

EVERY CHRISTIAN'S FINAL DESTINY

A biblical response to the teachings of
Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, & the Grace Evangelical Society.

A Paper

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by
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"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5b-6)

Preface

I first wrote this article many years ago in response to a Free Grace pastor who taught that not all Christians will rule and reign with Christ in the future 1000-year millennial kingdom. The Free Grace pastor who I'm referring to was influenced by the teachings of Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and the Grace Evangelical Society (GES), who unfortunately teach that not all Christians will reign with Christ in the Millennium.

The title of this paper is adapted from and in response to Joseph Dillow's book *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, which he has since updated and the book is now titled *Final Destiny*. Dillow takes the view that only "servant kings" (i.e. faithful Christians) will rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium. But in contrast to Dillow's view, the Bible teaches that all Christians will rule and reign with Christ as "kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6, KJV) not only in the millennial kingdom, but also on into eternity forever and ever!

Although I am a proponent of Free Grace Theology, I do not agree with Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and the GES on this issue. Actually, a lot of Free Grace people (and also many evangelical Christians in general) don't agree with Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and the GES on this issue. There are good Bible teachers on both sides, but from my research most of them take the position which I set forth in this paper, which is that all Christians will rule and reign with Christ in His 1,000-year millennial kingdom and on into eternity.

Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 6:3, the apostle Paul says to the carnal believers in Corinth: "Do you not know that we shall judge the angels? How much more, then, the things of this life!" It's unfortunate that the subject of ruling and reigning with Christ is such a neglected area of biblical and practical theology. As good friend of mine once told me, the subject of reigning with Christ in His future kingdom is "an undeveloped topic in a lot of believers' lives". In researching this topic, I was surprised to find out how little is actually written on the subject. Furthermore, often what is written is not what the Bible teaches. A true story illustrates this unfortunate reality. Several years ago, I sent an email to twelve Christian men (many of whom were pastors, teachers, and Bible conference speakers) asking them their thoughts on what the role of the church would be in the Millennium as it pertains to reigning with Christ. Would all Christians reign with Christ in His kingdom? Only two men (one a pastor and the other a Bible conference speaker and author) responded to my questions. In part, the pastor's response was as follows: "You asked whether believers of this age will rule with Christ in the Millennium. There is no place in the Bible, to my knowledge, where the Bible explicitly states that." The Bible conference speaker wrote, "I can only give you an opinion, since neither are delineated in Scripture." He went on to tell me that in his opinion reigning with Christ is a reward for only a relatively small number of faithful Christians.

It is my prayer that God will use *Every Christian's Final Destiny* to help shed some biblical light on this often neglected and much misunderstood prophetic subject.

RELEVANCE

If you're a Christian, this topic is about you! You'll be amazed to see what the Bible says about the glorious future God has prepared for each and every Christian in the coming 1,000-year millennial kingdom that Jesus Christ will set up on this earth: "*Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:6).

RIGHT OR REWARD?

Is reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom in "the blessed by and by" the *right* of every blood-bought child of God or is it a conditional *reward* based upon the believer's earthly walk in "the nasty now and now"? To put the question another way: Will all church-age Christians reign with Christ in His 1,000-year kingdom or will this be a privilege enjoyed by only a relatively few believers?

Some people in the Free Grace movement teach that reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom is a special privilege granted to only a few faithful saints. Regarding this teaching one pastor has written the following:

"Participation in this aspect [the 1,000 years] of the kingdom (for church age believers) is a reward based on faithful service and obedience to the commands of Scripture. Ruling and reigning with Christ is granted to those who 'overcome and keep' his deeds; in order to reign with Christ you must endure...Rev. 2:26, 27...2 Tim. 2:12...Authority in this 1000-year kingdom is a privilege and not to be mistaken as a spiritual blessing bestowed upon all Christians at the moment of salvation....You **must** deny yourself and become **worthy** in your walk in order to reign in the 1000-year kingdom".[1]

Similarly, another pastor writes that "we will be judges in the Millennial Kingdom 'if' we pass the test of a godly walk filled with an abundance of righteous acts....REV. 20:6 A promise for WORTHY Christians. CONDITIONAL."[2] Likewise, Bob Wilkin of the Grace Evangelical Society asserts:

"Some mistakenly think that reigning with Christ is synonymous with being a Christian. However, Paul makes it clear in this passage [2 Timothy 2:11-13] that only Christians who endure will reign. While all Christians have life, even faithless ones (vv 11, 13), only persevering Christians will rule with Christ. The Lord Jesus also made it clear that only overcoming Christians will rule with Him. Compare Luke 19:11-26; Rev 2:26; 3:21. While all Christians will be in His kingdom, only Christians who endured in this life will be part of His kingdom administration....If we don't endure, we shall not reign with Him."[3]

Contrary to the belief which says that reigning with Christ is a conditional reward for only a relatively few faithful Christians, the Scriptures set forth with a divine unity the fact that all church-age believers will reign with Christ in His future 1,000-year millennial kingdom, and on into eternity forever and ever. This amazing privilege is every Christian's *final destiny!*

Consider the following:

REASONS WHY ALL CHRISTIANS WILL REIGN WITH CHRIST

REASON # 1: The church is different and distinct from Israel (Rom. 9-11; 1 Cor. 10:32; Phil. 3:5-6) — particularly concerning her spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3, 3:8; Col. 2:10) and promises (1 Cor. 3:21-23; 2 Cor. 1:20, 6:10; 2 Pet. 1:3-4), and exalted position and destiny (Eph. 1:18-23, 2:4-7; Rev. 3:21).[4]

REASON # 2: The Christian is not under the dispensation of law, but under the dispensation of grace (Rom. 6:14-15, 7:4, 7:6; Gal. 3:19; Eph. 3:2-9; Col. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 9:17-21). It's important to recognize that the grace dispensation teachings for the church are contained primarily in the epistles, not the Gospels. The epistles are written specifically to the church (1 Cor. 1:2), whereas in the Gospels the church is referred to as something still future (Matt. 16:18) – for it began on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit baptizing both Jew and Gentile into one body (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 3:5-6; Col. 1:25-26). The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and parts of the Gospel of John do not describe the church of Jesus Christ in the dispensation of grace, but instead describe events that occurred prior to the church-age during the dispensation of law. Therefore, the biblical truths contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not contradict the grace dispensation truths contained in the epistles which reveal that every believer in Christ will reign with Christ and will enter into all the promises and blessings given to church-age believers in Christ.

REASON # 3: All Christians have an indivisible union and oneness with the risen and ascended Christ (Jn. 14:20; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 14:26; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-16, 4:4-6; Col. 3:3).

REASON # 4: The church is “one body” - the body of Christ - with Christ as its Head (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:20-23, 4:4, 5:30; Col. 1:17-18, 1:24).

REASON # 5: The church is the bride of Christ (Jn. 3:29, 14:1-3; Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-8).[5]

REASON # 6: The church-age believer's *position* in Christ is different from his or her *condition* in this world. The believer's position has been defined as “that which is true of me according to God's Word, regardless of how I feel or even what I do”. Some examples of positional truth can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, 6:2a, 6:3a, and 6:11. The believer's condition has been defined as “that which I find to be true in my practice and experience, concerning my feelings and conduct”. Some examples of conditional truth can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12, 3:1-4, and 6:4-6. Dr. C. I. Scofield writes:

"A distinction of vast importance to the right understanding of the Scriptures, especially of the Epistles, is that which concerns the standing or position of the believer, and his state, or walk. The first is the result of the work of Christ, and is perfect and entire from the very moment that Christ is received by faith. Nothing in the afterlife of the believer adds in the smallest degree to his title of favor with God, nor to his perfect security. Through faith alone this standing before God is conferred; and before Him, the weakest person, if he be but a true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, has precisely the same title as the most illustrious saint." [6]

The church-age believer's right to reign with Christ in the Millennium is based on the believer's heavenly *position* in Christ (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Eph. 2:6-7; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 17:14, 20:4, 20:6), whereas the believer's reward of reigning to a greater extent or degree with Christ in the Millennium is based on the believer's earthly *condition* (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12). [7]

REASON # 7: All Christians are purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10).

REASON # 8: All Christians are adopted into God's family with all the rights and privileges of adult sons (cf. Gal. 3:23-27, 4:1-7) – including being “heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom. 8:17; cf. Rom. 8:15-17, 8:23; Gal. 3:26, 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5; Titus 3:7). [8] Romans 8:17a says that Christians are “heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ”. Free Grace theologian William R. Newell comments:

"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ – I could not have the presumption to write these words if they were not in God's Holy Book. That a guilty, lost, wretched child of Adam the First should have written of him, **a joint-heir with Christ**, the Eternal Maker of all things, the Well-beloved of the Father, the Righteous One, the Prince of life – only God, the God of all *grace* could prepare such a destiny for such a creature!

And, we may humbly say, perhaps, that God could only do this by joining us in eternal union with His beloved Son, as the Last Adam, the Second Man; having released us from Adam the First and all his connections, at the cross, and having placed us in Christ Risen, in all the boundless and everlasting rights of His dear Son, whom He has 'appointed heir of all things!' Ages after ages of ever-increasing blessing forever and forever and forever, lie in prospect for believers – for the joint-heirs!" [9]

Similarly, John Nelson Darby writes:

"But what is the extent of this grace towards us? It has given us the same position that the Lord Jesus has. 'We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' It is not only certain that grace has visited us, has found us when we were 'in our sins,' but it is also certain that it has set us where the Lord Jesus Christ is; that we are identified with Him in all but his essential glory as God." [10]

REASON # 9: Concerning "things to come," the church possesses "all things" thru Christ (1 Cor. 3:21-23; cf. Rom. 8:30-32; 2 Cor. 6:10).

REASON # 10: All Christians are Christ's brothers (Jn. 20:17; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-12). As the songwriter has penned: "You're my friend and You are my brother, even though You are my king, I love You more than any other, so much more than anything!" Commenting on Romans 8:29, the words of William R. Newell are appropriate when he writes:

"**That He might be the First-born among many brethren**—In Christ, like Christ, brethren there with the First-born! This is the highest place, shall we not say, that God *could* give creatures! God puts us there: and of Christ it is written, 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren'; because we are 'all of one' with Christ! (Heb. 2:11). 'This, in fact, is the thought of grace, not to bless us only *by* Jesus, but to bless us *with* Him'." (Newell, *Romans Verse-By-Verse*, pp. 231-232, emphasis his.)

REASON # 11: All Christians are "in Christ" and Christ overcame (Jn. 16:33; cf. Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10, 3:3).

REASON # 12: All Christians are overcomers (1 Jn. 5:4-5).

REASON # 13: All Christians are super-overcomers (Rom. 8:37).

REASON # 14: All Christians are victorious through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-57). The gospel song "Victory in Jesus" captures this truth well. Here are a few stanzas from the song and the refrain:

I heard an old, old story,
How a Savior came from glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary
To save a wretch like me;
I hear about His groaning,
Of His precious blood's atoning,
Then I believed what Jesus did
And won the victory!

O victory in Jesus, My Savior, forever.
He sought me and bought me
With His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him,
And all my love is due Him,
He plunged me to victory,
Beneath the cleansing flood.

I heard about a mansion
He has built for me in glory.
And I heard about the streets of gold
Beyond the crystal sea;
About the angels singing,
And the old redemption story,

And some sweet day I'll sing up there
The song of victory!

REASON # 15: The promises given to the believer in Christ throughout the New Testament match the promises given to the overcomer in Revelation chapters 2-3. Concerning the promises to the overcomer in Revelation 2-3, Dr. John Whitcomb says, “All the promises to these churches apply to you and me.”[11]

REASON # 16: All Christians are overcomers because there is no tautology in Revelation 2:26. The word tautology means the “needless repetition of an idea, statement, or word”.[12] This needless repetition exists in Revelation 2:26 when the overcomer is defined as a faithful Christian who “runs and finishes the race, II Tim. 4:7”.[13] But when the overcomer is defined as a Christian who “runs and finishes the race,” then Revelation 2:26 would read something like this: “And he who runs and finishes the race [i.e. he who keeps My deeds until the end], and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations....” This needless repetition vanishes when the overcomer in Revelation 2:26 is defined to be simply a believer in Christ (Rom. 8:37; 1 Jn. 5:4-5; Rev. 2:11, 20:6, 21:6-8).

REASON # 17: The overcomer in Revelation 21:7 is contrasted with the unsaved in Revelation 21:8.

In Revelation 21:7-8 the apostle John speaks of only two groups of people:

- (1.) the overcomer who is God’s son (Rev. 21:7) – i.e. the saved
- (2.) the unsaved who experience the second death in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8) – i.e. the unsaved

Notice that in Revelation 21:7-8 John does *not* speak of three groups of people:

- (1.) the overcomer (i.e. the faithful, enduring believer – as some define it)
- (2.) the non-overcomer (i.e. the unfaithful believer – as some define it)
- (3.) the unsaved

In both 1 John 5:4-5 and here in Revelation 21:7-8 the apostle John views all Christians as overcomers.

REASON # 18: No Christian will be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11, 20:6).

In Revelation 2:11 a strong promise is given to the overcomer. Christ declares: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”. The word “not” is actually a double negative in the Greek language (*ou me*) and can literally be translated: “not at all” or “in no way”. Therefore Revelation 2:11 teaches that the overcomer shall “not at all be injured” by the second death! Revelation 2:11 is consistent and harmonious with Revelation 20:6 which says that the second death has “no power” over those who

have a part in the first resurrection – i.e. all believers (Jn. 5:25-29; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Rev. 20:4, 20:5b, 20:6). Thus, the promise given to “he who overcomes” in Revelation 2:11 is true of all believers (cf. Rev. 20:6, 20:14-15, 21:7-8).

Some non-traditional Free Grace teachers say that Revelation 2:11 and Revelation 20:6 should be understood to mean that Christians who are unfaithful in evangelism can be “indirectly hurt” by the second death of the unsaved. Unfaithful believers, they say, can be hurt by the second death. For example, one pastor writes:

"Smyrna is known as the persecuted church. Notice that they are not told to repent, but to be faithful unto death. If they are killed for their testimony they will be given a Crown of Life (Purple Heart). If they overcome, they will not be hurt by the second death. Now, if you are saved, how are you hurt by the second death? True believers do not go to the Lake of Fire. So what does this mean? If you, as a believer, are not faithful to the King of Kings, you will see those people who you were ashamed to witness to DROP INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE. SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THIS."[14]

This teaching fails to recognize the fact that the second death has “no power” over those who have a part in the first resurrection. In other words, the second death has *no power* over those who believe in Christ. Revelation 20:6 does *not* say that the second death has some power, a little power, indirect power, influential power, or slight power. But Revelation 20:6 does say: “*Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has **no power**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years*” (emphasis added).

There is something else to notice in the quote mentioned above. In regards to the crown of life, the quote says: “If they [the church in Smyrna] are killed for their testimony they will be given a Crown of Life (Purple Heart).” However, in the Bible “the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10) has more to do with enduring trials than winning souls (see James 1:2-4, 12; Rev. 2:10). (The apostle Paul refers to the soul-winner’s crown as a totally different crown altogether. He calls it the “crown of rejoicing” in 1 Thessalonians 2:19.) If Christ had (as some suppose) been speaking of evangelism in Revelation 2:8-11, why did He not promise the church in Smyrna the crown of rejoicing (i.e. the soul-winner’s crown)? Instead, Christ promised the church in Smyrna “the crown of life” (i.e. the martyr’s crown). Could it be that in Revelation 2:8-10 Christ wasn’t speaking of winning souls but of enduring trials?

The differences of reward crowns (relating to Rev. 2:8-10), as well as the fact that no Christian will be hurt in any way by the second death (Rev. 2:11) – for it has “no power” over them (Rev. 20:6) – are further reasons why many believe that all Christians will reign with Christ in the Millennium.

