in Acts 3:21, Ephesians 1:10, and 1 Timothy 6:15. Therefore, we expect to find evidence in the Holy Scriptures of the specific time period to which these appointed times refer.

The word “Jubilee” is not found in the Christian Greek Scriptures, but the same ideas are found. To demonstrate that, I compare the events of the Jubilee with Peter’s words in Acts 3:19-21:

<sup>19</sup> “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, *that the appointed times (kairoi) of the refreshing rest (anapsyxis)* may come from Jehovah himself. <sup>20</sup> And he may send the one *chosen beforehand* for you, Christ Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must take hold of this one until the times (*khronos*) of restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things (*pas*) of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets *through the ages*.

The Jubilee in Israel was a time when slaves were freed, and property sold was restored. It was also a time of freedom and relief from burdens, as well as a time for great rejoicing.

### *The Jubilee was the restoration of all things for the Jewish people.*

The two passages of Acts 3:19-21, and Ephesians 1:10, connect the restoration with Jesus Christ, and Paul shows that the Jewish festivals were types whose antitypes would be fulfilled in connection with Jesus Christ.

Hebrew does not have a word that corresponds to the Greek word *apokatastasis* (“restoration”). However, NIV has 82 examples of the word “restore” in the Hebrew Scriptures. These are translated from the Hebrew verbs *shūb* (“return”), often in the causative hifil stem (“cause to return; to restore”), and *qūm* (“rise; rise up”), often in the causative hifil stem (“cause to rise up; restore”). Two examples where the Hebrew verb *shūb* is rendered by the Greek verb *apokathistēmi*, which corresponds to the noun *apokatastasis*, is Genesis 40:21 (above) and 2 Samuel: 9:7 (below):

And he *restored* (*shūb, apokathistēmi*) the chief cupbearer to his office, and he gave the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.

and I *will restore* (*shūb, apokathistēmi*) to you every field of Saoul, father of your father, and you shall eat bread at my table always.”

I will now quote Leviticus 25:10, and discuss parallels between this verse and Acts 3:19-21:

<sup>10</sup> And YOU must sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty (*derōr, afesis*) in the land to all its inhabitants. It will become a Jubilee for YOU, and YOU must return (*shūb aperkbomai*) each one to his possession and YOU should return each one to his family.

*Two parallels are following:*



**Acts 3:21: RESTORATION** (*apokatastasis*) — **Leviticus 25:10: RETURN (RESTORE) TO HIS POSSESSION** (Hebrew: *shūb*, Greek: *aperkhomai*)

During the Jubilee, all inhabitants of the land were to return to the property that had previously been sold without any compensation. This was a restoration of property, and the Hebrew word *shūb*, which is used in Leviticus 25:10, can mean “return” and “restore.”

The prophetic type of the Jubilee was the restoration of all property of the inhabitants in the land, and the antitype is the full restoration of what was lost when sin was introduced, namely, perfect humans living forever on the paradise earth.

**Acts 3:19: A REFRESHING REST** (*anapsyxis*) — **PROCLAIMING OF LIBERTY ALL INHABITANTS** (Hebrew: *derōr*, Greek: *afesis*).

The Hebrew word *derōr* means “freedom, liberty” (Kohlenberger and Mounce), and the Greek word *afesis* means “dismissal, deliverance, from captivity, remission, forgiveness, pardon.” (Mounce) All inhabitants of the land were freed from slavery when liberty was proclaimed. The words of proclaiming liberty focus on the action, and “a refreshing rest” focuses on the result of this proclamation. There was freedom for all inhabitants, and the whole year was a sabbath with much rejoicing — a refreshing rest.

The prophetic type of the Jubilee was that all inhabitants received freedom and rest, and the antitype is that the thousand-year reign of Jesus is a sabbath of rest where all inhabitants receive freedom from sin and imperfection.

According to Luke 4:18, Jesus should “proclaim freedom.” Luke uses the Greek word *afesis*, which means “freedom,” and this is the same word that the Septuagint uses in Leviticus 25:10 for “freedom” in the expression “proclaiming freedom.” However, the “freedom” Jesus spoke about was not connected with the Jubilee. This is because Jesus spoke about freedom for the prisoners and quoted Isaiah 61:1, which mentions freedom for those who were prisoners in Babylon, not the freedom proclaimed in the Jubilee for all the people.

However, Paul spoke about freedom, which is related to the Jubilee. We read in Romans 8:20, 21:

<sup>20</sup> For the creation (*ktisis*) was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will **be set free** (*eleutheroō*) **from enslavement to corruption** (*fibhōra*) **and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.**

The Greek word *fibhōra* has the meaning “corruption, decay, ruin, corruptibility, mortality.” All humans are imperfect and are destined to die because of their inherited sin, and this is their “enslavement to corruption.” Romans chapter 8 mentions the sons of God, anointed Christians who will reign with Jesus Christ in heaven. In addition to these, “the creation,” which includes all other descendants of Adam, except those who have sinned against the holy spirit, is mentioned.



The verb *eleutheroō* is a causative verb with the meaning “cause to be free; set free.” The freedom mentioned in Leviticus 25:10 is expressed by the noun *afesis* (“freedom”), and the freedom mentioned in Romans 8:20 is expressed by the verb *eleutheroō* (“set free”). Thus, the expression “proclaim liberty” in Leviticus 25:10 is identical with the expression “set free” in Romans 8:20.

*In the prophetic type, all inhabitants in the land of Israel would receive freedom from slavery and debt. In the antitype, the whole creation will be set free from slavery to corruption — from imperfection and death during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.*

## THE FIFTIETH SABBAT YEAR IS A PROPHETIC TYPE OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF JESUS

In this section, I will focus on the antitypical sabbath year rather than on the whole Jubilee cycle.

