

The Last Day

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The Last Day

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And Jesus said to them....

³⁹ "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:39-40)

Introduction

Every one of us has often thought about our death and whether there is an after-life. As Christians, we believe that when we die we will experience Paradise in heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have talked with many people about this subject and a variety of questions are often asked about death, the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven, hell, and the lake of fire. Therefore I wanted to write a book that will answer many of those questions.

This book is written from a Christian perspective, and I will use the Bible to address these issues. Whether you are a Christian or not, I invite you to read this book and learn what the Word of God has to say about death, the after-life, and what will happen on The Last Day.

Chapter 1

Where Do We Go When We Die?

The answer to that question depends on whether we are believers in Jesus Christ at death or not. Are we saved or unsaved? What are believers saved from? We are going to examine two different situations to see where we go at death.

The Saved

Who are the saved? These are people who have faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

God, in His great love, sacrificed His Son Jesus on the cross so that believers would not perish in hell but have everlasting life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Jesus Christ died on the cross as an atonement or payment for our sins. In God's holy and wonderful plan, Jesus became our substitute on the cross. He paid the penalty for our sins, and we receive His righteousness at the moment we believe in Him. What a glorious love that both the Father and the Son have for His children! We are saved by His grace and mercy.

At death our bodies are buried. The body is an empty shell.

⁸ *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:8)*

When a Christian dies his or her spirit is transported immediately into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in Paradise. We see an example of this in the account of Christ's crucifixion and the thief who turned in faith to the Lord.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

What is Paradise? It is heaven, a place of extreme happiness and pleasure with the Lord Jesus. What will we be doing in heaven? We will be praising and worshiping God and giving Him glory and honor. We will be having wonderful fellowship with all those in heaven and what a joy it will be to reunite with our family and loved ones who died in Christ. We will experience joy and contentment that we can't even imagine now.

⁹ *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9)*

We will be doing this while we await the resurrection of our bodies and the final judgment. This will be discussed in more detail later in this book.

What are Christians saved from? They are saved from God's wrath and a place of torment which will be addressed next.

The Unsaved

Those who die without faith in Jesus Christ also have a spirit. Their bodies are buried. However their spirits go immediately to a temporary place of torment and suffering called hell. Here they await the resurrection of their bodies and the judgment. Hell is a real place of suffering in fire.

Jesus gives us an account of two men who died. One was a beggar named Lazarus, who went to heaven and the other, a rich man, who went to hell.

²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'" (Luke 16:22-26)

Hell (Hades) is a place of suffering. Those who reject the Son of God will receive the wrath of God.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Hell is also a place where many of the fallen angels (demons) are in chains suffering in flames of fire waiting for the judgment. These demons are being punished as they rebelled against God along with their leader Satan and therefore will be ultimately cast into the lake of fire.

⁴ *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; (2 Pet. 2:4)*

⁶ *And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; ⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 6-7)*

Hell is a place reserved for demons and those people who have rejected Jesus Christ. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ it is not too late for you to be saved from the fires of hell by faith in Christ.

³¹ *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)*

What about Purgatory?

The Bible only mentions two places where departed souls go at death, heaven or hell.

There is no mention in the Bible of a place called purgatory or other realm where the spirits of dead men or women go for temporary punishment or cleansing before going on to heaven.

Chapter 2

Three Popular Views Regarding the Return of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection of the Saved

The Date of Jesus' Return is a Secret

When will Jesus Christ return? Many theologians have tried to figure out or calculate using the Bible when that day will be. In every case those who have set dates have been wrong. God has kept the date of His Son's return a secret. This motivates us to continually live to please the Lord and be prepared because He can come at any time. Otherwise we would put off living for Him until the last minute.

³² But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (1 Thess. 5:1-2)

The return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all believers who have died are linked together. They happen almost simultaneously.

Key Verses Regarding the Rapture of Believers

The following verses are important to help us understand how believers in Christ, both dead and alive, are translated up to Christ in the clouds when He returns. This event is referred to as the rapture.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Rev. 1:7)

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture View

This view is perhaps the most popular view among Christians today. What this view maintains is that there is coming a time of great tribulation on Earth. An evil world dictator, the Satan energized Antichrist, will seek to rule the world during a seven year period of distress. Right before this time of tribulation, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds and the bodies of the dead believers in Christ will come out of their graves and be joined with their spirits which have been in heaven. Those believers who are living when the Lord returns in the clouds will then immediately undergo a bodily transformation and be translated up in the clouds to also be with the Lord Jesus Christ. All the saved, both dead and alive, will hear the shout of the angel and the trumpet call to come forth and will see Christ in the clouds. All the unsaved who are left on Earth will not hear the shout or

trumpet nor be aware of Christ coming in the clouds and the resurrection of the saved. All that people on Earth will know is that millions of people are missing without explanation. This is referred to as the secret rapture. Then the time is ripe for the Antichrist to come to power.