REASON # 19: All believers in Christ have a part in the first resurrection (Jn. 5:25-29, 6:28-29, 39-40; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:14-16, 4:18; Rev. 20:4-6), including carnal believers (1 Cor. 15:22, 51; 1 Thess. 5:4-11).

Concerning Revelation 20:6, notice that it does *not* say, “some of them will be priests of God and of Christ and some of them shall reign with Him for a thousand years”. Commenting on Revelation 20:6, Arno C. Gaebelin writes:

"They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The first resurrection is passed and all who have part in it reign with Christ, as priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years." [15]

REASON # 20: All Christians will enjoy Christ and be “caught up” or raptured (Rev. 2:28; cf. Rev. 22:16; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 5:4-11).

Revelation 2:28 begins with the connective word “and,” joining it to verses 26-27. Since all church-age believers will enter into the promise of Revelation 2:28 and be raptured, it’s reasonable to conclude that these same people also enter into the promises spoken of in Revelation 2:26-27 because of the coordinating conjunction word “and” linking verses 26-27 with verse 28.

REASON # 21: All Christians will be physically “with the Lord” following the Rapture (Jn. 14:3; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:15-17).

REASON # 22: All Christians will be with Jesus Christ in God the Father’s house following the Rapture (Jn. 13:36-14:6, 14:16-18, 14:27-29).

REASON # 23: The twenty-four elders in Revelation chapter 4 seem to represent the Church (Rev. 4:4). [16]

REASON # 24: All Christians will receive the inheritance (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:9-11; Gal. 3:18, 3:22, 3:26-29; Eph. 1:11-14; Col. 1:5, 1:12-13; Heb. 2:11, 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:3-5, etc.). Concerning this truth, even Joseph Dillow affirms:

"All believers will receive some inheritance, simply because God chooses to bestow it on all (cf. John 3:3, 5, 16, 36; Rom. 5:1, 9; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Cor. 15:53-57; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-17; 1 Pet. 1:9)." [17]

REASON # 25: All Christians are inheriting a kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11, 15:49-50; Gal. 4:26, 4:28-31; Eph. 1:11-14; Col. 1:12-13; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). John Nelson Darby writes:

"Begin at verse 12 [of Colossians 1], which shews where we (I mean all believers) are: 'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [i.e. qualified, worthy].' He has made us meet [i.e. qualified, worthy] – that is all settled. You will always find this in Scripture; you will not find anything there about growing up to be meet [i.e. qualified, worthy]; it speaks about growing up to Christ in everything; but this is a different thing. 'Which hath made us meet [i.e. qualified, worthy] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son!' [18]

REASON # 26: All Christians will return with Christ at His second coming to the earth at the end of the seven-year Tribulation to set up His kingdom (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14; Rev. 2:26-27, 17:14, 19:14).

REASON # 27: Those in Revelation 20:4 who sit on thrones and receive the right to judge are seen in context to be the returning and victorious armies of Christ, particularly His bride the church (Rev. 17:14, 19:7-8, 19:14, 19:19-20:4; compare with 1 Cor. 6:2-3).

The heavenly armies that return to earth with Christ at His Second Coming consist, at least, of angels (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7; cf. 2 Kings 6:16-17; Matt. 26:53; Lk. 24:4; Rev. 5:11, 12:7, 15:6, 19:14) and church-age believers (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:17b; Rev. 17:14, 19:7-8, 19:14, 19:19-20:4).

Revelation 19:19 describes in a general way those who fight in the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 16:13-16, 17:11-14). Then Revelation 19:20-20:3 implies the victory of the Lamb and His armies by describing those who are defeated in the battle. And finally, in context Revelation 20:4 describes the victorious ones as those who sit on thrones and the authority to judge is given to them.

There are several things to notice in this passage that help to identify those who sit on thrones and receive the authority to judge:

- (1.) Revelation 20:4 begins with the connective word “and” which functions as a linking word connecting Revelation 20:4 with the previous verses.
- (2.) Revelation 20:1 also begins with the connective word “and” which links it with the previous verses in Revelation chapter 19.
- (3.) The chapter division of Revelation chapter 20 is man-made (as are the rest of the chapter divisions in the New Testament).[19]
- (4.) The word “they” in Revelation 20:4a is a pronoun. A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. What noun does the pronoun “they” replace? It probably doesn’t make very much sense to say that the pronoun “they” refers to the kings of the earth deceived by Satan because those kings and their armies were defeated and killed (Rev. 19:20-20:3; cf. Rev. 16:13-16). Rather, in light of the context it becomes clear that the pronoun “they” in Revelation 20:4a refers to the victorious “army” (Rev. 19:19) of Christ – particularly His bride the church (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 17:14).[20]

“Lamb of God, when Thou in glory
Shalt to this sad earth return,
All thy foes shall quake before Thee,
Then shall we, at Thine appearing,
With Thee in Thy kingdom reign:
Thine the praise and Thine the glory,
Lamb of God, for sinners slain.”[21]

REASON # 28: The right to “judge the world” and “judge angels” is based upon the church’s *position* in Christ, not her *condition* in this world (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 20:4, 20:6).

Regardless of when the judgments of 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 occur, the truth that judgment will be committed to all Christians due to their position in Christ emphasizes every believer’s exalted position and place of privilege in Christ. John Nelson Darby writes the following:

"It is strange to see how the church of God has lost the sense of all things; and I refer to these passages to shew how the saints are associated with Christ, even with reference to those extreme cases. 'Do ye not know,' says Paul to the Corinthians, 'that the saints shall judge the world?' He tells them just to think of that, and then to consider whether they were not worthy 'to judge the smallest matter' (speaking of saints going to law with one another). Are you not able, any of you, to settle the commonest things between yourselves? 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?' It was necessary to tell them this, because they had not got hold of a right understanding of the place in which Christ has put the saints because they did not see their association with Christ in all the fullness of its meaning." (J. N. Darby, "The Second Coming of Christ," Lecture 2.)

In 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, Paul says to the carnal Corinthians, “the saints will judge the world” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2), and “we shall judge angels”. The apostle does not make exceptions or distinctions. He does not say, for example: “the faithful saints,” “the spiritual saints,” “the enduring saints,” “the deserving saints,” “some saints,” or “a few saints”. Instead, he simply says “the saints will judge the world”. Concerning this, one Free Grace pastor wrote the following (but thankfully he changed his position after I discussed it with him), he said:

"I don't think that 1 Cor. 6:2-3 is necessarily teaching that each and every saint in Christ will exercise rule with Christ in the millennium and into eternity. It could simply be a reference to believers in Christ generally speaking (ie – 'don't you know that we as Christians will...') or it could be a reference simply to the fact that we'll be present to consent to the final judgment of unsaved mankind (Matt. 12:41-42) and the fallen angels."

In 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, does the apostle Paul speak of believers *consenting* or does he speak of believers *judging*? Is Paul saying that the saints will simply assent or agree with the judgments of someone else, or is he teaching that the saints will actually make judgments themselves? Paul is clearly teaching that the saints themselves will make judgments, for he says, “the saints will judge the world” (1 Cor. 6:2) and “we shall judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:3). In both cases the verb “judge” in the original Greek is a future tense, active voice, indicative mood verb. The Greek future tense corresponds to the English and indicates that the event has not yet occurred. *The active voice represents the subject as the doer or the performer of the action.* The indicative mood is a simple statement of fact. William R. Newell affirms:

"The Church will reign with Christ in glorified bodies like His (*I Corinthians 6:2, 3*) ... *Judgment*, and not the mere execution of it, will belong to—be 'given to'—the Church." (Newell, *Revelation Verse-By-Verse*, p. 324, emphasis his.)

The apostle Paul reasons that the carnal Corinthians were competent to judge “matters of this life” before the millennial kingdom is set up, as well as “judge angels” after the Millennium.[22] If all Christians are “competent” (1 Cor. 6:2, NASB) and “worthy” (KJV) to judge things in this life prior to the Millennium, and these same people will judge angels at the conclusion of the Millennium, wouldn’t it be appropriate to place these believers in places of authority during the Millennium as well? And this is indeed the case, as 1 Corinthians 6:2 and Revelation 20:4-6 indicate.

REASON # 29: Judgment is a privilege and responsibility of kings (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Kings sit on thrones and judge (1 Kings 3:16-28; Prov. 16:10, 20:8; Rev. 20:4).

REASON # 30: If “the friend of the bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29)[23] will reign with Christ (Dan. 7:27; cf. Rev. 20:4b), how much more will the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:4-6)!

REASON # 31: The redeemed are called “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19) and “kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10, KJV; cf. Rev. 1:5-6, 20:4, 20:6).[24]

REASON # 32: All Christians are royal kings and priests according to the order of Melchizedek (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6, 20:6) under Jesus Christ, their High Priest (Heb. 3:1, 5:10, 6:20).

REASON # 33: All Christians will be greater than angels in the millennial kingdom (1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 2:5-8).

REASON # 34: All Christians will exercise dominion over the earth in the millennial kingdom (Eph. 1:20-23, 2:6-7; Heb. 2:5-8; Rev. 5:9-10, 20:4, 20:6).

REASON # 35: The church is seated with Christ “not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:20-23, cf. Eph. 2:6-7; Col. 3:1-3). When the apostle Paul says “this age” (Eph. 1:21, Greek: *toutō aiōn*), he means the church age.[25] When Paul says “that which is to come,” he means the age or period of time to come after the church-age, which is the millennial kingdom-age (the Millennium).

REASON # 36: All Christians will be seated with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3:21).

Notice in Revelation 3:21 that church-age believers will be seated with Christ and that they will be seated on His throne. One pastor suggested the following analogy to me in an attempt to support his belief that not all Christians will rule and reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom: “A two year old prince may be seated upon the lap of his father the king, and yet, all the subjects know that the prince is not exercising any rule, yet he is to be honored along with the king.” But this analogy is unbiblical for the following reasons:

- (1.) Christians are adopted into God’s family with all the rights and privileges of adult sons (Gal. 3:22-4:7).[26]

- (2.) Christians will be kings who reign in the Millennium, not simply honored princes (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:4, 20:6).
- (3.) Christians will be seated with Christ (not upon Christ) on His throne (Rev. 3:21).
- (4.) Christ is not the Christians' father; Christ is our brother (Psa. 22:22; Jn. 20:17; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-12).

REASON # 37: It is consistent with the grace of God to say that all Christians will reign with Christ in His millennial kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 1:20-23, 2:4-7). Arno C. Gaebelin writes:

"Oh! Wonderful grace which has saved us! Grace which has saved us in Christ and through His ever precious blood delivered us from eternal perdition! Grace which saved us from Satan's power, from sin and all its curse! Grace which has lifted into such heights of glory and has made us the sons of God and the joint-heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ! And how little after all we enter into all these things, which ought to be our daily joy and delight. How little we know of the power of the coming glory of being with Christ and reigning with Him!"[27]

REASON # 38: 2 Timothy 2:12 refers to the reward of an elevated position of reign with Christ in the Millennium, not the right of reigning with Christ which all believers are promised (Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:6).[28]

In 2 Timothy 2:12 the apostle Paul says that Christians must "endure" in order to receive the reward of reigning to a greater extent or degree with Christ.[29] Exactly what are Christians called to "endure"? From the immediate context, it becomes clear that Paul is talking about enduring suffering, hardship, and persecution for Christ (see 2 Tim. 1:12, 2:3, 2:8-10, 4:5).

It's important to point out that Paul's statement "if we endure" (2 Tim. 2:12), is *not* true of all Christians. Although all Christians suffer for Christ and experience tribulation in this life as a result of their faith (Jn. 16:33, 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17-18, 8:23; 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 5:9-10; 2 Pet. 2:7-8; Rev. 1:4, 1:9, 3:14-18), it's clear that not all Christians *endure* suffering for Christ or persevere through tribulation (2 Tim. 4:5; Heb. 12:1-3; Jms. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). For example, if all Christians automatically endured suffering, hardship, and persecution for Christ, then it would be unnecessary for the apostle Paul to command us to "endure hardship" (2 Tim. 4:5).[30]

REASON # 39: The Christian's right to reign with Christ is not a reward (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:4, 20:6). In other words, reigning with Christ is a salvation blessing granted to all Christians.

REASON # 40: Ezekiel 44:10-14 is consistent with Revelation 20:6.

Ezekiel 44:10-14 describes how the resurrected Levites will serve God in the future millennial temple. The faithful Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of God's sanctuary when

the sons of Israel went astray from God during the reign of King Josiah, will be privileged come near to God to minister to Him in the Millennium (Ezek. 44:15). These faithful Levitical priests will stand before God to offer Him the fat and the blood (Ezek. 44:15). In other words, one of their duties in the future Millennium will be to keep charge of the altar (Ezek. 40:46).

The unfaithful Levitical priests, those who went far from God after idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel during the reign of King Josiah, will “bear their iniquity” (Ezek. 44:10, 12, KJV) and “the shame of their detestable practices” (Ezek. 44:13, NIV).[31] In other words, they will “bear the consequences of their sin” (Ezek. 44:10, 12, NIV). These Levites are eternally saved and forgiven – for they enter into the Millennium in their resurrected bodies to minister in God’s sanctuary (Ezek. 40:45, 44:10-14; Rev. 20:6). Although these unfaithful Levites will be priests in the Millennium, they will be excluded from the higher priestly duties (Ezek. 44:13).

From the example of the unfaithful Levitical priests it becomes clear that unfaithful Old Testament believers are still given a place of service in the millennial kingdom. Matthew Henry comments, “Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those who have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.”[32] No wonder the apostle John can say, “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

REASON # 41: The clear teaching of any Scripture must validate the main truth of any parable.

When interpreting parables, one must “validate truths observed with what the Scriptures teach elsewhere”. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest has noted: “No conclusion must be gathered from any part of a parable or type which is in its doctrine inconsistent with the clear revelation of Scripture.”[33] Likewise, Dr. Paul Lee Tan in his book *The Interpretation of Prophecy* is emphatic when he says: “*Do not prove doctrine with parable.*—Parables may be used to illustrate doctrines, but never to prove them.” (Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* [Winona Lake, IN: Assurance Publishers, 1978], p. 150, emphasis his.)

This principle is important because some Free Grace Bible teachers are trying to use the parables of Jesus to prove that not all Christians will reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom. For example, they say that the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 proves that attending the wedding feast at the beginning of the Millennium is a reward given only to faithful and obedient Christians. But that conclusion is unbiblical because the clear teaching of Scripture does not validate such an interpretation. The clear teaching of Scripture in regards to the church is set forth in the New Testament epistles, not in the four Gospels.[34]

REASON # 42: The parables of Jesus in the Gospels should not be made the first nor the only source of Scripture doctrine.[35]

REASON # 43: Many dispensational Bible teachers, pastors, and theologians agree that all Christians will reign with Christ in His millennial kingdom. Those who teach that all Christians will reign with Christ in the Millennium include men such as: Donald Grey Barnhouse,[36] E. W.