### THE ANTITYPICAL SABBATH OF WHICH JESUS IS THE LORD

The idea that the sabbaths were types of bigger antitypes was expressed by Jesus many years before Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians. We read in Matthew 12:5-8:

<sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbaths the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and continue guiltless? <sup>6</sup> ***But I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.*** <sup>7</sup> However, if you had understood what this means, ‘I want mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless ones. <sup>8</sup> ***For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.***”

An explanation of the meaning of the words, “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” is found in the study note of NWT13 below:

#### Lord of the Sabbath:

Jesus applies this expression to himself (Mr 2:28; Lu 6:5), indicating that the Sabbath was at his disposal for doing the work commanded by his heavenly Father. (Compare Joh 5:19; 10:37, 38.) On the Sabbath, Jesus performed some of his most outstanding miracles, which included healing the sick. (Lu 13:10-13; Joh 5:5-9; 9:1-14) This evidently foreshadowed the kind of relief he will bring during his Kingdom rule, which will be like a sabbath rest.— Heb 10:1.

Why must we conclude that this explanation is wrong? Galatians 4:4 (above) and Romans 6:16 (below) may help us to see that:

<sup>4</sup> But when the full limit of the time arrived, God sent his Son, who was born of a woman and who was under law.

<sup>16</sup> Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Paul says that Jesus “was under the law,” and he also says that when you obey someone or something, you are a slave of that one. Because the Law was still valid, Jesus had to obey the law. So, he was a slave of the sabbath and not the Lord of the Sabbath. When Jesus performed miracles on the sabbath, he did not violate the Law, but he did break some extreme sabbath rules that the religious leaders had made.

The words of Jesus about the temple in Matthew 12:6 may illuminate his use of the sabbath as an antitype, and we read in John 2:19-22:

<sup>19</sup> Jesus replied to them: “Tear down *this temple*, and in three days I will raise *it* up.” <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said: “This temple was built in 46 years, and will you raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup> *But he was talking about the temple of his body.* <sup>22</sup> When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples recalled that he used to say this, and they believed the scripture and what Jesus had spoken.

The word “temple” in verse 19 is *naos* (masculine singular accusative), and the pronoun *auton* (3. person masculine accusative) is of the same gender, number, and case as *naos*. Linguistically, the English pronoun “it” must refer to the literal temple. Nevertheless, the reference of Jesus was not to the literal temple but to “the temple of his body” — he would die and be raised up after three days.

When Jesus says in Matthew 12:6, “that something greater than the temple is here,” he also had to refer to “the temple of his body.” Because Jesus was a slave of the Law, including the sabbath, it could not rightly be said that he was “the Lord of the Sabbath.” Therefore, “the sabbath” must be viewed as in the same class as “the temple.” It had to refer to something different from the literal sabbath. This means that there must be a future sabbath that Jesus was referring to, over which he would be the lord. And the miracles he performed on the literal sabbath would foreshadow bigger actions of the same kind that would occur on this future sabbath.

Paul concluded his speech on the Areopagus with some words about Judgment Day. I quote Acts 17:31:

<sup>31</sup> Because he has set *a day* in which he purposes to *judge the inhabited earth* (*oikoumenē*) in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead.”

The one who was resurrected was Jesus. According to Matthew 12:8, he was lord (*kyrios*) over the sabbath. The Greek word *kyrios* refers to someone who has power over someone or something, as a king or as a judge. Paul refers to Jesus as the judge, and Revelation 20:4 says that Jesus is king during a period of 1,000 years, when the dead will be judged. Paul refers to the period when Jesus will judge as a day. Paul says that Jesus will judge the inhabited earth (*oikoumenē*), and Revelation chapter 20 shows that the inhabited earth (the resurrected ones) will be judged during the period of a thousand years. We see the following parallels:

*Table 13.1 Jesus as lord, judge, and king*

SCRIPTURE	TIME	ACTION
Matthew 12:8	the sabbat	Jesus is lord of the sabbath.
Acts 17:31	a day	Jesus is judge of the inhabited earth.
Revelation 20:4, 12	1.000 years	Jesus is king and judge of all the resurrected ones.

## THE “SABBAT RESTING” AND “THE REFRESHING REST” WHICH REFER TO THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF JESUS

According to Genesis chapters 1 and 2, God created the earth and the life on it during six time periods called “days” (*yōm*). On the seventh day God rested, as we read in Genesis 2:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth and all their army came to their completion. <sup>2</sup> And by the seventh day God came to the completion of his work that he had made, and he proceeded to rest on the seventh day from all his work that he had made. <sup>3</sup> And God proceeded to bless the seventh day and make it sacred, because on it he has been resting from all his work that God has created for the purpose of making.

Both Psalm 95 and Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 show that God did not end his day of rest shortly after completing his creation. But his day of rest still continued in the days of Paul.

*The length of Jehovah’s day of rest is the key to finding the length of the appointed times that will end at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.*

To find the clues, I will now analyze verses from Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. I discussed these chapters in Chapter 2. But I discuss them again in the context of the Jubilee.

Grasping the meaning of Hebrews 4:1-13 is not easy. The important point is to understand the relationship between the expressions “*the day of entering the promised land*, *a certain day*, and *another day*.” I will elucidate these expressions.

After the writer pointed out that the Jews who wandered in the desert did not enter God’s rest because of a lack of faith and obedience, he directs his attention toward the Christian hebrews. I quote Hebrews 4:1, 2:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise is left of entering into his rest (*katapausis*), let us fear that sometime someone of YOU may seem to have fallen short of it. <sup>2</sup> For we have had the *good news* declared to us also, even as they also had; but *the word* which was heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who did hear.

What was the good news (*euangelizō*), the word, which was declared to “them” (“the Jewish nation in the desert”? It was the words of Exodus 33:1-3, 14 that they would enter the promised land and God would give them rest. Confirming this, Hebrews 4:6 says, “and those to whom the good news (the Jews in the desert) was first declared did not enter in because of disobedience.”

What is the good news declared to “us” (the Hebrew Christians)? That is the possibility for the Hebrew Christians to enter God’s rest. Where do we find this good news? Joshua led the people into the promised land in the 14th century BCE, but he did not lead them into God’s rest. (Hebrews 4:8). The argument of the writer is that the opportunity of entering God’s rest did not end at that time, when the Jews entered the promised land in the 14th century BCE. David lived in the 11th century, and in Psalm 95:7, he used the expression “today” in connection with entering the rest of Jehovah.

In Hebrews 3:13, we read:

<sup>13</sup> but keep on exhorting one another each day, *as long as it may be called “Today,”* for fear any one of YOU should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin.

The writer argues that the word “today,” which was written in the 11th century BCE as an invitation to enter God’s rest, was still holding in the 1st century CE. His point is that the Christian Hebrews had entered God’s rest because of their faith and obedience, so it was essential not to become hardened by the power of sin and thus fall out of God’s rest. And if anyone had not entered God’s rest because of a lack of faith and obedience, it was important to change that, as we read in 4:11

<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore do our utmost to enter into that rest, for fear anyone should fall in the same pattern of disobedience.

Let us keep the timeline in mind. The nation was invited to enter God’s rest when Joshua had led them into the promised land (14th century BCE). But they did not achieve this because of a lack of faith and obedience. In Psalm 95, David showed that entering God’s rest was still possible (11th century BCE). David used the word “today,” and the writer of Hebrews says that this “today” still holds (1st century CE), and he exhorts the Hebrew Christians to enter God’s rest by showing faith and obedience. Then the writer shows there is “*another day*,” another future opportunity to enter God’s rest. I quote Hebrews 4:6-8 (my translation)

<sup>6</sup> Since, therefore, it remains for some to enter into it and those to whom the *good news was first declared* did not enter in because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> he again destines *a certain day: today*; saying through David after a long time, as *he had foretold* (*prolegō*). “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had put them to rest, he would not *after these things* (*meta tauta*) have been speaking of *another day*. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, *a sabbath resting* (*sabbatismos*) remains for the people of God.

## THE TIMELINE:

### THE DAY WHEN THE GOOD NEWS WAS FIRST DECLARED

#### A CERTAIN DAY (TODAY)

#### ANOTHER DAY

(**Verse 6**) **The 14th century BCE.** The Jewish nation, which received the good news of entering the promised land and participating in Jehovah’s rest, did not enter this rest because of obedience.

(**Verse 7**) **The 11th century BCE.** A long time after the Jewish people entered the promised land, Jehovah pointed to “*a certain day*,” another opportunity to enter God’s rest. The reference is to Psalm 95:7,11 (“*Today* if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...They will not enter my rest”)

Marking *a certain day*, the new possibility of entering God’s rest was something God had foretold (“*as he had foretold*”)<sup>68</sup> Where did God foretell this possibility? In Genesis 22:16-18 Jehovah swore that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through the seed of Abraham. Thus, in the 11th century BCE, there was an opportunity for the nations of the earth to enter God’s rest as a part of the promise to Abraham to bless the nations. Did this opportunity end?

(**Verse 7**) **The 1st century CE.** God’s oath that all nations would be blessed remained in effect. It was *a prophecy* according to verse 7, and in Hebrews 3:13 we read: “but keep on exhorting one another each day, as long as it may be called *Today*, for fear any one of YOU should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin.”

The text shows that the word “*today*” that was written in the 11th century BCE still remained in effect in the 1st century CE.

(**Verse 8**) **The sabbath resting for God’s people.** I use the words “after *these things*” instead of “afterward” in verse 8.<sup>69</sup> The use of “afterward” would naturally be a reference to the fact that Joshua had not put them to rest. But the rendering “after *these things*” would naturally include the failure of entering God’s rest in the promised land and the situation described by David in Psalm 95:7-11, which are described in Hebrews 4:7.

There is a contrast between the temporal words in verses 7 and 8 in chapter 4. Verse 7 speaks about *a certain day*, a certain opportunity to enter God’s rest, which David calls *Today*. This *a certain day* referred to the time in the 11th century BCE when it was possible to enter God’s rest. But it also referred to the time in the 1st century CE. In contrast to *the certain day* is “*another day*” that is mentioned in verse 8. The word *another* shows that this must be a day, an opportunity to enter God’s rest that is different from the day in the 11th century BCE and the 1st century CE. This “*another day*” is called “a sabbath resting for the people of God”

(**Verse 9**) **The thousand-year reign of Jesus**

This *another day* which is the “*sabbath resting* (*sabbatismos*),” must refer to a time after the 1st century CE to which *a certain day* referred. According to verse 7, this situation was foretold. Where can we find a prophecy about this sabbath resting in

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68. The Greek word *prolegō* has the meaning, “to tell beforehand, foretell.” (Mounce) One example from the Septuagint is Isaiah 41:26 (my literal translation): “Who told this from the beginning, so we could know, and so we could say, ‘He is right?’ No one *foretold* (*prolegō*) it, and no one heard any words from you.

69. The Greek pronoun *tauta* is neuter plural accusative of the demonstrative pronoun *boutos* (“this, this one, he”). The basic meaning of the form *tauta* is “these things.” But together with the preposition *meta* (“after”), the meaning can also be “afterward,” which is a shortened form of “after these things. I use the basic meaning in my translation.



addition to Hebrews 4:8? I have quoted the words about all the nations of the earth that will be blessed by the seed of Abraham. However, this prophecy does not refer to a specific sabbath. Isaiah 66:23 is the only place in the Hebrew Scriptures where a prophetic sabbath is mentioned.

<sup>23</sup> “And it will certainly occur that from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath all flesh will come in to bow down before me,” Jehovah has said.

This prophecy will be fulfilled on the new earth, after Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation, as shown in Isaiah 66:22. This is the thousand-year reign of Jesus, which is also the sabbath of which he is the Lord, according to Matthew 12:8.

Table 13.2 Entering God’s rest according to Hebrews chapter 4

v. 6	14th century	The Jewish nation received <i>the good news of entering the promised land</i> . But they did not enter God’s rest.
v. 7	11th century	There was <i>a certain day</i> with the possibility of entering God’s rest. This <i>certain day</i> is called <i>Today</i> .
v. 7	1st century	This <i>certain day</i> called <i>Today</i> was still holding with the possibility of entering God’s rest.
v. 8	The thousand-year reign	There is <i>another day</i> that is “ <i>the sabbath resting</i> of the people of God.”