Bullinger,[37] Lewis Sperry Chafer,[38] John Nelson Darby,[39] Charles L. Feinberg,[40] Arno C. Gaebelein,[41] Billy Graham,[42] Oliver B. Green,[43] Robert Gromacki,[44] M. R. DeHaan,[45] Herman Hoyt,[46] Thomas Ice,[47] H. A. Ironside,[48] Grant R. Jeffrey,[49] William Kelly,[50] Tim LaHaye,[51] Clarence Larkin,[52] John MacArthur,[53] Alva J. McClain,[54] James H. McConkey,[55] J. Vernon McGee,[56] Dwight L. Moody,[57] William R. Newell,[58] William Orr,[59] Rene Pache,[60] J. Dwight Pentecost,[61] William Pettingill,[62] John Phillips,[63] John R. Rice,[64] Charles Ryrie,[65] C. I. Scofield,[66] Thomas Scott,[67] Renald Showers,[68] J. B. Smith,[69] Lehman Strauss,[70] John Walvoord,[71] John Whitcomb,[72] Warren Wiersbe (see his commentary on Revelation), Leon J. Wood,[73] Kenneth Wuest,[74] and George Zeller.[75]

RELATED TOPICS

Why Even Carnal Christians Will Be Married to Christ

(2 Corinthians 11:1-4)

The apostle Paul betrothed the Corinthian Christians to Christ through the gospel, not through their good works (2 Cor. 11:2; cf. Rom. 6:1-5, 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:23). As the Corinthians spiritual father (1 Cor. 4:14-15), Paul desired that they be completely pure and devoted to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3; cf. 2 Cor. 12:20-21). But Paul feared that the Corinthians might be deceived into accepting a false gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4; cf. Gal. 1:8).

In this world the church is often sinful and impure (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 12:21). But when Christ returns to take His bride to heaven, the church will be glorified in the twinkling of an eye and will be as pure as Christ is pure (1 Cor. 1:7-8, 15:50-58; Phil. 1:6, 3:20-21; 1 Jn. 3:2-3). Then in heaven the church will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 19:7). After the church is glorified and rewarded, Christ will present the church to Himself in heavenly marriage as a completely pure and spotless bride (Eph. 5:26-27; 1 Jn. 3:2-3; Rev. 19:7-8),

Here are three more points to consider in regards to why all Christians will be married to Christ:

- (1.) In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the verb translated “might present” (NASB) should more literally be translated “to present” (HCSB) because in the original Greek the verb is an infinitive.
- (2.) In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Paul compares the Corinthians to Eve, Adam’s wife. Several times in the Bible Adam is compared and contrasted with Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 15:45-47). Just as Eve was still married to Adam after she was deceived, the carnal Corinthians would still be betrothed to Christ even if they should be led astray. This is because Christians are betrothed to Christ through the gospel, not through good works (Rom. 6:1-5, 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:23).

- (3.) The Judgment Seat of Christ is part of the church's preparation for the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7), and every Christian will be present at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Christ's Message to the Church in Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

It's evident that in Revelation 3:1-6 Christ is addressing people who are eternally saved. There are several reasons for this conclusion:

- (1.) Christ's message to the church in Sardis concerns rewards for good deeds. The Bible makes it clear that the unsaved have no deeds that are truly good (Isa. 64:6; Phil. 3:7-9).
- (2.) Unbelievers cannot "strengthen the things that remain" (Rev. 3:2), for they are "without strength" (Rom. 5:6).
- (3.) Most of those in the Sardis church had soiled their clean garments (Rev. 3:4). The unsaved never had clean garments to soil (Isa. 64:6).
- (4.) Believers can be "dead" (Greek *nekros*, see Lk. 15:24; Jms. 2:17).
- (5.) Christ can come "as a thief" for believers (Lk. 12:40; 1 Thess. 5:2-11; Rev. 3:3, 16:15).

Although the church people in Sardis are eternally saved, they are for the most part "carnal" (or "fleshly," see 1 Cor. 3:1-3). Notice what Christ says to them: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead [Greek *nekros*]" (Rev. 3:1). The apostle James says something similar to the Christians he's writing to in his epistle. He writes: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead [Greek *nekros*], being by itself" (Jms 2:17, also see 2:14, 2:16). This dead faith that James talks about is a near fruitless faith, a faith "by itself" – much like the faith of the carnal Christians in the Sardis church.[76] The Christians in Sardis are told to "wake up" (Rev. 3:2) or "be watchful" (Rev. 3:2, NKJV). They are challenged to "strengthen the things that remain" (Rev. 3:2).

As mentioned above, Christ can come "as a thief" upon unspiritual carnal believers (Rev. 3:3, also see Lk. 12:40; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Rev. 16:15). This simply means that when Christ returns – either for His church at the Rapture prior to the Tribulation (1 Thess. 5:1-11; Rev. 3:3) or for those left behind on earth at the end of the Tribulation (Lk. 12:40; Rev. 16:15), some believers will not be ready for Christ's return and will not be looking for Him nor expecting Him.

Only a "few" people in the Sardis church were spiritual (Rev. 3:4) and walking in a manner worthy of their heavenly calling, like it says in Ephesians 4:1. These few are described as those "who have not soiled their garments (Rev. 3:4). The implication is that most of the Christians in the Sardis church had soiled their clean garments.[77]

The phrase “and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4) speaks of reward (compare also 1 Tim. 5:18; Rev. 22:12).[78] Although all Christians will be physically with the Lord forever following the Rapture (see Jn. 14:3, 17:24; 1 Thess. 4:15-17), walking with Him seems to be a reward for those who are “worthy” (Rev. 3:4) and “deserving” (Rev. 16:6). Pastor Dennis Rokser of Duluth Bible Church believes that the term “walk” in Revelation 3:4 teaches the following principle: “My walk and service for Christ after salvation will determine my walk and service for Christ in the future.” Rokser goes on to add: “The whole concept of rewards comes into play here.”

Concerning the term “worthy” in Revelation 3:4, notice that it is not connected with the idea of reigning with Christ (that is, the right of reigning with Christ which all believers are promised), but with walking with Christ. Unworthy and worthy Christians will reign with Christ (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:6, 21:6-8); worthy Christians will also “walk with Christ in white” (Rev. 3:4). This may indicate a higher position of rule and responsibility in the 1,000 year millennial kingdom.

The promises to the overcomers in the Sardis church begin in Revelation 3:5. Keep in mind that the promises to the overcomers in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 act as encouragements, incentives, and motivations to repent (appropriate for the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea), or to press on in faithfulness (appropriate for the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia) based on what the Christian already possesses in Christ (see Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:1-11; Titus 2:12; Heb. 12:28).

In Revelation 3:5 it says, “He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments”. The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) reads: “In the same way, the victor will be dressed in white clothes” (Rev. 3:5). The “victor” (or overcomer) refers to each and every Christian (see Jn. 16:33, Rom. 8:37, 1 Jn. 5:4-5, Rev. 2:11, 20:6, 21:6-8). Notice that the promise to the overcomer in Revelation 3:5 is about wearing white garments and says nothing about walking with Christ.[79] In other words, all Christians will wear white garments, but walking with Christ seems to be a reward for only those Christians who are worthy. There are many Bible verses showing that each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will be clothed in white apparel (compare Job 29:14, Isa. 61:10, Jn. 9:7, 13:10, 1 Cor. 3:15, 6:11, Gal. 3:27, Eph. 5:27, Rev. 1:5, 4:4, 7:9-10, 7:14, 19:8, 22:14). So the wearing of white garments in Revelation 3:5 is a promise to all believers.

The promise to the overcomer continues: “and I will not erase his name from the book of life” (Rev. 3:5).[80] This is not a threat but a promise! Christ is not implying that a Christian can have his or her name erased from the book of life. Instead, Christ is emphasizing that He will never erase the name of any Christian out of the book of life! This has to do with the eternal security of the believer. Every Christian's name is permanently recorded in the book of life (see Jn. 5:24-25, 6:37, 6:39, 6:40; Rev. 20:6, 20:15).

Christ also promises the overcomer: “and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels” (Rev. 3:5). Keep in mind that each part of this three-part promise is exactly that – a promise (not a warning). In other words, each part is true of all Christians. How can the promise that Christ will confess the name of every overcomer to the Father be reconciled with Christ's

warning of denial in Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, and Luke 12:8-9? While Christ's words in Revelation 3:5 are spoken to the church (which was a "mystery" in the Old Testament and a parenthesis between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel), Christ's words in the Gospel accounts were spoken to those living under the Mosaic Law and during the 70 weeks of Daniel – that is, Old Testament Jewish believers (see Matt. 10:1-5; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 11:29-32, 11:45-54, 12:1, 12:11).[81] Notice the context of Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, and Luke 12:8-9:

- the exclusively Jewish emphasis (Matt. 10:5-6, 10:23; Mk. 7:27)
- the special gifts (Matt. 10:8; Lk. 9:2)
- the ministry requirements of the twelve disciples (Matt. 10:9-14; Lk. 9:3-5)
- the proclamation of the kingdom gospel (Matt. 10:7; Lk. 9:2)
- Christ's command of silence that He is the Messiah (Mk. 8:30; Lk. 9:21)
- the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:10)
- the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:11-12)
- the focus on the Second Advent of Christ to the earth as opposed to the Rapture of the church (Matt. 10:22-23; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26)

In the Gospels, Christ's confession and denial of men is said to occur after His Second Coming to earth (Matt. 10:22-23; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26), not after the Rapture at the Judgment Seat of Christ. As His Second Coming to the earth, Christ will not deny His wife (Rev. 19:7), for she is:

- already glorified (1 Cor. 15:50-58; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2-3)
- already judged (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12; cf. Rev. 4:4-10, 19:7-8)
- altogether holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27; 1 Thess. 3:13; Rev. 19:8, 19:14, 20:6)
- victorious with Him (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:17b; 2 Thess. 1:10; Jude 14; Rev. 2:26-27, 17:14, 19:14)

It seems that the confession and denial of individuals spoken of in the Gospels will occur at the Rod Judgment of Israel (Matt. 24:29-31; Ezek. 20:33-38) – which occurs *after* the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (Matt. 24:29-51, 25:31).

It is true that believers can be personally ashamed before Christ "at His coming" at the Rapture (1 Jn. 2:28). Christians can suffer loss of a reward (1 Cor. 3:14-15), lose their crown (2 Jn. 8; Rev. 3:11), be disqualified for a prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27), and denied the reward of an exalted position of rule and reign in the millennial kingdom (2 Tim. 2:12b).[82] Yet Christ's direct promise to church-age believers still stands, and will stand: "I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5). What amazing grace from the God of all grace (Eph. 2:4-7; 1 Pet. 5:10)! "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). Amen!

Will Unfaithful Christians Be Naked and Ashamed in Heaven?

(Revelation 16:15)

Revelation 16:15 reads as follows: “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.”

Does this Bible verse teach that certain unfaithful Christians will enter into the millennial kingdom and maybe even enter into eternity naked and ashamed? Some Bible teachers think it does. For example, one non-traditional Free Grace author puts it this way:

"The question is: 'When we stand before Him, will we be presented holy, blameless and beyond reproach, or will we be presented before our Father with shame...Rev. 16:15...?'"

"They [Christians] will enter into eternity in shame."

"Where will people be walking around naked? They will be walking around outside the city on the new earth in eternity." [83]

However, in Revelation 16:15, God is not directly speaking to church-age believers (Christians). Instead, He is speaking to believers living during the future seven-year Tribulation period. This is true for at least three reasons:

1. The context of the passage has to do with the end of the seven-year Tribulation. Revelation 16:15 takes place after the sixth bowl judgment (the Euphrates River dries up, Rev. 16:17) and before the seventh bowl judgment (the destruction of the city of Babylon, Rev. 16:17).
2. The church is not on earth during the Tribulation, for the Rapture of the church occurs prior to the Tribulation - most likely in Revelation 4:1 (also see 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). [84]
3. The coming of Christ spoken of in Revelation 16:15 refers to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth at the end of the Tribulation (see Rev. 17:14, 19:1); it does not refer to the Rapture of the Church nor does it have to do with the Judgment Seat of Christ. [85]

Although Christ's announcement in Revelation 16:15 is addressed to believer's who will be living during the coming seven-year Tribulation, what Christ says to them is similar to His message to the believers in the Sardis church (see Revelation 3:1-6). In both instances, Christ encourages believers to be watchful for His return and faithful and pure so that they will not be ashamed when He comes.

Christians can be carnal and “naked” in their condition in this world like it says in Revelation 3:17-18. Christians can be “ashamed” at Christ's coming at the Rapture like it says in 1 John 2:28. Christians can “suffer loss” of a reward like it says in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 and 2 John 8. But praise God that we will one day be completely sanctified through glorification (1 Cor. 15:50-58; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Jn. 3:2-3) and prepared (Rev. 19:7) by the Judgment Seat of Christ to marry the Lamb of God, the blessed Lord Jesus (Rev. 19:7-8), judge angels and the world (1 Cor. 6:2-3), and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:6) and then on into eternity forever and ever (Rev. 22:5)! “Not to us O LORD, not to us, but to Thy name be the glory, because of Thy righteousness, and because of Thy truth!” (Psa. 115:1).

The Christians' Wedding Garment (Revelation 19:8)

Revelation 19:8 says that all Christians will be given fine linen to wear as part of the wedding garment and that the fine linen of the wedding garment “represents the good deeds of God’s Holy people” (Rev. 19:8, NLT; also see Eph. 5:27; 2 Cor. 11:2). Yet 1 Corinthians 3:15 indicates that some Christians will only get through the Bema Seat Judgment by the skin of their teeth and “be saved yet so as by fire”. In other words, they may not have done any good works during their Christian lives and they are “barely saved” (1 Pet. 4:18; also see Rev. 3:14-18). How does all this add up?

In 1 Corinthians 3:15, the apostle Paul teaches that “if any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.” These Christians will still be included as part of Christ’s one bride (see Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:22-33), and they will even be clothed with the wedding garment of fine linen (Rev. 19:7-8).

While Revelation 19:8 speaks of fine linen in the singular, the terms “righteous acts” and “people” are plural. This is because the Bible says that although we are one body we are individually members of it (Rom. 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 12:27). William R. Newell concludes: “Now, although for our service each one in the kingdom will ‘receive his own reward according to his own labor [1 Cor. 3:8],’ yet all the works wrought through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in and by the saints of the Bride will all belong alike to that holy Bride: for the whole Church is the Bride.”[86]

The Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15, 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10)

What is the Judgment Seat of Christ?

The Judgment Seat of Christ is the judgment of the church of Jesus Christ.[87] The Bible says that “judgment must begin with the house of God” (1 Pet. 4:17). The Judgment Seat of Christ is also called the Bema Seat Judgment because the Greek word for “judgment seat” in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 is *bēma*. [88]

When is the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Concerning the timing of the Judgment Seat of Christ, C. I. Scofield writes: “THE WORKS OF BELIEVERS ARE TO BE JUDGED. – Time, when Christ comes [1 Cor. 4:5]. Place, ‘In the air [1 Thess. 4:17].’”[89] When Christ returns at the Rapture, all Christians will be caught up together with the Lord in the air and will be transformed into the very image of Christ (Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 15:43, 15:49-58; 2 Cor. 3:18, 5:2-4; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn. 3:2-3) and then rewarded for their good works (1 Cor. 3:13-15, 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8).[90] And so, the Judgment Seat of Christ occurs after the church is resurrected and caught up to be with the Lord in Heaven (1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 22:12).

The Purposes of the Judgment Seat of Christ

The Judgment Seat of Christ has at least four purposes:

- 1.) *revelation* of each Christian's earthly works, including the things hidden in the darkness and the motives of men's hearts (1 Cor. 3:13, 4:5),
- 2.) *evaluation* of the quality of each Christian's earthly work (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:10),
- 3.) *compensation* for "deeds in the body," according to what he had done, whether good or bad (1 Cor. 3:13-15, 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2 Jn. 8), and
- 4.) *preparation* of the bride for the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-8).

The Judgment Seat of Christ does not involve purification of the Christian as some people think.[91] Every Christian arrives at the Judgment Seat of Christ already fully purified from the presence and power of sin (1 Cor. 15:50-57; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2-3). In the words of F. W. Grant, the Christian arrives at the Judgment Seat of Christ "in resurrection glory, and in the image of His Lord".[92] Although all believers will be glorified (Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 15:40, 49), some may shine brighter than others (see Daniel 12:3).[93]

Regarding the supposed purification of the Christian at the Judgment Seat of Christ it has been said, "Christians will have to face fire!"[94] But in light of the truths set forth above it would seem more accurate to say, "The *earthly works* of Christians will have to face fire!" Although the Judgment Seat of Christ does not exist for the purpose of further purifying glorified believers, it should have a purifying effect on the daily lives of Christians now (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Col. 3:23-25; Heb. 10:35, 12:28-29; 1 Pet. 1:17; 1 Jn. 2:28; Rev. 2:10).