## A SABBATH RESTING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Paul was writing to anointed Hebrew Christians living in the first century CE. He encouraged those who had entered into God’s rest (*katapausis*) not to fall out of it and others to exert themselves to enter into it. In Hebrews 4:9 two expressions contrast the situation of the anointed Hebrews in the first century CE. mentioned in the preceding verses. The two expressions are “sabbath resting” (*sabbatismos*) and “the people of God” (*laos theos*).

Let us consider this more closely. Throughout the letter to the Hebrews, a contrast is drawn between the two hopes, between those with “the heavenly calling” (3:1) and those looking forward to life on “the inhabited earth to come” (2:7). This contrast is emphasized in various ways, including by the use of pronouns. Those who have the heavenly calling are referred to as “we,” “you,” and “us,” but others who do not have the heavenly calling are referred to as “them.”

In chapters 3 and 4 we see the following use of pronouns regarding those who have the heavenly calling: “we” (3:19), “us,” “you” (4:1) “we,” “us” (4:2), “we,” “us” (4:3) “you,” “you” (4:7), “us” (4:11), “we,” “us” (4:14), “we,” “us” (4:15), “us,” “us” (4:16). We see the following use of pronouns regarding those who do not have the heavenly calling; in this case, the Jews of old who did not enter into God’s rest: “they” (3:16), “them” (3:17), “they,” “them” (3:18), “they” (3:19), “they,” “them,” “them” (4:2), “they” (4:6).



In Hebrews 11 and 12, we see the contrast between those who have the heavenly calling, who are referred to as “us” and “you,” and those who have the hope of living on the inhabited earth to come, who are referred to as “them.” The climax of this contrast is seen in 11:39, 40:

<sup>39</sup> And yet all these, although *they* had witness borne to *them* through their faith, did not get the [fulfillment of the] promise, <sup>40</sup> as God foresaw something better for *us*, in order that *they* might not be made perfect apart from *us*.

Here, the Hebrews with the heavenly calling are referred to as “us,” and those with the earthly hope, who are discussed in detail in chapter 11, are referred to as “they,” and “them.” In view of the consistent contrast in the use of pronouns, we now return to 4:9 to see to whom the Sabbath resting refers:

<sup>9</sup> So there remains a sabbath resting (*sabbatismos*) for *the people* (*laos*) *of God*.

We note that the coming sabbath resting does not apply to “we” and “us,” that is, the Hebrews with the heavenly calling, but the reference is to someone else, to “the people of God,” who can be referred to as “them.” Who are “the people of God”? In Hebrews, the word *laos* (“people”) is mentioned six times in addition to 4:9. Five of these refer to the people of Israel. But the sixth place is significant for our question. I quote 13:11-13:

<sup>11</sup> For the bodies of those animals whose blood is taken into the holy place by the high priest for sin are burned up outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> Hence Jesus also, that *he might sanctify the people with his own blood*, suffered outside the gate. <sup>13</sup> Let *us*, then, go forth to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach he bore.

The background of these words is the Day of Atonement. The bodies of the bull and the goat that were sacrificed were burned outside the camp. In a similar way, Jesus was fastened to a pole outside the city of Jerusalem, offering his body and blood as a ransom sacrifice. We can see this sacrifice in the light of 1 John 2:2:

<sup>2</sup> And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world’s.

The letter John wrote was addressed to people who had the heavenly calling, just as the Hebrews were. Jesus was a propitiatory sacrifice not only for “our sins” (those with the heavenly calling) but also for the sins of “the whole world” (all other people). We see the same contrast in Hebrews chapter 13. He offered his body and blood to “sanctify the people,” and those who were sanctified became “God’s people.” In contrast to the “people” is the group with a heavenly calling, referred to as “*us*” at Hebrews 13:13. And we see the same contrast in Hebrews chapter 4, between the Hebrew Christians with the heavenly calling, and the “people of God” mentioned in 4:9:

*Table 13.3: The contrast between the heavenly and earthly hopes*

	HEAVENLY CALLING	THE EARTHLY HOPE
Hebrews 4	«we» and «us»	Gods people ( <i>laos</i> )

Hebrews 13	«us»	the people ( <i>laos</i> )
1 John 2:2	«our»	the whole world ( <i>kosmos</i> )

What is clear from Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 is that the coming sabbath resting (4:9) does not apply to Christians with a heavenly calling (“we” and “us”). But it does apply to someone else, who is called “the people of God.” These are mentioned as “the people” in Hebrews 13:12, and as “the whole world” in 1 John 2:2.

To further emphasize the difference between God’s people and the sabbath resting on the one hand and the Hebrews who are referred to as “we” and “us” on the other, we should note that entering into God’s rest is based on a promise (*epaggelia*). I quote Hebrews 4:1 (above), 6:12 (in the middle), and 10:36 (below):

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since *a promise* is left of entering into his rest, let us fear that sometime someone of YOU may seem to have fallen short of it.

<sup>12</sup> in order that YOU may not become sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit *the promises*.

<sup>36</sup> For YOU have need of endurance, in order that, *after YOU have done the will of God*, YOU may receive the [fulfillment of *the*] *promise*.

Entering into God’s rest is based on a promise (4:1). But this promise is not limited to entering into the rest while living as humans. The promise also applies to the person’s eternal future (6:12). Entering into God’s rest is the same as doing God’s will, as 10:36 states. But the promise involves much more than resting with Jehovah in this system of things, for 10:36 refers to the fulfillment of the promises in the future. The promises were made by Jehovah, and we read about this in Genesis 22:15-18:

<sup>15</sup> And Jehovah’s angel proceeded to call to Abraham the second time out of the heavens <sup>16</sup> and to say: “‘By myself I do swear,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one, <sup>17</sup> I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. <sup>18</sup> And *by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves* due to the fact that you have listened to my voice.’”

These words refer to two promises: one to Abraham’s seed, which would be as numerous as the stars. The other was to all the nations of the earth, which would be blessed through Abraham’s seed. The promise to Abraham’s seed is for those who have the heavenly calling (Galatians 3:15-29), and the Hebrew Christians were among these, as we see in Hebrews 6:13-20:

<sup>13</sup> For when God made *his promise* to Abraham, since he could not swear by anyone greater, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying: “Assuredly in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you.” <sup>15</sup> And thus after [Abraham] had shown patience, he obtained [*this*] *promise*. <sup>16</sup> For men swear by the one greater, and their oath is the end of every dispute, as it is a legal guarantee to them. <sup>17</sup> In this manner God, when he

purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to *the heirs of the promise* the unchangeableness of his counsel, stepped in with an oath,<sup>18</sup> in order that, through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to the refuge may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us.<sup>19</sup> *This [hope]* we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and firm, and it *enters in within the curtain*,<sup>20</sup> where a forerunner has entered in our behalf, Jesus, who has become a high priest according to the manner of Mel·chiz'e·dek forever.

Here, the heirs of the promise are mentioned, who, according to Galatians 3:15-29, apply to those who have the heavenly calling. This is confirmed by Hebrews 6:19 in the quotation above. In Hebrews chapters 8-10, it is shown how the tabernacle, the priests, and the sacrifices in Israel were prophetic types of greater things. The Most Holy was a prophetic picture of heaven, and the curtain between the Holy and the Most Holy was a prophetic picture of Jesus' body. (Hebrews 10:19, 20)

When he offered his body, the curtain was removed, opening the way to heavenly life. When the Hebrews' hope, which was based on the promise to Abraham, "enters within the curtain" (6:19), it means they looked forward to a heavenly resurrection.

The promises to Abraham were not limited to his seed, who turned out to be people of all nations with a heavenly calling. (Hebrews 3:1) But the promises were that all nations of the earth would bless themselves through Abraham's seed. This is shown in Hebrews 2:5:

<sup>5</sup>For it is not to angels that he has subjected *the inhabited earth to come*, about which we are speaking.

The expression "all nations of the earth" must apply to all of Adam's descendants, both past and present. Jehovah also made other promises to Abraham, as we read in Genesis 12:6, 7 (above) and Psalm 105:9-11 (below):

<sup>6</sup>And A'bram went on through the land as far as the site of She'chem, near the big trees of Mo'reh; and at that time the Ca'naan·ite was in the land. <sup>7</sup>Jehovah now appeared to A'bram and said: "To your seed I am going to give this land." After that he built an altar there to Jehovah, who had appeared to him.

<sup>9</sup>Which [covenant] he concluded with Abraham, And his sworn statement to Isaac,<sup>10</sup> And which [statement] he kept standing as a regulation even to Jacob, As an indefinitely lasting covenant even to Israel, <sup>11</sup>Saying: "To you I shall give the land of Ca'naan As the allotment of YOUR inheritance."

These two quotations show that God's promise to Abraham was that his descendants would receive the land of Canaan. This means that Abraham and his family's personal hope was not tied to his seed, but to the promised land. We see this in Hebrews 11:8-12:

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed in going out into a place he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, although not knowing where he was going.

<sup>9</sup>By faith he resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the very same promise.<sup>10</sup> *For he was*

*awaiting the city having real foundations, the builder and maker of which [city] is God.*

<sup>11</sup> By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even when she was past the age limit, since she esteemed him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Hence also from one [man], and him as good as dead, there were born [children] just as the stars of heaven for multitude and as the sands that are by the seaside, innumerable.

Abraham and Sarah lived as foreigners in the land, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan. But that was not all, for we read in Hebrews 11:13-16

<sup>13</sup> In faith all these died, although they did not get the *[fulfillment of the] promises*, but they saw them afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land. <sup>14</sup> For those who say such things give evidence that they are earnestly seeking *a place* (*patris*, "fatherland") *of their own*. <sup>15</sup> And yet, if they had indeed kept remembering that [place] from which they had gone forth, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> *But now they are reaching out for a better [place], that is, one belonging to heaven.* Hence God is not ashamed of them, to be called upon as their God, *for he has made a city ready for them.*

All those who died according to verse 13, include Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. The verse shows that they had been promised a better future. But these promises had not been fulfilled, and verse 13 says they saw their fulfillment "afar off." The promise to Abraham was that all nations would be blessed through his seed. What promises Abel, Enoch, and Noah had received, we do not know. But verse 14 says that they had received promises and a future fatherland (*patris*). What this fatherland is, we see in Hebrews 2:5:

<sup>5</sup> For it is not to angels that he has subjected *the inhabited earth to come*, about which we are speaking.

According to Revelation 20 and 21, the coming inhabited earth has a heavenly government called "the new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:1-4). And the new Jerusalem is identical with God's kingdom. Therefore, Hebrews 11:16 says that the fatherland they were looking forward to, "belongs to heaven" and that God "has prepared a city for them."

We can now return to the promises made to Abraham, that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The Hebrews had the heavenly calling, and they therefore fulfilled the promise regarding Abraham's seed. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the others mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, looked forward to having a new fatherland on the coming inhabited earth. They therefore were included in the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his seed.

These two different promises and two different hopes are discussed in detail in Hebrews, and in Hebrews 11:39, 40, both promises and both hopes are brought together to a climax:

<sup>39</sup> And yet all these, although *they* had witness borne to *them* through their faith, did not get the [fulfillment of the] promise, <sup>40</sup> as God foresaw something better for *us*, in order that *they* might not be made perfect (*teleioō*) apart from *us*.

The faithful men and women of old who had a report of their faith in Hebrews chapter 11 died and did not “receive the fulfillment of the promise” of a fatherland in the inhabited earth to come. The reason was that God had provided something better for the Hebrews than for the faithful men and women of old.

What God had in mind for the Hebrews was to rule with Jesus in heaven. This was a better hope than living forever in the new earthly fatherland for God’s people. The Greek verb *teleioō* means “to make perfect, to reach the goal.” (UBS lexicon). Those of Abraham’s seed will be “made perfect” by a resurrection to heavenly life. The nations of the earth will be “made perfect” by the end of Jesus’ thousand-year reign.