Furthermore, the Judgment Seat of Christ does not involve damnation of the Christian, or of anyone for that matter. Writing to Christians about "the Day" (1 Cor. 3:13) of their judgment (the day of the Judgment Seat of Christ), the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:15, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." Paul likewise says in 1 Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God."

Sins and the Judgment Seat of Christ

It is true that concerning salvation, judgment is over for the Christian (see John 5:24). However, concerning rewards all Christians still face judgment (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:17). Christians will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for the deeds done in the body for which one might expect to receive a reward and to see whether

those deeds were truly good (2 Cor. 5:10-11; cf. 1 Cor. 3:14, 4:5; Col. 4:23-24; 1 Tim. 5:25) or if they just looked good but were actually bad (2 Cor. 5:10-11; cf. 1 Cor. 3:15, 9:27; Col. 3:25; 1 Tim. 1:19-20, 5:24; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; 2 Jn. 8).

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not for the purpose of judging sin because Christ has put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). “He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west” (Psa. 103:12, NLT). Yet the Judgment seat of Christ necessarily involves sin because the apparent “good” works of some Christians were in reality done with sinful motives or attitudes and in the end will be judged to be actually bad works (1 Cor. 3:15, 4:5; Phil. 1:15-17; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 1:19-20, 5:24-25; 2 Tim. 4:14; Heb. 4:12-13; Jms. 5:9; Rev. 2:23).

Some people say that according to 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Colossians 3:25, unconfessed and unforsaken sin will be judged at the Bema Seat.[95] This teaching implies that sin (at least unconfessed sin) is the focus of judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It must be clearly stated here that it is Christian works which are the focus of judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ, not sins per se (see 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17). The purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ is not to judge sin but Christian works—works for which one might expect to receive a reward (1 Cor. 3:10-12; cf. Gal. 1:8; Col. 4:17; Jms. 3:1; 1 Pet. 4:11). In light of Colossians 3:25, the bad works of 2 Corinthians 5:10 are seen to be works that are apparently or outwardly good, such as outward obedience, external service, and pleasing people (Col. 3:22; cf. Eph. 6:6-7).[96] But these works are actually judged to be “bad” (Greek *kakos*, 2 Cor. 5:10) and “wrong” (Greek *adikeo*, Col. 3:25) due to the underlying attitude of the worker.[97] So what happens when the works of a Christian are judged to be “bad” and “wrong” at the Judgment Seat of Christ? The apostle Paul says: “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect [favoritism] of persons.” (Col. 3:25, KJV) This seems to speak of a loss of reward, like Paul makes clear elsewhere when he says: “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15, ESV; cf. 1 Cor. 3:14; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 3:11).

Does James 5:9-10 teach that Christ will judge the sins of Christians on the Day of Judgment? James 5:9-10 reads: “Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the Judge standeth before the doors. Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord.” The word “murmur” (Greek *stenazō*) in James 5:9 literally means “groan”.[98] This Greek word is used in other places in the Bible where it is said that Jesus groaned (Mk. 7:34), the Holy Spirit groans (Rom. 8:26), and godly Christians groan for heavenly glorified bodies (2 Cor. 5:2, 4). And so while godly groaning is good, apparently Christians can groan with a wrong attitude and then this work for which one might expect to receive a reward is really not good, but bad. The Greek word for “judged” in James 5:9 is *katakrino*, which means “judged against”. So while this verse says that Christians can be judged against when the Lord returns for His church, it doesn’t say that sins will be the focus of judgment. Rather, the focus is on the apparent good works of groaning (Jms. 5:9; cf. Mk. 7:34; Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:2, 5:4; Heb. 13:17) and suffering (Jms. 5:10). The afflicted Christians spoken of in James chapter 5 probably appeared to be meek and patient (see James 5:4, 6, 7ff). However, Christ will judge against these believers because their groaning was actually done with an impatient attitude, for it was “against one another” (Jms. 5:9; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:25). Their groaning involved an impatient, irritable, critical, and condemning spirit (Jms. 5:7-11), and an anxious heart (Jms.

5:8).[99] And so James 5:9 simply gives an example of the “bad” deeds spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Punishment and the Bema Seat of Christ

Will Christians be punished by the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ? According to the Bible, it doesn't appear that believers will be punished by Christ at the Bema Seat. However, Christians can be punished during their earthly lives by the local church (2 Cor. 2:6), the government (1 Pet. 2:14), by their own hearts (1 Jn. 4:16-18), and by God Himself (Heb. 10:26-31).[100] The Scriptures clearly teach that Christ will punish the unsaved in the afterlife (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7).

Blessed Are Those Who Wash Their Robes

(Revelation 22:14)

Revelation 22:14 in the New American Standard Bible reads this way: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.” I remember quoting this verse to a Christian brother in an attempt to show him that since all Christians have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, all Christians therefore have a right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city. The brother responded by asking me if the washing of the robes referred to justification or sanctification? In answer to this question, I would say that the phrase “wash their robes” in Revelation 22:14 is referring to justification, not sanctification. There are at least three reasons for this conclusion:

- 1.) Those who “wash their robes” (Rev. 22:14) are contrasted with those “outside” the city (Rev. 22:15). The word “outside” is often used to describe the unsaved (Mk. 4:11; Jn. 12:31; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12; Rev. 20:10). Those who are “outside” in Revelation 22:15 are outside of God's eternal kingdom in Hell (see Jn. 12:31; Rev. 20:10, 20:14-15, 21:8).
- 2.) Revelation 22:14 is consistent with what the apostle John had written earlier on the same subject (see Revelation 7:9-14).[101] In Revelation 7:13 one of the elders asks the apostle John, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they...?” The answer is given by the elder that they are the ones who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).[102] This speaks of “salvation” (Rev. 7:9-10) – that is, salvation in the sense of going to Heaven (see Rev. 7:15-17), which is justification.
- 3.) Human volition is involved in salvation, that is, justification (see Jn. 7:37-38; Rev. 22:17). The verb “wash” (Gr. *pluno*) is in the active voice in Revelation 7:14 and Revelation 22:14. This simply means that the subject is the doer or performer of the action. In the New Testament, the term “wash” (Gr. *pluno*) is used figuratively of those who through faith so appropriate (take possession of) the results of Christ's propitiation

(satisfactory payment or sacrifice) that they are regarded by God as pure and sinless (see Rom. 3:24-26; Rev. 1:5, 5:9).

Who Has a Part in the Tree of Life and in the Holy City? (Revelation 22:18-19)

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19, NASB).

Saved or Unsaved?

The false prophets who add to and take away from God's Word: are they saved or unsaved?

There are three reasons showing that the warnings of Revelation 22:18-19 are directed toward and referring to the unsaved.[103] These three reasons all begin with the letter “c” – they are: context, characteristics, and consequences.

First, concerning the context surrounding Revelation 22:18-19, the unsaved are referred to in the verses preceding Revelation 22:18-19. Notice that in Revelation 22:15 the unsaved are referred to as those “outside” God’s eternal kingdom in Hell.[104] The unsaved are also addressed in Revelation 22:17. In verse 17 they are given four invitations to “take the water of life without cost”.[105] In light of the immediate context, verses 18-19 of Revelation 22 are probably written to the unsaved.

Second, the characteristics of those described in Revelation 22:18-19 are typically those of the unbeliever, particularly false prophets (see Matthew 24:11, 24). In contrast, believers are typically described as “those who heed the words of this book” (see Revelation 22:7, 22:9, 22:18-19).

Third, the consequences for *adding to* the words of the prophecy of Revelation are that God shall add to him “the plagues which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18). These plagues are none other than the plagues of the Great Tribulation! These plagues are the plagues of God’s wrath poured out upon the unsaved world! These plagues include:

- Evil angels are released to lead an army of 200 million horse-like creatures with demonic riders to plague and kill one-third of mankind (Rev. 9:13-21). This is the sixth trumpet judgment of the Tribulation. Obviously, these plagues will not smite unfaithful church-age believers because the church will not be on earth during the Tribulation (see 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 4:1, 17:14, 19:7-9). The church will be “caught up” (raptured) prior to the Tribulation (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9-11; Rev. 3:10).
- God grants His two witnesses the authority to devour their enemies with fire, shut up the sky, turn water into blood, and smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire

(Rev. 11:3-6). As stated, unfaithful Christians will not be on earth during the Tribulation to undergo the plagues of God's two witnesses.

- Seven angels pour out seven bowl judgments upon the earth which are the plagues of God's wrath (Revelation chapters 15 and 16). If in Revelation 22:18 God was speaking about church-age believers it would mean that Christians would be destined to go through the Great Tribulation and worse yet it would mean that Christians would directly experience God's wrath as He pours out judgment plagues upon the earth!

The consequences for *taking away from* the words of the prophecy of Revelation are that God shall "take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19). Concerning the phrase, "God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city" (Rev. 22:19), it cannot mean that Christians will be banned or restricted from the New Jerusalem, for all Christians will have access to the city (see 1 Cor. 6:11; Jn. 13:10; Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 7:10, 7:14, 20:15, 21:9, 21:14, 21:27, 22:14). Clearly, the consequences for taking away from the words of the prophecy of Revelation can only be true of the unsaved. Commenting on Revelation 22:18-19, Donald Grey Barnhouse affirms:

"Let us not forget that the Apocalypse was written not only to inform the believer of the events which close the history of time and open the history of eternity, but it was also written to warn the lost of their eternal doom and to bid them seek the Savior who alone can deliver them from a godless eternity." [106]

In light of the consequences for adding to and taking away from the words of the prophecy of the book of Revelation, it becomes clear that verses 18-19 of chapter 22 are written to the unsaved.

A Universal Opportunity To Be Saved

Anyone can potentially have a part in "the tree of life" and "the holy city," the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:19, also see Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 20:15, 21:27) – for a part has been purchased for all (see Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:2; Rev. 22:17). John R. Rice says:

"Rev. 22:19 mentions a 'part' in the book of life [or 'tree of life' (NASB)]....Every man in this world has a part in the book of life if he will take it (1 John 2:1, 2), but one's name is not written down in the book of life unless he is saved." [107]

Similarly, he writes:

"Verse 19 means that Christ has died for sinners everywhere and everyone has a part in the book of life [or 'tree of life' (NASB)] bought for him by the blood of Christ, but one will lose that opportunity to be saved by rejecting the things written in the Bible." [108]

Revelation 22:17 speaks of universal opportunity: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17, KJV, also see Jn. 7:37) An individual can choose to have a "part" of life or death (Rev. 20:6, 21:7, 22:19).

The Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8)

In Revelation 19:7-9, the apostle John refers first to “the marriage of the Lamb” (v. 7) and next to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (v. 9). These two events will be considered in the Biblical order, first the Marriage of the Lamb, and second, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Time of the Marriage of the Lamb

When does the Marriage of the Lamb take place? In Revelation 19:7, the apostle John declares that the Marriage of the Lamb “has come”. The phrase “has come” is significant, for it tells the timing of the marriage. J. Dwight Pentecost explains, “The aorist tense, *elthen*, translated ‘is come,’ signifies a completed act, showing us that the marriage has been consummated.”[109] The popular Biblical Greek scholar William D. Mounce affirms that “the aorist...describes an undefined action normally occurring in the past.”[110]

Hence, the Marriage of the Lamb takes place *before* Revelation 19:7.

Additionally, it can be shown that the Marriage of the Lamb takes place *after* the catching away of the church to Heaven at the Rapture, which occurs at the beginning of Revelation chapter 4. Notice that in Revelation 4:1 the apostle John writes: “After these things” – that is, after the church related things of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, or after the church-age. The prolific Baptist author and evangelist John R. Rice affirms: “Compare verses 1-3 [of Revelation chapter 4] with 1 Thes. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51, 52. The similarity could not be accidental. Notice the door opened in heaven, the trumpet, the call ‘come up hither.’ If chapters 2 and 3 [of Revelation] picture the church age, then obviously chapter 4 pictures the rapture.”[111]

Furthermore, it can also be seen from the Bible that the Marriage of the Lamb takes place after the Judgment Seat of Christ. Concerning the timing of the Bema Seat Judgment, J. Dwight Pentecost writes:

"The bema of Christ takes place immediately following the translation of the church out of this earth's sphere. There are several considerations that support this. (1) In the first place, according to Luke 14:14 reward is associated with the resurrection. Since, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the resurrection is an integral part of the translation, reward must be a part of that program. (2) When the Lord returns to the earth with His bride to reign, the bride is seen to be already rewarded. This is observed in Revelation 19:8, where it must be observed that the 'righteousness of the saints' is plural and can not refer to the imparted righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's portion, but the righteousnesses which have survived examination and have become the basis of reward. (3) In 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8; and Revelation 22:12 the reward is associated with 'that day,' that is, the day in which He comes for His own. Thus it must be observed that the rewarding of the church must take place between the rapture and the revelation of Christ to the earth."[112]

And so it can be shown from the Bible that the Marriage of the Lamb must occur *after* the Rapture of the Church (pictured in Revelation 4:1) and *after* the Judgment Seat of Christ, but *before* Revelation 19:7 and *before* the Second Coming of Christ to the earth with His bride (see Rev. 19:11-16).

The Location of the Marriage of the Lamb

Where does the Marriage of the Lamb take place? The location of the marriage can be nowhere else but Heaven itself. In Revelation 19:1 John's attention is drawn to Heaven, and this is the stage for the Marriage of the Lamb (in vv. 7-8). After the marriage, the bride accompanies the Lamb as He descends to earth for the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-19; cf. Jude 14-15; Rev. 17:14).

The Bridegroom of the Marriage of the Lamb

Who is the Bridegroom in the Marriage "of the Lamb"? The Lamb is a reference to Jesus Christ. This is made clear in John 1:29, where the apostle John writes: "The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" Likewise, the Lamb is clearly identified with Christ in Revelation 5:5-10. The Lamb can be none other than the person of Christ. The Marriage of the Lamb is the marriage of Jesus Christ.

The Bride of the Marriage of the Lamb

Now that the Bridegroom has been identified, who is the bride? There are those who advocate that Israel is the bride, as she is called the "wife" of Jehovah (see Isa. 54:6; cf. Ezek. 16; Hosea 2:19-20). However, Revelation 19:7 is not speaking of the wife of Jehovah but the bride of Christ. Concerning this, Clarence Larkin states:

"We must not forget that there are 'Two Brides' mentioned in the Scriptures. One is in the Old Testament, and the other in the New. The one in the Old Testament is Israel, the Bride of Jehovah; the one in the New Testament is the Church, the Bride of Christ." [113]

Similarly, W. A. Criswell writes:

"The bride is not the Old Testament Israel. Old Testament Israel in Isaiah, in Ezekiel and in Hosea is described as the wife of Jehovah who is now a put-away wife. Israel is a forsaken wife, she is a repudiated wife. Because of her idolatries and her adulteries and because of her rejection of her great Maker to whom God married her, she is a divorced wife. The prophets say that some day she will be restored. But when she is restored, when she comes back, even then she will not be a bride. No restored wife is ever referred to as a virgin. But this bride in Revelation is a virgin." [114]

In Revelation chapter 19, Christ is not marrying Israel, for that nation is presently rejecting Him in unbelief (see Rom. 11:15, 20), and will continue to do so throughout the 7-year Great Tribulation.