*An important point in our context is that both groups “will be made perfect” together. Therefore, Hebrews 11:39, 40 says the same thing as Ephesians 1:10, that all things in the heavens and on the earth will be gathered together again in the Christ. These verses also say the same thing as Acts 3:19-21, that humans will experience “a refreshing rest” during the restoration of all things.*

The prophetic pattern that Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 show is:

*The Jews entered the promised land with a promise to enter into God’s rest. But they did not attain any rest because of a lack of faith and obedience.*

*The nations of the earth will enter into the “sabbath resting,” which is Jesus’ thousand-year reign. There, they will attain real rest from their imperfection and inherited sin. And at the end of the thousand years, they will be “made perfect.”*

Table 13:3 References to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ

Matthew 12:8	<i>For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.”</i>
Acts 3:19	<i>So that appointed times for a refreshing rest may come from Jehovah himself</i>
Hebrews 4:9	<i>Therefore, a sabbath resting remains for the people of God.</i>
Revelation 20:4, 12	<i>And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years.</i>
Acts 17:31	<i>The day when Jesus will judge the inhabited earth in righteousness.</i>

## CALCULATING THE LENGTH OF JEHOVAH’S DAY OF REST

A comparison of the words in Hebrews chapter 4 and the chronological information found in the Hebrew Scriptures, we can calculate the length of Jehovah’s day of rest.



Luke 3:23-38 lists all the ancestors of Jesus back to Adam. If we add the ages of these and use the chronology of the Hebrew Scriptures, we find that Adam was created in 4026 BCE.

In this year, 2025, 6,050 years have elapsed since Adam was created. However, Jehovah's day of rest did not start in the year 4026 when Adam was created. Eve was Jehovah's last creation, but we do not know exactly how long time Adam was alone before Eve was created.

I have demonstrated that Jesus' presence began in 1914, and, according to Matthew 24:34, the great tribulation and the start of Jesus' thousand-year reign will occur within a generation of 1914.

We know that after the great tribulation, Jesus will reign for 1,000 years.

If we add 1,000 years of the reign of Jesus to the 6,000 years from the creation of Eve, we find that Jehovah's day of rest is 7,000 years long.

We expect that the coming of Jesus as judge in the great tribulation occurs 6,000 years from the start of God's rest day of 7,000 years. But because we know the date of Adam's creation but not the date of Eve's, we can only estimate when Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation. The time between Adam and Eve must be added to the year 1975, which is 6,000 years from Adam's creation, to find the date for the great tribulation and the start of the restoration of all things. I will return to that below.

## **CALCULATING THE BEGINNING OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF JESUS AND THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

The fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 shows that the arrangement with the weekly sabbath is based on the pattern of God's week of creation:

<sup>8</sup> "Remembering the sabbath day to hold it sacred,<sup>9</sup> you are to render service and you must do all your work six days.<sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God. You must not do any work, you nor your son nor your daughter, your slave man nor your slave girl nor your domestic animal nor your alien resident who is inside your gates.<sup>11</sup> For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and he proceeded to rest on the seventh day. That is why Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and proceeded to make it sacred.

That every seventh year was a sabbath year was based on the pattern of Jehovah's week of creation as well. The same is true with the arrangement of the Jubilee. As I mentioned earlier, something similar to the Jubilee cycle is not found in any other nation in the ancient Near East. And there is no necessity in the arrangement of 49 and 50 years. A Jubilee of liberty could have come every 40 years or every 70 years, or at another number of years. Therefore, the 7 x 7 years and the 50th year must be a prophetic type with and antitype.

In view of Paul's words in Romans 15:4 that "*all* the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction," the arrangement of the Jubilee not only



served the nation of Israel but also was arranged for our instruction. When we also keep in mind that Paul says in Colossians 2:17 that festivals and sabbaths are prophetic types, and that both the 49th and the 50th year are sabbaths, there is strong reason to believe that the chronology of 49 and 50 years represents prophetic types with an antitypical fulfillment.

Moses connected the sabbath arrangement with Jehovah's week of creation, which is written in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. The Jubilee cycle is an arrangement of sabbaths, so let us connect the Jubilee cycle with the days of creation.

## APPLYING THE ANTITYPICAL JUBILEE TO THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN OF JESUS

The Hebrew word *yom* ("day") is used for each of the seven days described in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. And the description here is of a week of seven *yom* of equal length. The word *yom* usually refers to a day of 24 hours. But it can also refer to a much longer time period. We have seen that according to the chronology of the Bible, the seventh *yom*, which is the sabbath, is 7,000 years long. Does this mean that each of the other six days is 7,000 years as well?

The sedimentary rocks on the earth, containing fossils, must represent days three, four, five, and six of the creation week when plants and animals were created. Geologists believe that these rocks are hundreds of millions of years old. The sedimentary rocks were formed from small pieces of igneous rock and sand and possibly from material from space. The pieces of igneous rocks and the supposed material from space may be millions of years old. But there is nothing in the sedimentary rocks that would contradict the possibility that they —*the sedimentary rocks that were formed by igneous rocks and sand*—are 49,000 years old, and the creation week consists of 49,000 literal solar years. Evidence regarding the ages of rocks is presented in R.J. Furuli, *Can We Trust the Bible? With Focus on the Creation Account, the Worldwide Flood, and the Prophecies*, pages 26–102.

The important point is that, while the geological evidence allows for an age of the creation week of 49,000 years, the presentation in Genesis chapter 1 is of a week of seven days, where each day (*yom*) is of equal length. I use the word "conceptually" to show how Moses portrayed the seven days as equal in length, rather than to argue for the geological age of the creation days.

We have found that the 7th day is 7,000 years long. Each of the six creation days is, conceptually speaking, 7,000 years long. This means that, conceptually speaking, the creation week is 49,000 years long. Moses showed that the sabbath arrangement, of which the Jubilee cycle is a part, had its pattern from Jehovah's creation week.

How can we, based on the length of the creation week, find the antitypical application of the Jubilee year? I quote Leviticus 25:8-12:

<sup>8</sup> “*You will count off seven sabbath years, seven times seven years, and the days of the seven sabbath years will amount to 49 years.*” <sup>9</sup> You will then sound the horn loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement, you should cause the sound of the horn to be heard in all your land. <sup>10</sup> *You must sanctify the 50th year and*

*proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants.* It will become a Jubilee for you, and each of you will return to his property and each of you should return to his family. <sup>11</sup> A Jubilee is what that 50th year will become for you. You will not sow seed or reap what grew on its own from leftover grain nor gather the grapes of unpruned vines. <sup>12</sup> For it is a Jubilee. It is to be holy to you. You may eat only what the land produces by itself.

If we apply this chronology to the creation week, the 7,000 years of God's rest are a sabbath in relation to the creation week of 49,000 years. If we now count 48,000 years from the start of the creation week, we come to the last 1,000 years of Jehovah's day of rest of 7,000 years. According to Revelation chapter 20, the last 1,000 years of Jehovah's day of rest is the thousand-year reign of Jesus. As I have already described, this is the time for the restoration of all things.

But here there seems to be a discrepancy. The Jubilee is the prophetic type of the restoration of all things, and its antitype is the thousand-year reign of Jesus. But this thousand-year reign is the 49,000th year of creation week, while the Jubilee was the 50th year of the Jubilee cycle. The solution is that the liberty and rest for the people of Israel started in the 49th sabbath year and continued in the following Jubilee year, with the high point on the Day of Atonement (*yom kippur*) in the autumn month of Tishri in the 50th year, when the horn sounded and proclaimed liberty throughout the land, as the picture on page 1 shows.

Regarding the sabbath year, I quote Leviticus 25:2-5 (above) and Deuteronomy 15:1, 2, 12-14 (below):

<sup>2</sup> "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you must say to them, 'When YOU eventually come into the land that I am giving YOU, then *the land must observe a sabbath to Jehovah.*' <sup>3</sup> Six years you should sow your field with seed, and six years you should prune your vineyard, and you must gather the land's produce. <sup>4</sup> But in the seventh year there should occur a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath to Jehovah. Your field you must not sow with seed, and your vineyard you must not prune. <sup>5</sup> The growth from spilled kernels of your harvest you must not reap, and the grapes of your unpruned vine you must not gather. *There should occur a year of complete rest for the land.*

<sup>1</sup> *At the end of every seven years you should make a release.* <sup>2</sup> And this is the manner of the release: there will be a releasing by every creditor of the debt that he may let his fellow incur. He should not press his fellow or his brother for payment, because a release to Jehovah must be called.

<sup>12</sup> "In case there should be sold to you your brother, a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, and he has served you six years, then *in the seventh year you should send him out from you as one set free.* <sup>13</sup> And in case you should send him out from you as one set free, you must not send him out empty-handed. <sup>14</sup> You should surely equip him with something from your flock and your threshing floor and your oil and winepress. Just as Jehovah your God has blessed you, you should give to him.

In the sabbath year before the Jubilee year, as in any sabbath year, slaves should be set free, and debt should be cancelled. Deuteronomy 15:9 calls the sabbath year "the year of release" (*shanat hasshemittā*). Thus, the 49th sabbath year and the 50th Jubilee year were two pieces of the same cloth. The release, rest, and freedom started in the sabbath year and culminated in the Jubilee year. Applying the prophetic type

of the Jubilee cycle, both the 49th and the 50th year were prophetic types of the thousand-year reign of Jesus, where freedom, rest, and restoration of all things will occur.

## CALCULATING THE TIME OF THE ANTITYPICAL JUBILEE CYCLE

When we are calculating the time when the antitypical Jubilee starts after the great tribulation, we must keep in mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:36 regarding the time when he comes as judge in the great tribulation:

<sup>36</sup> “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.

We cannot know the day or year when the thousand-year reign of Jesus will begin. But the antitypical Jubilee cycle gives us some clues, and to understand this, we need to know when Jehovah God completed his creation. I quote Genesis 2:18-23:

<sup>18</sup> And Jehovah God went on to say: “It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him.” <sup>19</sup> Now Jehovah God was forming from the ground every wild beast of the field and every flying creature of the heavens, and he began bringing them to the man to see what he would call each one; and whatever the man would call it, each living soul, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man was calling the names of all the domestic animals and of the flying creatures of the heavens and of every wild beast of the field, but for man there was found no helper as a complement of him.

<sup>21</sup> Hence Jehovah God had a deep sleep fall upon the man and, while he was sleeping, he took one of his ribs and then closed up the flesh over its place. <sup>22</sup> *And Jehovah God proceeded to build the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman and to bring her to the man.* <sup>23</sup> Then the man said: “This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one will be called Woman, because from man this one was taken.”

This account shows that Eve was created after Adam and was the last part of God’s creation. After her creation, Jehovah’s day of rest began. How much time elapsed between the creation of Adam, and the creation of Eve is not stated. According to the Bible’s chronology, Adam was created in the year 4026 BCE, and 6,000 years from Adam’s creation ended in 1975 CE.

According to the prophetic Jubilee cycle, Jesus’s thousand-year reign begins in the 49,000th year of creation week. The time that elapsed between Adam and Eve’s creation must be added to 1975 (6,000 years after Adam’s creation) to determine the beginning of this 49,000th year, which marks the beginning of Jesus’s thousand-year reign.

As mentioned, we do not know the exact time that elapsed between Adam and Eve. But there is a limit that we can find by reading Genesis 4:25 (above) and 5:3 (below):

<sup>25</sup> And Adam proceeded to have intercourse again with his wife and so she gave birth to a son and called his name Seth, because, as she said: “God has appointed another seed in place of Abel, because Cain killed him.”

<sup>3</sup> And Adam lived on for a hundred and thirty years. Then he became father to a son in his likeness, in his image, and called his name Seth.

Because Set was born when Adam was 130 years old, Eve was created less than 130 years after Adam’s creation.

This means the thousand-year reign will begin less than 130 years after 1975.