It is only when the Deliverer comes from Zion at the Second Coming (Zech. 12:10; Matt. 24:29-30; Rev. 1:7) that ungodliness will be removed from Jacob and all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). In other words, the salvation of Israel does not occur until after the Marriage of the Lamb (which occurs in Heaven while the Great Tribulation is taking place on earth) and after Christ's Second Coming to the earth. Thus, it is impossible for the heavenly Marriage of the Lamb to be referring to the union of Christ and the unbelieving (and *earthly*) nation of Israel. It is clear that the bride of the Lamb can only be the church. In Ephesians 5:22-32, the apostle Paul speaks of the husband and wife relationship as picturing Christ and the church (v. 32). Paul, speaking to the church in Corinth says, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2). J. Dwight Pentecost affirms: "The marriage of the Lamb is an event which evidently involves only Christ and the church".[115] Clarence Larkin adds:

"Many assume that the 'Bride' is composed of all the saints from Abel down to the time of the taking out of the Church, but this cannot be so, for the Church did not exist until the Day of Pentecost, and only those who live and die in Christ between Pentecost and the taking out of the Church [at the Rapture] belong to the Church." [116]

It's clear from God's Word that the bride of the Lamb is the church of Jesus Christ.

The Preparation for the Marriage of the Lamb

What is meant in Revelation 19:7 when the apostle John says that the "bride has made herself ready"? Has the bride made herself ready for the marriage or has she made herself ready for the marriage supper? It seems that the bride's preparation has more to do with the marriage than the marriage supper. The bride's preparation in verse 7 is related to her wedding gown in verse 8. The fine linen of the gown is "the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). So the Judgment Seat of Christ (which occurs immediately prior to the Marriage of the Lamb) plays an important part in readying the bride. It seems best to interpret the Judgment Seat of Christ as the means by which the bride prepares herself for the marriage. Lehman Strauss writes: "The wedding gown, then, will be made up of the good works that remain after the testing of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now you can see how the wife makes herself ready".[117]

The Participants in the Marriage of the Lamb

Who are the participants in the heavenly Marriage of the Lamb? According to the Bible, it appears that only Christ and the church actually participate in the marriage. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 indicates that only believers "in Christ" will be resurrected and caught up to Heaven at the Rapture. Those "in Christ" are those in the body of Christ – the church. Since the Day of Pentecost, believers are placed into the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Old Testament and Tribulation believers are never said to be "in Christ". They are not part of the church, Christ's body. Such passages as Isaiah 26:19-21 and Daniel 12:1-3 and 12:13 show that the resurrection of Israel and other Old Testament believers will not take place until after the Second Coming of Christ to the earth at the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11), which occurs after the

Marriage of the Lamb. Like the Old Testament believers, the Tribulation believers will also be resurrected after the Second Coming and take part in the 1,000 year kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6).

So there are several reasons indicating that Old Testament and Tribulation believers will not be the ones married or given in marriage:

1. They are not part of the church, Christ's bride.
2. They are not resurrected with the church, so they are not rewarded nor prepared for the marriage at the time it occurs.
3. They are not raptured with the church, so they are not physically present for the marriage - although they could observe since their souls are present in Heaven.

Referring to the Marriage of the Lamb, J. Dwight Pentecost writes: "While it would be impossible to eliminate these groups [i.e. Old Testament and Tribulation saints] from the place of observers, they can not be in the position of participants in the event itself." [118] Thus it is clear that only church-age believers "in Christ" will participate in the Marriage of the Lamb.

The Guests at the Marriage of the Lamb

Who attends the Marriage of the Lamb? Here one should not confuse the marriage with the marriage feast. The marriage occurs in heaven, but the marriage feast occurs on earth. The marriage is wholly heavenly. First, "a great multitude" (Rev. 19:1) is seen in attendance at the marriage. Second, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are also present at the marriage (Rev. 19:4). [119] Third, "servants" are seen to be present at the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:5, KJV). This is possibly a reference to the souls of martyred Tribulation saints (see Revelation 6:9-11, 7:15).

The Duration of the Marriage of the Lamb

While the church is presently united with Christ spiritually (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:30), after the Rapture when the bride is taken to be with Christ in the Father's house, she will then also be united with Him physically (Jn. 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17). While it may be impossible to know the exact duration of any ceremony that takes place when the bride is presented to the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:27, 5:32), the marriage occurs while the seven-year Tribulation is unfolding on earth. Renald Showers writes:

"As the Jewish bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber for seven days after arriving at the bridegroom's father's house, the church will remain hidden for seven years after arrival at Christ's Father's house in heaven. While the seven-year Tribulation period is occurring on the earth, the church will be in heaven, totally hidden from the sight of those living on Earth." [120]

The important thing to remember is that the marriage is an eternal union between Christ and the church, for then "we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17b).

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9)

In Revelation 19:9, an angel speaks to the apostle John, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” The subject now shifts from the Marriage of the Lamb to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

When does the marriage supper take place? It almost goes without saying that the marriage supper takes place after the marriage (Rev. 19:7-9).

The Location of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Where does the marriage supper take place? While the announcement of the marriage supper takes place in heaven (Rev. 19:9), it declares an event which is about to take place on earth. The marriage supper takes place on earth during the Millennial Kingdom, after the heavenly marriage. After the Marriage of the Lamb, Christ descends to earth with His bride (Zech. 12:10, 14:1-4; Matt. 24:27-30; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19:11-19). Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice write: “the Marriage Supper of the Lamb does not commence until after the second coming of Christ, during the first part of the Millennium, when all believers throughout the ages will be present to enter into the festivities (Matthew 8:11; Mark 14:25; Luke 13:29; 14:12-15).”[121]

The Host of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Who hosts the great marriage feast? The host of the marriage supper is none other than God Himself! The prophet Isaiah identifies Him as Jehovah, saying: “And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain [that is, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23)]; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine” (Isa. 25:6). Although the feast will be given by the Father for His Son (Matt. 22:2), it appears that Christ will help serve at His own marriage feast. Luke 12:37 says, “Blessed are those slaves whom the master [equated with the Son of Man in verse 40] shall find on the alert when he comes [to earth at His Second Coming]; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.” During the Last Supper, Jesus said to His disciples: “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Lk. 22:27-30).

The Guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Who are the guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? Clearly, the bride is not a guest at her own wedding supper! She does not need to be “invited” (Matt. 22:4), for there could be no wedding supper without her. The guests are not to be equated with the bride. The guests at the marriage supper appear to be all the saints of all time – excluding church-age believers because these people are the bride of Christ – who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. These guests include Old Testament believers like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as all the prophets (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28-29, 14:14-15; cf. Job 19:25-26; Dan. 12:1-3, 12:13). John the Baptist considered himself a guest, saying that he was not the bride nor the bridegroom, but a “friend of the bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29). Those redeemed during the Tribulation period will also be guests at the marriage supper. Clarence Larkin summarizes:

"Thus we see that the righteous of all the past Ages and Dispensations, and all the Saints of God who shall be worthy, and who are not included in the Bride (The Church), will be 'Guests' at the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb.' Angels will be 'spectators' of the scene but they cannot be 'Guests,' for that honor is reserved for only those who have been redeemed by the 'Blood of the Lamb.'" [122]

As Larkin noted, it does not appear that angels will be guests at the marriage feast. Although the angels will probably be spectators, “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9) has special significance and reference to those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.[123] Angels are not included in this group (Heb. 1:14, 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:9-12).

The Duration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

How long does the marriage supper last? In Old Testament times, the wedding festivities might last a day or longer (Gen. 29:22; Judg. 14:12; Esth. 2:18; Jn. 2:1-2). In Matthew 22, the marriage supper seems to be equated with the Millennial Kingdom. It is possible that the marriage supper will extend the entire 1,000 years! What a glorious future awaits every believer in Christ!

"...just as it is written, 'THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.' For to us God revealed them through His spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10.)

The Identity of the Overcomer (1 John 5:4-5)

God’s Word sets forth the fact that every Christian is an overcomer (Rom. 8:37; 1 Jn. 4:4, 5:4-5; Rev. 2:11, 20:6, 21:6-8) because of the fact that we are in Christ, and Christ overcame (Jn. 16:33; cf. Ps. 68:18; Jn. 12:31, 16:11; Rom. 8:37; Gal. 1:4). And so the overcomer is simply one who has believed in Christ as their Savior.

A key verse in connection with the identity of the overcomer is 1 John 5:4-5 which says, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world

– our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”
George Zeller comments:

"Please note that this is the only place in the New Testament where the question, 'Who is he that overcometh?' is asked and answered. Also note that the answer was given by the Apostle John, the same man who was the human penman for Revelation chapters 2-3. [Zane] Hodges goes so far as to say that it is 'totally illicit' (illegal!) to appeal to 1 John 5:4-5 in order to understand who the 'overcomer' really is (Grace in Eclipse, p. 108). Is it illegal to let God's Word explain its own terms? Is it illegal to compare Scripture with Scripture? Is it illegal to allow the Apostle John to define the word 'overcomer'? Hodges is concerned because the Apostle John's definition of an 'overcomer' in 1 John 5:4-5 is not in agreement with his own definition of an overcomer. For my part, I choose to agree with the Apostle John." [124]

It will be interesting to notice the following similarities between the overcomer and the believer in Christ in order to highlight the fact that every Christian is an overcomer:

- 1.) The overcomer is someone who has believed in Christ (1 Jn. 5:5). Likewise, the Christian is anyone who has believed in Christ (Jn. 7:38; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Jn. 5:13).
- 2.) The overcomer is a child of God (1 Jn. 5:4; Rev. 21:7). Likewise, the Christian is a child of God (Jn. 1:12).
- 3.) The overcomer has received undeserved favor, namely the gift of eternal life (Rev. 3:5, 21:6-7, 22:17). Likewise, the Christian has received undeserved favor, namely the gift of eternal life (Jn. 7:37-38, 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:5).
- 4.) The overcomer will be allowed “to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). Likewise, the Christian will be granted “the right to the tree of life” in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 22:1-2, 22:14, 22:17) and presumably in the Millennium as well (Ezek. 47:12; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8). Just as the first Adam had the right to the tree of life and could eat freely of it (Gen. 2:9, 2:16, 3:24), so those in the Last Adam – those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22, 5:45; Eph. 1:3) – will again have the right to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14) and be granted the privilege of eating its fruit (Rev. 2:7, 22:2).
- 5.) The overcomer will not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11, 3:5, cf. 20:14-15, 21:8). Likewise, the Christian will not be hurt by the second death, for it has “no power” over him or her (Jn. 3:16, 5:24, 11:25; Rev. 20:6, 20:14-15, 21:8).
- 6.) The overcomer partakes of the hidden manna, and is given a white stone with a new name on it (Rev. 2:17). Likewise, the Christian partakes of the living manna (Jn. 6:31-33, 6:48-51, 6:58; cf. Ex. 16:11-15; Psa. 78:24) and is given a white stone with a new name on it (2 Cor. 1:20). What is the white stone with a new name on it that Christians will receive? In Greek courts of the New Testament era, jurors would use black stones to vote for a person's guilt but white stones to vote for innocence (cf. Acts 26:10). [125] Of course, every Christian is forgiven and innocent in God's sight, not guilty (Rom. 4:6-8; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rev.

1:5, 7:14). The white stone could also signify friendship. White stones were given by the Romans as badges of friendship and alliance, and on which some device was engraved, as a testimony that a contract of friendship had been made between the parties.[126] Concerning the new name written on the stone, Merrill Unger notes: "Princes often changed their names on their accession to the throne (2 Kings 23:34; 24:17). This was also done in the case of private persons on entering upon public duties of importance (Num. 13:16; cf. John 1:42; Acts 4:36). So the prophet Nathan, on assuming the charge of Solomon's education, gave him the name Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25)."[127] Christians also will ascend to sit on thrones (Rev. 1:6, 3:21, 5:9-10, 20:4, 6) and enter into public duties of importance in the Millennial Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2) and serve Christ into eternity (1 Cor. 6:3; Rev. 22:3). Commenting on Revelation 2:17, Tim LaHaye similarly writes: "The stone indicates acquittal from our sins, and our new name, just as Christ renamed Peter and Paul after their conversion, points to the new life we have in Him." (LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], p. 94.) Although the exact meaning of the white stone with a new name on it is somewhat unclear, there are many interpretations of it that are consistent with every Christian being an overcomer.

7.) The overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end will be given "authority over the nations; and he shall rule them. . . and I will give him the morning star" (Rev. 2:26-28). The promise given to the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end begins in Revelation 2:26. Christ's promise given here to the overcomer who keeps His deeds until the end contains three main parts: (a) authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26b), (b) rule (Rev. 2:27), and (c) the morning star (Rev. 2:28). Looking at the first two parts of this three part promise, it is stated that the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end will be given authority over the nations and will rule them "with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father" (Rev. 2:26-27). In Revelation 2:26-27, Christ quotes from Psalm 2:8-9. Psalm 2:8-9 has reference to Christ returning to earth to put down all rebellion and set up His millennial kingdom (cf. Rev. 12:5, 19:15). Then, at His second coming to earth, Christ will return as Judge (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 19:15). In Revelation 2:26-27, the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end is promised authority and rule over the nations as promised to Christ (Psa. 2; Isa. 11:10; Rom. 15:12; Rev. 12:5, 19:15), the tribulation saints (Rev. 20:4b), all the saints of all time (Psa. 149:5-9; Dan. 7:18, 7:22, 7:27; Rev. 20:4-6), and His very own Church (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 1:5-6, 4:4, 5:9-10, 17:14, 19:14, 20:4, 20:6). As mentioned above, the promises given to the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end in Revelation 2:26-27 are not exclusive promises. They are not given only to "he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end". Notice that Christ does not say, "he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, only to him I will give authority over the nations; and only he shall rule them". The promises in Revelation 2:26-27 are addressed to the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end, but the promises do not exclude others from partaking of them. The Bible makes it clear that all Christians will return with Christ at His Second Coming to the earth and will share in His victory and rule (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10, 1:12; Rev. 17:14, 19:11-20:6) and will be given authority and rule over the nations (1 Cor. 6:2; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:5-6, 4:4, 5:9-10, 20:6). To repeat for clarification: The promises found in Revelation 2:26-27 are true of "he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end," and (as seen from other Scriptures) these promises are also true of those who

simply overcome (that is, all Christians). The bride of Christ will partake of these promises when she returns with Christ at His Second Coming (Dan. 2:40-45; Zech. 14:5; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:17b; 2 Thess. 1:10; Jude 14; Rev. 17:12-14, 19:11-20:6) when she shares in His rule over the earth (1 Cor. 6:2; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:5-6, 4:4, 5:9-10, 20:6). If the Bible indicates that all Christians enter into the promises of Revelation 2:26-27 (cf. 1 Cor. 6:2; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:5-6, 4:4, 5:9-10, 17:14, 19:14, 20:6), then why are these promises (in Revelation 2:26-27) specifically given to the overcomer who keeps Christ's deeds until the end? The answer it seems is because Christ wants to *motivate* the believers in the church of Thyatira (and by extension all Christians) to keep His deeds as opposed to the deeds of Jezebel (cf. Rev. 2:20-22). It reminds me of how in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon while he was hiding from the Midianites in a winepress and yet the angel of the Lord still addressed Gideon by saying, "Oh mighty man of valor!" (See Judges 6:11-12, ESV.) Notice that in Judges 6:12, God does not call Gideon what he is - a fearful man, but instead God calls him what He plans him to be - a valiant warrior! How gracious is our God! Similarly, in the New Testament the apostle Paul says that the believers in Corinth are "saints by calling" (1 Cor. 1:2). He goes on to instruct these carnal believers in proper conduct by pointing out how God sees them and drawing attention to the wonderful future they have in Christ. "Don't you realize," Paul says, "that someday we believers will judge the world? And since we are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves? Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life" (1 Cor. 6:2-3, NLT). I've found that people who think Revelation 2:26-27 contain exclusive promises for the super-saints are not really consistent with their interpretation of Scripture when it comes to the promise contained in Revelation 2:28. They seem to forget that without verse 28, verses 26-27 are an incomplete sentence and thought. Revelation 2:28 is the conclusion of the three-part promise begun in Revelation 2:26. In Revelation 2:28, Christ promises that the overcomer who keeps His deeds until the end will be given "the morning star" (Rev. 2:28). This is a reference to Christ Himself (cf. Rev. 22:16) and it seems to refer to Christ as the One coming for His church (Rev. 22:7, 22:12, 22:17, 22:20) before the establishment of His glorious kingdom on earth (Num. 24:17; Mal. 4:2; 2 Pet. 1:17-19; Rev. 22:16). John Walvoord writes, "The morning star (2:28) refers to Christ returning before the dawn, suggesting the Rapture of the church before the establishment of the kingdom (cf. Rev. 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19)."[128] Similarly, George N. H. Peters writes: "We have in the 'Morning Star' an implied reference to the first state of the Advent, the thief-like coming for the saints, and to obtain it indicates that we are worthy of the better [i.e. first] resurrection, or (if living) of the translation. The mention of this in such a connection is also exceedingly significant of the exaltation of the saints to coheirship with Christ when the morning breaks." [129] All church-age believers will participate in the promises of Revelation 2:26-27 ("authority" and "rule"), so it would be consistent to also see all church-age believers partaking of the last portion of this three-part promise found in Revelation 2:28 ("the morning star"). This in fact is the case, as all Christians – whether spiritual or carnal – will be "caught up [raptured] . . . to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:22, 15:51; 1 Thess. 5:4-11) in His kingdom (Col. 1:12-13; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). Let us "encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18)!