Today marks 50 years since 1975. This means that the window of 130 years from 1975 to the start of the thousand-year reign of Jesus is restricted to 80 years (130 years minus 50 years)

After Eve’s creation and before the birth of Set, Cain and Abel were born, they grew up, became adults, and then Cain killed Abel. The time for this to happen must be subtracted from the 80 years mentioned to determine the start of the 49,000th year and the beginning of Jesus’s thousand-year reign.

As Jesus said, we do not know the day and hour when he will come as the judge in the great tribulation. But the Bible’s chronology indicates that this date is not far off.

## CONCLUSION

The first words of the introduction were:

### THE ISSUE IS:

*The requirement for receiving everlasting life is to believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and do the will of God (1 John 2:17). More than 90 % of all humans who have lived on earth have never had the chance to believe in Jesus Christ or do the will of God.*

*They cannot get everlasting life because they do not fulfill the requirement. But neither can they get everlasting death? Because of God’s righteousness and love for those he has created, he has made the arrangement that each one of these will get a personal chance to decide whether they will believe in Jesus Christ and do God’s will.*

*This is the reason for his plan throughout the ages for the restoration of all things.*

This book has shown how Jehovah God has solved this issue by the future resurrection of all Adam’s descendants who have died because of inherited sin. Over the thousand years, they will become perfect and sinless. And now they can decide if they will fulfill the requirement for everlasting life that still stands — believing in Jesus Christ and doing God’s will. The last chapters of Revelation suggest that most humans

who have lived through the thousand-year reign of Jesus will fulfill the requirements and receive everlasting life.

## **GOD'S PLAN THROUGH THE AGES FOR THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS HAVE NOW SUCCEEDED. THE EARTH IS A PARADISE FILLED WITH BILLIONS OF ADAM'S DESCENDANTS, WHICH WAS JEHOVAH'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE!**

<sup>33</sup> O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments [are] and past tracing out his ways [are]! <sup>34</sup> For "who has come to know Jehovah's mind, or who has become his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> Or, "Who has first given to him, so that it must be repaid to him?" <sup>36</sup> Because from him and by him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

### **ADDENDUM**

In the 21st century, the members of the Governing Body have rejected almost all prophetic types in the Scriptures. However, in 1987, the members of the Governing Body still believed in types and antitypes, as the Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses had believed in since the 1870s. I present a quotation from The Watchtower of January 1, 1987, page 30, regarding the Jubilee:

**In ancient Israel a cycle of 49 years was followed by a Jubilee year (50th year). Does that Jubilee correspond to the period following God's creative week of 49,000 years?**

Because the number 49 occurs in both cases, it might seem that the Jubilee would foreshadow the time *following* the end of a creative week of 49,000 years. But for mankind in general who receive God's approval, what occurred during Israel's Jubilee corresponds more with what will occur *during* the Millennium, the last thousand years of such creative week, not what follows after that week. Consider the basis for this:

First, the Mosaic Law required that every seventh year be a sabbath for the land; crops were not to be sown, cultivated, or harvested. After the seventh Sabbath year (the 49th year), there came a special Jubilee year, the 50th year. It was a sabbath during which the land was again to rest. More importantly, liberty was proclaimed. Hebrews who had sold themselves into slavery were freed from indebtedness and servitude. Also, hereditary land was returned to families who had been forced to sell it. So the Jubilee was a time of release and restoration for the Israelites.—Leviticus 25:1-46.

Second, a study of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy and of our location in the stream of time strongly indicate that each of the creative days (Genesis, chapter 1) is 7,000 years long. It is understood that Christ's reign of a thousand years will bring to a close God's 7,000-year 'rest day,' the last 'day' of the creative week. (Revelation 20:6; Genesis 2:2, 3) Based on this reasoning, the entire creative week would be 49,000 years long.

Noting the similarity in numbers, some have compared the 49 years of the ancient Jubilee cycle to such 49,000 years of the creative week. Reasoning this way, they have thought that Israel's *Jubilee* (50th) year should prefigure, or foreshadow, what will come *after* the end of the creative week.

However, bear in mind that the Jubilee was particularly a year of release and restoration for people. The creative week largely relates to the planet Earth and its development. But with regard to the outworking of God's purpose for man on earth, the globe itself has *not* been sold into slavery and thus is not in need of liberation. It is mankind that needs that, and humans have existed, not for 49,000 years, but for about 6,000 years. The Bible shows that some time after Adam and Eve were created, they rebelled against God, thus coming into captivity to sin, imperfection, and death. According to Romans 8:20, 21, Jehovah God purposes to liberate believing mankind from this slavery. As a result, true worshipers on earth "will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—See also Romans 6:23.

While the small group selected to be taken to heaven have had their sins forgiven from Pentecost 33 C.E. onward and thus already enjoy the Jubilee, the Scriptures show that the liberation for believing mankind will occur *during* Christ's Millennial Reign. That will be when he applies to mankind the benefits of his ransom sacrifice. By the end of the Millennium, mankind will have been raised to human perfection, completely free from inherited sin and death. Having thus brought to an end the last enemy (death passed on from Adam), Christ will hand the Kingdom back to his Father at the end of the 49,000-year creative week.—1 Corinthians 15:24-26.

Consequently, for believing mankind with earthly prospects, the liberation and restoration that marked the Jubilee year in ancient Israel will find a fitting parallel *during* the coming Millennial Sabbath. Then liberation and restoration will be experienced. That will be under Christ's rulership, "for Lord of the sabbath is what the Son of man is."—Matthew 12:8.

In 1995, the view of the Jubilee as a prophetic type of the thousand-year reign of Jesus changed. I quote from The Watchtower of May 15, 1995, page 24:

<sup>14</sup> The understanding of the antitypical Jubilee also received some clarification. Under the Law, every 50th year was a grand Jubilee, in which things were restored to their original owners. (Leviticus 25:10) It was long understood that this foreshadowed the Thousand Year Reign of Christ. In more recent times, however, it was seen that the antitypical Jubilee actually began at Pentecost 33 C.E., when those receiving the poured-out holy spirit were set free from bondage to the Mosaic Law covenant.—*The Watchtower*, January 1, 1987, pages 18-28.



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