8.) The overcomer will “be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels” (Rev. 3:5). This three-part promise is true of all Christians. Every Christian will be clothed in white garments (Job 29:14; Isa. 61:10; Jn. 13:10; 1 Cor. 3:15, 6:11; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 1:5, 4:4, 7:9, 7:10, 7:14b, 19:8, 19:14, 22:14). Every Christians’ name is permanently recorded in the book of life. In Philippians 4:3, the apostle Paul describes Christians as those whose names are “in the book of life”. The preposition “in” (Greek *en*) has the primary idea of rest.[130] It denotes a fixed position and signifies something that remains in place. Similarly, Christ says, “I will not erase his name from the book of life” (Rev. 3:5). If the name of any believer could be erased from the book of life it would mean that “brethren” (Phil. 4:1) could be “thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15) and experience the second death (Rev. 21:8). Such is impossible however, for the second death has “no power” over believers (Rev. 20:6). Lastly, Christ will confess the names of all Christians before His Father and before His angels (cf. Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 4:5b).

9.) The overcomer will be made “a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (Rev. 3:12). William R. Newell comments, “Pillars (like Boaz and Jachin) in Solomon’s temple, exhibited permanency, strength, and beauty.”[131] Similarly, the Bible teaches that like immovable pillars, all Christians will be forever and permanently with the Lord following the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 3:12) and specially associated with the New Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21:9, 21:14, 21:27). Christians “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5, NIV). We are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Rev. 1:4-6, 3:12, 5:9-10, 20:6).

10.) To the overcomer, Christ declares: “I will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21). Similarly, the Bible teaches that Christians will be seated with Christ in the millennial kingdom (Eph. 1:20-23, 2:6-7; Col. 3:1-4). The victorious church (1 Thess. 3:13; Rev. 17:14, 19:14, 19:19, *etc.*), composed of all Christians, will sit on thrones (Rev. 20:4a; cf. 1 Cor. 6:2) in the Millennium and “will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6), and even into eternity (Rev. 22:5).

Who Will Not Inherit the Kingdom?

(Rom. 7-8; 1 Cor. 6; Gal. 5; Eph. 5; Rev. 21, 22)

Some Free Grace people teach that not all Christians will inherit the millennial kingdom. This teaching stems in part from failing to distinguish between the believer’s condition in this world and his position in Christ, as well as failing to recognize the believer’s exalted and glorious position in Christ. Notice what Zane Hodges writes:

"There is no difficulty at all in speaking of people who live in the Kingdom of God but who do not inherit that Kingdom...the heirs of the Kingdom, then, are its owners, not merely its residents or citizens." [132]

Similarly, Joseph Dillow says:

"All Christians will enter the kingdom, but not all will rule there, i.e., inherit it....They will, having been justified, be in the kingdom; however, they will not inherit it...There is a difference between being a resident of the kingdom and inheriting it." [133]

"They [the residents of the kingdom who do not inherit the kingdom] will be in the kingdom but not at the wedding feast." [134]

Also, Merrill F. Unger writes:

"The apostle warns that believers failing to separate from this polluted paganism, [1 Cor. 6:] 9-10, 'shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' i.e., shall suffer loss of reward (cf. 3:11-15)...." [135]

"These sins characterize the unsaved, [Eph. 5:] 5-7, upon whom the wrath of God rests, 6, (cf. Rom. 1:18). Should they characterize the professing believer, if truly regenerate, he forfeits any reward or inheritance in the kingdom of God..." [136]

Concerning these statements, the question must be asked, "*But what does the Scripture say?*" (Gal. 4:30).

Romans 7-8

The Bible makes a distinction between the Christian's condition in this world and the Christian's position in Christ. In regards to the Christian's condition in this world, the Christian can choose to live either "according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:4, 8:12-13) or "according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4-6, 8:13). [137] However, in regards to the Christian's position in Christ, the Christian is not "in the flesh" (Rom. 7:4-6, 8:8-9), but "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9; cf. Gal. 4:6). These distinctions will be important in this study.

1 Corinthians 6

In 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, the apostle Paul reproves the Corinthian Christians because "brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers" (1 Cor. 6:6). The Corinthians were apparently taking each other to court and the cases were being judged by unsaved judges (1 Cor. 6:1, 6:4, 6:6). This was a problem and it prompted the apostle Paul to ask: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. 6:9). The word "unrighteous" in 1 Corinthians 6:1 and 6:9 is the Greek word *adikos*. It refers to the unjust or unjustified - those who have not been justified or declared righteous by God (1 Cor. 6:11). These people are unsaved, and God still sees these unsaved people in their sins (Jn. 8:24; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Paul goes on to say to

the Corinthians: “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame.” (1 Cor. 6:1-5)

The Corinthian Christians were carnal in their condition in this world. They were even committing some of the same sins that the unsaved were committing which are listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (see 1 Cor. 5:1, 11:19, 11:21). Yet the Corinthian believers had a position in Christ in which God still saw them as washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor. 6:11; cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10)! Commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Joseph Dillow writes:

"All Christians will enter the kingdom, but not all will rule there, i.e., inherit it....They will, having been justified, be in the kingdom; however, they will not inherit it....There is a difference between being a resident of the kingdom and inheriting it." [138]

Unfortunately, Joseph Dillow makes a false distinction between entering (or being a resident in) the kingdom and inheriting (or ruling in) the kingdom. No such distinction exists in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. The apostle Paul contrasts the saved carnal Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:11) with the unsaved who will not inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:1, 6:4, 6:6, 6:9-10) – implying that the saved carnal Corinthians will inherit the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:4, 20:6). The contrast is not between the sins of the saved and the sins of the unsaved because the sins of the saved and the sins of the unsaved are the same (compare 1 Cor. 5:1, 11:19, 11:21 with 1 Cor. 6:9-10)! The contrast is between how God views the saved (as washed of their sins, sanctified, and justified – forgiven of sin and legally declared to be perfectly righteous) and how God views the unsaved (as still in their sins). Even though the carnal Corinthians were living “according to the flesh” (Rom. 8:4, 8:12-13), God did not view them as “in the flesh” (Rom. 7:4-6, 8:8-9), but as “in the Spirit” (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:11). The unsaved, however, are viewed by God as “in their sins” (Jn. 8:24) and “in the flesh” (Rom. 7:5), regardless of how moral or religious they might be (Isa. 64:6; Phil. 3:8-9).

Galatians 5

Another passage that relates to the topic of not inheriting the kingdom is Galatians 5:16-26. For the purposes of this study, only verses 19-21 of Galatians chapter 5 will be specifically discussed. Here the apostle Paul writes: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you beforehand, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21, KJV).

It must be clearly stated here that the carnal Corinthian believers were committing many of the sins listed in Galatians chapter 5 (see 1 Cor. 3:3-4, 5:1, 11:21). Yet the apostle Paul teaches that the Corinthians will inherit the kingdom of God, and even be given positions of authority in that kingdom: “Or do you not know,” the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, “that the saints will

judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

The apostle Paul does not have Christians nor even carnal Christians in view when he says in Galatians 5:21, "of the which I tell YOU beforehand, as I have also told YOU in time past, that THEY which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Who is Paul talking about when he says, "THEY which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"? Paul is clearly not referring to the Galatian Christians because (a) Paul changes pronouns from "you" to "they" (b) Paul has already said that the Galatians are "heirs" (Gal. 4:30-31) of "the Jerusalem above" (Gal. 4:26). Someone might insist that the apostle must be referring to other believers like the sinful Corinthians. But it has already been shown from the Scriptures why this cannot be (see above). What Paul says in Galatians 5:19-21 is very similar to what he says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In both passages, Paul speaks of the unsaved as those who will not inherit the kingdom.

Ephesians 5

Ephesians 5:5-8 is another Bible passage that should be considered in regards to the question, "Who will not inherit the kingdom?" In this section of Scripture, the apostle Paul writes: "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolator, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light". Notice what George Zeller says about this passage:

"In considering the Ephesians 5:5 passage, the very next verse speaks of God's wrath coming upon THE UNSAVED because of their sins: 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things (see v.5) cometh the wrath of God upon the CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE' (Eph. 5:6). If the Hodges/Dillow view were correct, we might expect Paul to discuss how God's wrath will come upon saved people, the carnal ones who are persisting in such sins; but instead Paul discusses God's wrath upon the children of disobedience (the unsaved)."[139]

It is true that believers can be disobedient in their walk and condition in this world. However, in their position in Christ, God views believers as children of light (Eph. 5:8; cf. Jn. 12:36; 1 Thess. 5:5), not sons of disobedience (Eph. 5:6). The phrase "sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6) does not refer to carnal believers, but to the unsaved (Eph. 2:1-7).

Revelation chapter 21

Revelation 21:7-8 is another Bible passage that relates to the subject of inheriting and not inheriting the kingdom. There are only two groups of people referred to in this passage: the overcomers who are sons and who have an inheritance (Rev. 21:7), and the non-inheritors who have a part in the Lake of Fire and the second death (Rev. 21:8). God's Word contrasts the overcomer with the unbeliever. The approved student of God's Word would do well to do likewise (2 Tim. 2:15).

Appendix 1: Questions and Answers

Question # 1: “One thing I’m curious about...is this, and please, if you’re able to look at it, tell me if it works well: since John (1 Jn. 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5) and Christ (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) both say that one overcomes the world through faith, could [it] be said that LS [Lordship Salvation] exegetes’ commentaries on Rev. 22:14 (assuming, for the sake of argumentation, they use the Majority Text reading)--as though this were an indictment against our views and an aid to theirs--is an example of a non-sequitor? In other words, to say that the one who keeps the commandments of God (22:14) can enter the city and eat from the Tree of Life is not, however, to say that those who don’t do these things won’t inherit (compare Rev. 2:7; 21:7), but is perhaps just focusing on the positive with an affirmation that we should live godly in Christ because of being reconciled to the Lord. Yet, one thing I’m just a bit confused on (and why I ask) is about the texts of Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:11, 15, 19 (which appear to place some contingency on reigning and/or kingdom entrance via obedience, which we know is false, as we’re saved, adopted into the family of God, overcome the world, et al, on account of our faith in Christ and not works). Furthermore, what about the Lord’s promises of ‘thrones’ (Rev. 3:21; also see Rev. 4:4; 11:16; 20:4a) or even white garments (Rev. 3:4-5; also see Rev. 3:10; 4:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8, 14), or His other promises for that matter? Are all these also ‘descriptive’ and not ‘prescriptive’ in nature?”

Answer: Good thoughts on Revelation 22:14. I've come across a couple interpretations that I think are consistent with Free Grace theology. I address that Bible verse in my article *Every Christian's Final Destiny*, but let me just clarify that what you said is, I think, a plausible interpretation (i.e. it could be that it is descriptive, not prescriptive, or just emphasizing the positive for reasons of encouragement). Also, we could take the non-Majority Text reading and work with that instead of building a case on the Majority Text (MT). If we take the non-MT reading of Revelation 22:14 it says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes". Okay, well that could mean wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb like it says in Revelation 7:10-14, and is I believe, a reference to "salvation" (verse 10). Another interpretation I've heard (getting back to the MT reading of Rev. 22:14) is that some think there is a difference between *doing* God's commandments (as in "blessed are those who *do* His commandments") and *keeping* His commandments. In other words, repentance and faith in Christ are God's commandments and the unsaved should "do" them, i.e. get saved (see Jn. 6:28-29, Acts 16:30-31; 17:30, *etc.*). But keeping God's commandments is something different, and verse 14 doesn't say "keep", only "do".

The way I understand Revelation 21:8, 21:27; 22:11, 22:15, and 22:19 is that these are descriptions of the unsaved based on 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Although the Corinthians were still committing some of the very sins named in verses 9-11 (fornication, idolatry, drunkenness, *etc.*), the apostle Paul specifically says "such *were* some of you". God still sees the unsaved in their sins, but Christians have been washed, (positionally) sanctified, and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Praise the Lord! Furthermore, if you do a study on "those that are outside" like it says in Revelation 22:15 (or "without" as the KJV says) - in other words, if you do a study on "outsiders" in the New Testament, you will see that it's a description of the unsaved. For example, see Colossians 4:5.

In regards to when you ask: "Furthermore, what about the Lord's promises of 'thrones' (Rev. 3:21; also see Rev. 4:4; 11:16; 20:4a) or even white garments (Rev. 3:4-5; also see Rev. 3:10; 4:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8, 14), or His other promises for that matter? Are all these also 'descriptive' and not 'prescriptive' in nature?" I would say the short answer is yes. I get into this more in my article *Every Christian's Final Destiny*, but one thing that I can share briefly that might be helpful is that I believe all Christians will rule and reign with Christ in some capacity (see 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 20:6, *etc.*), but there are different positions of rule and authority assigned to individuals based upon one's faithfulness to the Lord. For example, Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 19:28: "You who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel". Jesus is referring to a higher position of rule and authority (over Israel) for the 12 disciples (Judas being replaced by Matthias, see Acts 1:15-26).

Question # 2: "You assert that Matt. 10:32-33; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26; 12:8-9 were said under the Mosaic Law dispensation and thus, if I might say it this way, for I'm not sure how else to word it, don't apply in relation to Rev. 3:5. Yet, how is this correct, for it was said to the Apostles? I don't mean to say that I don't agree with it, but I'm just wondering: if we argue that the above doesn't connect with Rev. 3:5, how do we understand Jn. 15:1-6? Why should one not apply across dispensations while the other does? I hope you understand what I'm trying to ask."

Answer: My basic response is that the contexts of Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26, and Luke 12:8-9 indicate a different dispensation than John 15:1-6. Or to say it another way: in John chapters 14-15, Jesus is looking ahead to when the Holy Spirit will come and indwell believers on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. So Jesus is looking ahead to the dispensation of grace and that's the context of John chapters 14-15. But as I understand the passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke that I mentioned, the contexts of those passages have to do more with the nation of Israel and with the return of Christ to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. And so the contexts of those passages are in regards to those people who will be living on the earth when Jesus returns for the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21). In my understanding of prophecy, the people living on the earth at that time are not the church because the church has already been "caught up" (1 Thess. 4:17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 4:1) in the air to be with Christ previous to the battle of Armageddon.

Question # 3: "Furthermore...what do we make of 2 Tim. 2:12b (that says if we deny Him then He will deny us)?....In relation to the above, you say that 2 Tim. 2:12a is about the 'reward of an elevated position of reign' (page 19). Yet, how so? The text, as it appears, paints everything in a very black-and-white way. If we endure then we'll reign, but if we don't endure we (presumably) won't. Please, if you could, might you give me your reasons for saying that? Is there something in the context or even in the original Greek that lends itself to that interpretation? Thanks."

Answer: As to your first question about why I say the "reward of an elevated position of reign" - you are right that the text doesn't explicitly say this, but an elevated position of reign is still reigning with Christ as 2 Timothy 2:12a says, and so I believe that my interpretation is consistent with what the text says. Furthermore, Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. And other Scriptures indicate that those who endure trials and suffering for the Lord will be given an elevated position

of reign in Christ's future kingdom. For example, in Matthew 19:28 Jesus says to His disciples, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In my paper *Every Christian's Final Destiny*, I mentioned some other Scriptures that indicate degrees of reign. I'm not sure if I mentioned Ezekiel 34:34 in my paper, but it indicates an elevated position of rule in Christ's future kingdom. It says, "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken."

Second, Paul doesn't state the negative of what happens if believers don't endure. In other words, he doesn't say "if we don't endure we won't reign". So I'm hesitant to conclude that, especially when I don't believe that it best fits the whole counsel of God's Word. To be more specific, I believe the Bible clearly indicates that all Christians - even carnal Christians like the Corinthian Christians - will reign with Christ in one capacity or another (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:10, 20:6). So I'm hesitant to presume to conclude the opposite based on one Bible verse.

I just thought of an example of how I understand 2 Timothy 2:12 where it says, "if we endure we will reign with Him, if we deny Him, He will also deny us". The apostle Peter denied Christ, yet according to Matthew 19:28, the Lord still promised that Peter would reign with Christ in His future kingdom and even be given an elevated position of rule and reign. And so this is a good example, I think, to show that 2 Timothy 2:12 *doesn't* mean that Christians who deny Christ won't reign - because the apostle Peter denied Christ three times and Christ knew this all along and still promised in Matthew 19:28 that the twelve apostles would reign with Christ in His coming kingdom. By the way, I think that the place of Judas Iscariot was given to Matthias according to what the Bible says in Acts 1:12-26.

The apostle Peter no doubt will be denied some rewards because he denied Christ, but he confessed his sin and went on to endure great suffering and persecution for the name of Christ even to the point of being killed for his faith. And so because Peter endured, he therefore will receive an exalted position of rule and reign in Christ's future kingdom.

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ENDNOTES:

[1] This quote is attributed to Pastor Chet Schmeier of Good News Messengers Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (www.gnmc.us). *Note*: Good News Messengers Church was formerly located in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

[2] Richard Tenaglia, *Reward According To Works*, pp. 21, 40. The late Richard Tenaglia was co-pastor of Good News Messengers Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and later he was pastor of Truth Bible Church in Waukesha, WI.

[3] Bob Wilkin, “If We Endure, We Will Reign with Him,” *Grace In Focus Magazine* (January/February 1996): p. 2.

[4] See: Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 462; C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, pp. 5-12.

[5] The phrase “that you may be married to another” in Romans 7:4 (NKJV) speaks of the legal privilege of all believers (cf. Rom. 6:1-5), as opposed to being some kind of conditional statement.

[6] C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 50.

[7] For more information regarding the church-age believer’s position and condition, please read: *Salvation* by Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* by C. I. Scofield, *The Complete Green Letters* by Miles Stanford, “The Difference Between The Believer’s Standing and State” (middletownbiblechurch.org) and “215 Things That Are True Of Me Now That I Am Saved” (middletownbiblechurch.org).

[8] Romans 8:17 is often misunderstood, largely due to the phrase “if indeed we suffer with Him”. It is important to note that Paul uses the first class conditional “if” when he writes “if indeed we

suffer with Him,” as he does earlier in the verse as well (“if children”). Daniel B. Wallace, a prominent Greek scholar, defines the first class condition this way: “The first class condition indicates *the assumption of truth for the sake of argument*. The normal idea, then, is *if – and let us assume that this is true for the sake of argument – the...*” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 690).

While the “assumption of truth” is not necessarily “truth,” there are several reasons to believe that Paul’s assumption of truth (“if indeed we suffer with Him”) actually corresponds to reality, i.e. all Christians suffer with Christ: (1.) The Apostle Paul’s initial use of the first class conditional “if” (“if children”) in Romans 8:17 corresponds to reality – the Christians in Rome and Paul himself actually are “children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Since Paul’s initial use of the first class conditional “if” in Romans 8:17 corresponds to reality, it would be consistent for his second use of the first class conditional “if” in the same verse (and in the same sentence and thought) to also correspond to reality. (2.) All believers in Christ will be glorified with Christ. If, as Romans 8:17 indicates, God’s children have to “suffer with Him” in order to be “glorified with Him,” then all Christians suffer with Him because all Christians will be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:30; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:10b; 1 Jn. 3:2). (3.) The Bible teaches that all Christians indeed suffer with Christ (see Jn. 16:33, 17:14, 16, 18:36, 8:23; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:18, 23; 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 5:9-10; 2 Pet. 2:7-8; compare Rev. 1:9 with Rev. 1:4a and Rev. 3:14-18). (4.) Various Bible translations interpret the first class conditional “if” clause (“if indeed we suffer with Him”) in Romans 8:17 as corresponding to reality. For example, Romans 8:17 in the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) reads as follows: “and if children, also heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ – seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” Similarly, the Jerusalem Bible reads, “And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.” (5.) Various Bible teachers interpret the first class conditional “if” clause (“if indeed we suffer with Him”) in Romans 8:17 as corresponding to reality. For example, J. Vernon McGee writes: “‘If so be’ assures the fact that the child of God will suffer with Him. I believe it could be translated ‘*since* we suffer with Him.’ I don’t think the ‘if’ is as important as some folk make it out to be.” (McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 701.) Similarly, William MacDonald aptly writes: “When Paul adds, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together**, he is not making heroic suffering a condition for salvation. Neither is he describing some elite inner circle of overcomers who have endured great afflictions. Rather, he sees all Christians as being co-sufferers and all Christians as **glorified** with Christ. The **if** is equivalent to ‘*since*.’ Of course, there are some who suffer more than others in the cause of Christ, and this will result in differing degrees of reward and glory. But all who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior are seen here as incurring the hostility of the world, with all its shame and reproach.” (MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, p. 1711.)

[9] William R. Newell, *Romans Verse-By-Verse*, p. 316.

[10] Quoted by Miles J. Stanford, *Position Papers, A Spiritual Anthology*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

[11] John C. Whitcomb, “Preparing for the Rapture” lecture (August 28, 2004).

[12] *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, p. 1208.

[13] Pastor Chet Schmeier of Good New Messengers Church writes: “In Rev. 2:7, Christ tells them

‘to him who overcomes, (runs and finishes the race, II Tim. 4:7), to him I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’ Remember that no one has eaten from the tree of life yet. This is not salvation!!! This has to do with reward.” (Schmear, *Will All Christians Inherit the Kingdom?*, pp. 2, 3.) Similarly, “[Zane] Hodges and [Joseph] Dillow...teach that a large number of saved people will not qualify as overcomers. They also teach that being an overcomer is something that must be earned and achieved by faithful living.” (George Zeller, “Who Is The Overcomer of Revelation 2-3?,” p. 4.)

[14] Chet Schmear, *Will All Christians Inherit the Kingdom?*, p. 3, emphasis his. (This pamphlet is a publication of Good News Messengers Church.)

[15] Arno C. Gaebelien, *Gaebelien’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1227.

[16] For example, see: J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, pp. 207-209, 252-258; C. I. Scofield, *Will the Church Pass Through the Great Tribulation?*, p. 13; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* pp. 105-107; and *The Scofield Study Bible*, 2002 Edition, Revelation 4:4 footnote, p. 1724.

[17] Joseph Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 551-583.

[18] J. N. Darby, *Lectures on the Second Coming of Christ*, Lecture 2, Ephesians 1.

[19] The chapter divisions in the New Testament were added by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, in A. D. 1227.

[20] This is the view of several dispensational Bible expositors. For example, see: William Kelly, *Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Volume III, pp. 557, 559; William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, pp. 414-415; Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 176-179; William R. Newell, *Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p. 324.

[21] H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, p. 331.

[22] When Paul says “we shall judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:3), he is likely referring to the judgment of Satan and the fallen angels (see 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, and Revelation 20:7-10). This judgement occurs after the Millennium. (For more information see Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 515.)

[23] This is a reference to Old Testament believers like John the Baptist, who called himself “a friend of the Bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29). The Bridegroom is, of course, a reference to Jesus the Messiah (Jn. 3:28).

[24] Notice that Revelation 20:6 does *not* say, “...those who reign with Christ have a part in the first resurrection....” This statement could imply that only a select number of believers will reign with Christ. However, Revelation 20:6 is actually a statement that is true of all Christians, for it says: “Blessed and holy is *the one who has a part in the first resurrection* [i.e. every Christian, see Jn. 5:28-29, 6:28-29]; over these the second death [i.e. the lake of fire, see Rev. 20:14] has no

power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and *will reign with Him for a thousand years*” (emphasis added).

[25] The church age is also called “the age of grace”.

[26] Concerning the biblical term “adoption” *The Scofield Study Bible* (2002 Edition, p. 1619) summarizes: “‘Adoption’ (Greek *huiothesia*, meaning *placing as a son*) is not so much a word of relationship as of position. In regeneration a Christian receives the nature of a child of God; in adoption he receives the position of a son of God. Every Christian obtains the place of a child and the right to be called a son the moment he believes (Gal. 3:25-26; 4:6; 1 John 3:1, 2). The indwelling Spirit gives the realization of this in the Christian’s present experience (Gal. 4:6); but the full manifestation of his sonship awaits the resurrection, change, and translation of saints, which is called ‘the redemption of our body’ (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 1 John 3:2).” Tim LaHaye notes, “Under Roman law an adoption ceremony officially and openly designated a person as a full heir. Hence, all children, even adopted ones, shared an inheritance, though Hebrew law gave the firstborn a double portion.” (Tim LaHaye, *The Prophecy Study Bible*, Romans 8:17 footnote, p. 1334.)

[27] Arno C. Gaebelin, *Gaebelin’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1227.

[28] 2 Timothy 2:12 is not the only place in Scripture that speaks of the reward of an elevated position of reign. Other Scriptures include: Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24, 40:46, 44:10-15, Daniel 12:2-3, Matthew 19:28, Hebrews 11:35, and 1 Peter 4:13-17.

[29] The word “endure” (2 Tim. 2:12) in the Greek is *hupomeno*, which literally means “to remain under”. It can be translated as “endure” or “persevere”. Endurance is often associated with reward in Scripture (for example, see: 2 Tim. 2:10, 4:6-8, Jms. 1:2-4, 1:12, Rev. 2:10, and 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

[30] Someone may think that because the “if” clause in 2 Timothy 2:12 is a first class condition, Paul’s statement must then be true of all Christians. Thus it might be thought that all Christians endure suffering. While it’s true that the first class condition “if” is used in 2 Timothy 2:12, it is *not* true that the first class condition means “since” (as some suppose), nor is it true that the “if” statement corresponds to reality. Dr. Daniel B. Wallace defines the first class condition this way: “The first class condition indicates the assumption of truth for the sake of the argument. The normal idea, then, is if – and let us assume that this is true for the sake of argument – then. . . .” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics*, p. 690.) Notice that the “assumption of truth” is not necessarily truth, and the assumption does not necessarily correspond to reality. Dr. Wallace goes on to say, “The first class condition is popularly taken to mean the condition of reality or the condition of truth. Many have heard this from the pulpit: “In the Greek this condition means *since*.” This is saying too much about the first class condition. For one thing, this view assumes a direct correspondence between language and reality, to the effect that the indicative mood is the mood of fact. For another, this view is demonstrably false for conditional statements: (a) In apparently only 37% of the instances is there a correspondence to reality (to the effect that the condition could be translated *since*). (b) Further, there are 36 instances of the first class condition in the NT that cannot possibly be translated *since*.” (Ibid.)

If not all Christians endure suffering, why does the apostle Paul use the first class condition in 2 Timothy 2:12? At least three reasons seem possible:

(1.) Paul was optimistic and assumed the best. In 2 Timothy 1:2, Paul calls Timothy his “beloved child,” and genuine agape love inherently “believes all things, hopes all things” (2 Cor. 13:7).

(2.) Paul was near the end of his life when he wrote the letter we know today as 2 Timothy. The aging apostle knew that he had endured (see 2 Tim. 2:10, 4:7), and it’s possible he assumed Timothy would endure as well (2 Tim. 1:8, 3:10, 3:14-15, 4:5) – due in part to Timothy’s godly reputation and character. History tells us that Timothy did, in fact, endure suffering, hardship, and persecution for Christ. See page 13 of the book *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyr’s*.

(3.) Paul sought to motivate Timothy and all Christians reading 2 Timothy 2:12 to endure suffering for Christ!

[31] Some people believe that the unfaithful Levitical priests went astray during the reign of King David. At that time, Zadok was a faithful priest who stood by King David during Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam. 8:17, 19:11). But Ezekiel chapter 44 looks back to an event that occurred *after* the time of David and Zadok because the Bible says, “But the Levitical priests *the sons of Zadok*, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me” (Ezek. 44:15, emphasis added). Ezekiel 44:15 speaks of “the sons of Zadok,” not Zadok himself. Therefore, Ezekiel 44:15 seems to describe an event that occurred some time after David and Zadok.

[32] Matthew Henry, *Henry’s Exposition*, Vol. 4, p. 780.

[33] Angus-Green, “INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE”. (These class notes on the "INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE" were compiled by professor Kenneth S. Wuest who taught New Testament Greek at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago from 1929 until his death in 1962. I acquired these class notes from my great-grandfather William G. Storz who took night classes at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in 1932.)

[34] In the Gospel accounts, the church had not yet come but was still future (see Matthew 16:18). The beginning of the church is recorded in Acts chapter 2 with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit baptizing both Jews and Gentiles into one body (Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 1:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:13).

[35] Angus-Green, *Ibid*.

[36] Donald Gray Barnhouse, *Revelation*, pp. 383-385.

[37] E. W. Bullinger, *Things to Come*, pp. 20, 36, 37.

[38] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 4, p. 378.

[39] J. N. Darby, *The Second Coming of Christ*, Lecture 2 on Ephesians 1.

[40] Charles L. Feinberg, *A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p. 145.

[41] Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Conflict of the Ages*, p. 167.

[42] In a gospel tract titled *The Coming World Ruler*, Billy Graham writes: “Do you know Jesus? Are you ready for His coming? Thanks be unto God, the real Ruler of the world is going to be Jesus Christ, and then shall men know war no more. You can know Christ and reign with Him if, as a guilty and condemned sinner before a holy God, you open your heart and let Him come in at this moment.” (This gospel tract is published by Evangelical Tract Distributors, Edmonton, AB, Canada. The tract code is SC06.)

[43] Oliver B. Green, *The Revelation*, p. 486.

[44] Robert Gromacki, *Called to Be Saints*, pp. 74-75.

[45] M. R. DeHaan, *Revelation*, p. 267.

[46] Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times*, p. 110.

[47] Thomas Ice, *Charting The End Times*, p. 69.

[48] H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, p. 336.

[49] Grant Jeffrey, *Heaven: The Last Frontier*, p. 140.

[50] William Kelly, *Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Vol. 3, pp. 557, 559; Kelly, *Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p. 324; Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, p. 433.

[51] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 31; *Prophecy Study Bible*, pp. 1350, 1503.

[52] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 176-179.

[53] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, p. 138; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation*, p. 105.

[54] A. J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp. 464, 484-485, 497.

[55] James McConkey, *The End of the Age*, pp. 118-121.

[56] J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 1057; J. Vernon McGee, *Reveling Through Revelation*, Part I, p. 48; J. Vernon McGee, *Reveling Through Revelation*, Part II, p. 76.

[57] D. L. Moody, *Heaven*, pp. 44-45, 58, 71, 82, 111; D. L. Moody, *Moody's Notes From My Bible and Anecdotes & Illustrations*, pp. 199, 208.

[58] William R. Newell, *Revelation Chapter-By-Chapter*, pp. 318, 324.

- [59] James Orr, *A Simple Picture of the Future*, p. 27.
- [60] Rene Pache, *The Return of Jesus Christ*, p. 413.
- [61] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, pp. 208, 255-258, 543, 546.
- [62] William L. Pettingill, *Bible Questions Answered*, p. 389.
- [63] John Phillips, *Exploring The Future*, pp. 102, 319.
- [64] John R. Rice, *Bible Lessons on the Book of Revelation*, p. 38.
- [65] Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 509; Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, pp. 149-150.
- [66] C. I. Scofield, *Prophecy Made Plain*, pp. 136, 148.
- [67] Thomas Scott, *Scott's Bible*, Vol. 6, pp. 693, 716, 776.
- [68] Renald Showers, *The Most High God*, pp. 88-89.
- [69] J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 80-81, 270-271.
- [70] Lehman Strauss, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 334.
- [71] John F. Walvoord, *End Times*, p. 198; *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 297.
- [72] John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel*, pp. 100, 105-106, 169.
- [73] Leon J. Wood, *The Bible & Future Events*, p. 175.
- [74] Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 56.
- [75] George Zeller, "Who Is The Overcomer of Revelation 2-3?," p. 8.
- [76] In the Bible, death speaks of separation. The dead faith in James 2:17 is "by itself," separated from good works.
- [77] The soiled garments seem to be a reflection of the believer's earthly works or walk in this world (Rev. 3:1, 2, 4, 3:18, 16:15).
- [78] 1 Timothy 5:18 says "The laborer is worthy of his reward." This shows the principle that a reward or wage is owed to those who labor or work.
- [79] It may be that all believers will walk with Christ in the future millennial kingdom (although

to the author's knowledge no verse in the Bible explicitly says this). But still only those who would be "worthy" (Rev. 3:4) would enjoy a special place of fellowship with the Lord – much like Enoch (Gen. 5:22-24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9) in the Old Testament.

[80] In the New Testament, the book of life is God's written record of those who will dwell in the heavenly New Jerusalem, as opposed to the Lake of Fire (Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15, 21:10-27, 22:19). In regards to the book of life, some people teach that it is "a list of those for whom Christ died, that is, all humanity who have possessed physical life. As they come to maturity and are faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are blotted out if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour; whereas those who do accept Christ as Saviour are confirmed in their position in the book of life, and their names are confessed before the Father and the heavenly angels" (John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, p. 82). But this teaching contradicts what the Bible says in Revelation 13:8 and 17:8. In both passages it's clear that the names of the unsaved have "not been written" in the book of life. Notice the Bible *doesn't* say that the names of the unsaved have been written and erased, as Walvoord indicates in his statement. Revelation 13:8 and 17:8 help clarify what it says in Revelation 20:15 that "if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." In other words, certain names are "not found written" in the book of life (as it says in Revelation 20:15) precisely because they have "not been written" in the book of life (Rev. 13:8, 17:8) – even from the foundation of the world!

[81] In Mark 8:38, Christ specifically declares that He is speaking to "this adulterous and sinful generation". This is a clear reference to the unbelieving nation of Israel (see Matt. 12:39, 12:45, 16:4, 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41, 11:29; Acts 2:22, 2:36, 2:40). The nation of Israel continues in national unbelief up to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth at the end of the seven-year Great Tribulation period (Zech. 12:10; Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). In Mark 8:38 the term "generation" (Greek *genea*) refers to the nation of Israel as a whole, even looking ahead and speaking of the unbelieving nation of Israel during the Tribulation period – the unbelieving nation of Israel that witnesses the Second Coming of Christ "when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38, also see Matt. 23:36-39, 24:34; Lk. 9:26, 21:32). At that time Christ will regather (Matt. 24:31) and judge Israel. This end-time judgment of Israel is known as the Rod Judgment (see Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9). The saved Israelites will enter the millennial kingdom in their physical bodies, but the unbelieving ones will be cast out of God's eternal kingdom and into Hell (Matt. 8:10-12; Lk. 13:22-29). Dwight Pentecost believes that the judgment of the nation of Israel will include only those Israelites physically living at the time of the Rod Judgment (Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 414), whereas Chafer interprets the judgment of Israel to include not only living Israelites surviving the Tribulation, but also those raised from the dead "throughout all her generations" (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4 Vols., 4:399). Concerning the term "generation" (Greek *genea*) and its reference to the nation of Israel as a whole both now and in the future, C. I. Scofield writes the following footnote on Matthew 24:34 that is applicable to this entire discussion. He says: "Gr. *genea*, the primary definition of which is, 'race, kind, family, stock, breed.' (So all lexicons.) that the word is used in this sense here is sure because none of 'these things,' i.e. the worldwide preaching of the kingdom, the great tribulation, the return of the Lord in visible glory, and the regathering of the elect, occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. The promise is, therefore, that the generation – nation, or family of Israel – will be preserved unto 'these things'" (Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible*, p. 1034). Similarly, Dwight

Pentecost writes the following concerning the term “generation” (as used in Matthew 24:34): “the word generation is to be taken in its basic usage of ‘race, kindred, family, stock, breed,’ so that the Lord is here promising that the nation Israel shall be preserved until the consummation of her program at the second advent” (Pentecost, *Things To Come*, p. 281).

[82] 2 Timothy 2:12 speaks of the reward aspect of reigning to a greater extent or to a greater degree with Christ, not the right of reigning with Christ which all believers are promised (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 1:5-6, 5:9-10, 20:6, 21:6-8).

[83] These quotes are attributed to Pastor Chet Schmear of Good News Messengers Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. *Note:* Good News Messengers Church was formerly located in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

[84] Compare with Revelation 11:12, which refers to the Rapture of God’s two witnesses during the Great Tribulation.

[85] Dave Hunt (*The Berean Call*, November 2003, p. 4) argues that Revelation 16:15 has reference to the Rapture, not to the Second Coming of Christ. In attempting to prove that Christ cannot come as a thief at His Second Advent, Hunt applies Matthew 25:1-13 and Luke 12:35-40 exclusively to the church and sees both passages as referring only to the Rapture. Of course, the general principles of these passages are transferable to the Rapture of the Church (that is, Christ comes as a thief on both occasions to those who are not ready for Him, people are to be ready, etc.). However, Matthew 25:1-13 and Luke 12:35-40 are nonetheless specifically referring to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, not to the Rapture of the Church. In regards to Matthew 25:1-13, notice Matthew 25:1 begins with the word “then,” a term that directs the reader back to the preceding Bible verses. Looking at the surrounding context, Matthew 24:42 speaks of Christ’s coming, and Matthew 24:29-31 is a clear reference to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, not the Rapture of the Church. And so in light of the context, Matthew 25:1-13 does, in fact, show that Christ can come as a thief at His Second Coming to those who are not expecting Him. Similarly, Luke 12:35-40 also is in reference to Christ’s Second Coming to the earth. Luke 12:37 speaks of the time when after Christ returns at His Second Coming, He will gird Himself to serve at His own marriage supper (compare with Isaiah 25:6).

In attempting to prove that Revelation 16:15 does not refer to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, Dave Hunt further goes on to say: “Why would Christ suddenly change the subject to the Rapture between two verses about Armageddon? He seems to be warning that those who are not taken to heaven at the Rapture will be on the wrong side at Armageddon.” But notice that Revelation 16:15 actually contains no warning about “being on the wrong side at Armageddon” as Hunt asserts. On the contrary, in Revelation 16:15 Christ is specifically addressing believers (who will be on the right side at Armageddon according to Revelation 19:11-21). Consider at least the following three reasons:

- (1) Christ says that those in Revelation 16:15 are “Blessed”. The unsaved are not blessed but “cursed” (see Galatians 3:10).
- (2) Christ encourages those in Revelation 16:15 to “stay awake”. The unsaved cannot stay awake for they are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).

(3) Christ encourages individuals in Revelation 16:15 to “keep his garments”. The unsaved have no garments to keep – theirs are only filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). Christ does not want the unsaved to keep their filthy garments! Instead, He wants to clothe them with “garments of salvation” like it says in Isaiah 61:10!

In light of these truths, it becomes clear that Hunt’s reasoning is without Scriptural support.

[86] William R. Newell, *Revelation Chapter-By-Chapter*, p. 305.

[87] The church began in Acts chapter 2 with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The church will continue on earth until it is “caught up” to Heaven to be forever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17).

[88] Literally *bēmāti* and *bēmātos* respectively.

[89] C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* [Findlay, Ohio: Durham Publishing Co., 1961], pp. 30-32.

[90] Concerning 1 Corinthians 4:5, C. I. Scofield writes: “It is very comforting, in view of that inevitable scrutiny of our poor botch-work, to learn that in His patient love He is so leading us now as that He can then find *something* in it all for which to praise us. (Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* [Findlay, Ohio: Durham Publishing Company, 1961], p. 32, emphasis his.)

[91] For example, John Whitcomb takes the position that the Judgment Seat of Christ involves the purification of the Christian. He says, “But the Bible makes it clear dear friends that the Bride will not be completely purified from the presence and power of sin until she appears at the great judgment seat of Christ” (Whitcomb, “The Second Coming of Christ,” audio CD-set, “Judgment Seat of Christ” CD). Similarly, he declares, “. . . after the church has been raptured to the air and has passed through the Bema of Christ (that’s the Judgment Seat of Christ, for purification and for judgment for the purpose of rewards), then the great Second Coming of Christ to the earth will occur” (“The Second Coming of Christ,” audio CD-set, “The Second Coming of Christ” CD).

[92] F. W. Grant, *Man and the Future State*, p. 187.

[93] When the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:41 that “star differs from star in glory,” it appears that he is contrasting the glory of the earthly body with the glory of the heavenly body (1 Cor. 15:40, 42-49); he is not contrasting the heavenly body of a carnal believer with the heavenly body of a spiritual believer.

[94] John Whitcomb, “Preparing for the Rapture” audio CD.

[95] For example, see Kenneth F. Dodson, *The Prize of the Upcalling*, pp. 86-88, and Carl Johnson, *Prophecy Made Plain*, p. 123.

[96] Robert Gromacki offers some helpful comments on Colossians 3:22-25 in his book *Stand Perfect in Wisdom, An Exposition of Colossians & Philemon* (see pages 151-153).

[97] Also see Hebrews 4:12-13 and Revelation 2:23.

[98] Greek scholar A. T. Robertson explains: “Murmur not (*μη στεναζετε* — *mē stenazete*). Prohibition with *μη* — *mē* and the present active imperative of *στεναζω* — *stenazō* old verb, to groan. ‘Stop groaning against one another,’ as some were already doing in view of their troubles. In view of the hope of the Second Coming lift up your heads.” (Robertson, *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament*, commentary on James 5:9.) Jamieson-Fausset-Brown has this helpful commentary on James 5:9: “Grudge not—rather ‘Murmur not’; ‘grumble not.’ The Greek is literally, ‘groan’: a half-suppressed murmur of impatience and harsh judgment, not uttered aloud or freely. Having exhorted them to patience in bearing wrongs from the wicked, he now exhorts them to a forbearing spirit as to the offenses given by brethren. Christians, who bear the former patiently, sometimes are impatient at the latter, though much less grievous.”

[99] For more information see Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1127, and D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, p. 300.

[100] For more information about Hebrews 10:26-31 see Robert Gromocki, *Stand Bold in Grace, An Exposition of Hebrews*, pp. 173-176.

[101] The term “washed” in Revelation 7:14 is the Greek word *pluno*. This term appears only once again in the New Testament – in Revelation 22:14.

[102] Throughout the Bible, “the Lamb” is a title for Jesus Christ (see Isa. 53:7; Jn. 1:29; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 7:14).

[103] The apostle John may indeed be addressing believers and unbelievers when he says, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:18). Both saved and unsaved can hear “the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:18). However, in light of the consequences of adding to or taking away from the prophetic words of the book of Revelation, it seems best to understand “anyone” in Revelation 22:18-19 as meaning “anyone who is unsaved”.

[104] Also see Mk. 4:11; Jn. 12:31; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12; Rev. 20:10. In regards to whether or not those outside the city are saved or unsaved, it has been argued: “Verses 14 and 15 of [Revelation] chapter 22 are not referring to unbelievers in the lake of fire, they are talking about disobedient Christians who will be outside the city. That word ‘outside’ means ‘just’ outside or ‘in the immediate proximity.’” (Vince Cullen, *Will All Christians Inherit the Kingdom?*, p. 6.) But that statement must be rejected as false in light of the Greek grammar. As to the Greek grammar of Revelation 22:15, Bruce M. Metzger (one of the world’s best-known scholars on the Greek text of the New Testament) writes, “‘Outside’ does not mean that they are in close proximity to the city; for the idea of ‘outside’ we should compare Jesus’ reference to ‘the outer darkness’ (Matt. 8:12). This list of those who are excluded resembles in some respects the earlier list of those consigned to the lake of fire ([Rev.] 21:8), but here [in Rev. 22:15] the first category is ‘the dogs’ – a reference to sodomites. The sentence in the original [Greek language] is abrupt, as expressing abhorrence” (Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*, pp. 105-106).

- [105] Compare Revelation 22:17 with John 4:10, 7:37-38; Rom. 3:24, 6:23.
- [106] Donald Gray Barnhouse, *Revelation*, p. 413.
- [107] John R. Rice, *Bible Lessons on the Book of Revelation*, p. 10.
- [108] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- [109] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, p. 226.
- [110] William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, First Edition, p. 177.
- [111] John R. Rice, *Bible Lessons on the Book of Revelation*, p. 11.
- [112] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, pp. 220-221.
- [113] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 168.
- [114] W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, 5 Vols., 5:28.
- [115] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, p. 227.
- [116] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 168.
- [117] Lehman Strauss, *Revelation*, p. 321.
- [118] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, p. 227.
- [119] Many believe that the twenty-four elders represent the church. If this is so, then of course they would not be guests at their own marriage!
- [120] Renald Showers, *Behold, The Bridgroom Comes!*, p. 9.
- [121] Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times*, p. 124.
- [122] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 170.
- [123] W. A. Criswell explains that “the Lamb” is a description of Christ’s “blood-bought, redemptive relationship with us who have been saved by His grace.” (Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, 5 Vols., 5:28.)
- [124] George Zeller, *Who Is The Overcomer of Revelation 2-3?*, p. 4.
- [125] See Donald Gray Barnhouse, *Revelation*, p. 56.
- [126] See Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*.

[127] Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 903.

[128] John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, p. 522.

[129] George N. H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, 2 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 418.

[130] See William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, Second Edition, pp. 60-62, 328; cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 358; Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, p. 579.

[131] William R. Newell, *Revelation Chapter-By-Chapter*, p. 73.

[132] Zane C. Hodges, *Grace In Eclipse*, p. 71.

[133] *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 64, 78.

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

[135] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 631.

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 681.

[137] In Romans 8:14, the apostle Paul writes: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God". The Spirit of God leads all believers, but not all believers follow the Spirit's leading (see Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).

[138] Joseph Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 62, 64, 78.

[139] George Zeller, "Those Who Do Not Inherit The Kingdom . . . Are They Saved or Unsaved?," p. 4.