Although there is no direct biblical text for this view, the pre-tribulation view makes some biblical conclusions based primarily on several sections of Scripture as follows:

John Taken Up to Heaven

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus Christ sends a message to seven churches in Asia (present day Turkey). In His message He evaluates these churches regarding their service to Him. Chapter 4 describes an unusual experience that happens to the Apostle John who is the one who records what takes place in the book of Revelation.

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (Rev. 4:1-5)

In this passage John said that he was in the spirit and he heard a voice as a trumpet which told him to come up so that the one speaking to him could show him things which were to take place

in the future. Next John was before the throne of God in heaven. It is not clear if John was actually transported to the throne of God or if this is a vision he is experiencing on Earth. In either event he did see what was taking place in heaven. Since Jesus will return one day at the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:16), the conclusion is that John's moving upward into heaven is symbolic of all believers being translated upward to Christ.

This conclusion is based on the fact that after this account of John before the throne of God in chapter 4, the church or word church is no longer mentioned during the time of God's judgment in Revelation chapters 5-18. Therefore, it is believed that the church or believers must be raptured up before the time of tribulation.

There are several problems with this interpretation. First, only John is mentioned as being translated. It is quite an assumption to say that his being called up to heaven is thus symbolic of all believers in Christ being raptured up. Second, the rapture is when believers are translated to Christ in the clouds. However, nothing is said about John being translated to Christ in the clouds. In his vision or experience he finds himself before the throne in heaven. Finally, the fact the word church is not used after chapter 4 is not unusual. Christ was talking to seven churches of that day in chapters 2 and 3. He specified that this revelation was to go to those various churches. There would be no reason to refer to them again or use the word church later. Just as in the salutation of a letter the writer mentions the name of who it is being written to initially but not again in the letter.

The Return of Christ Is Pictured in Rev. 19

¹¹ *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness*

He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Since chapter 19 is between the tribulation chapters and before the millennium or 1,000 year reign mentioned in chapter 20, it appears that Christ returns before that reign begins. One thing to keep in mind is that all the events that happen in the book of Revelation do not necessarily happen in chapter order. We must also remember that this book is the most highly symbolic book in the Bible. It is not clear where this 1,000 year reign is taking place. Is it on Earth, in heaven, or within us spiritually while we live the Christian life? More will be said about the millennium later in this book.

Protection from the Hour of Trial

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Rev. 3:10)

Some think this verse is referring to the church that is raptured or translated up to Christ in the clouds before the coming seven year tribulation. However, these comments were actually directed to the church in the city of Philadelphia in the first century for their faithfulness. What is this hour that this church was protected from? No one knows and it would be pure speculation for us to make an application to any event.

Jesus Comes as a Thief in the Night

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thess. 5:1-8)

There are those who feel that since it says that Jesus comes as a thief in the night, His first coming will be a secret one. It is true that a thief comes secretly at night to hide from being seen by others. However, the comparison to the Lord's coming as a thief in the night is to make us understand that He may come at any time, not that His Own coming is going to be secret or silent to some. No one knows when Jesus is coming back. It is a secret. So we need to be prepared and watch and not be lazy. We want to be of the day, alert, awake, not sleeping when He comes. This is how Jesus comes as a thief in the night; He comes unexpectedly.

Some will be Taken and Some Left Behind

³¹ In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. ³² Remember Lot's wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and

the other will be left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. ³⁶ Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left. (Luke 17:31-36)

Some feel that those who are taken are Christians in a pre-tribulation rapture and those left behind are the unsaved who will endure the tribulation period. Again, these are just conclusions. Actually, under all views discussed in this book Christians are taken upward to meet the Lord in the air and the unsaved are left behind on Earth. There is no biblical evidence in these verses to make a case for a pre-tribulation rapture any more so than for the other views.

The Mid-Tribulation Rapture View

This view believes that the seven year tribulation is divided up into 2 three and a half year segments. The last 3.5 years is thought to be the great tribulation half. According to this view, the silent rapture of believers occurs right before the last 3.5 years. The following verses are used in support of this view:

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (Dan. 7:25)

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (Rev. 11:1-3)

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But

the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. (Rev. 12:13-14)

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:5-8)

These verses do refer to a 3.5 year time of great tribulation caused by the Antichrist or the beast of Revelation. The problem is these verses or others used by the mid-tribulation view never make reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. This view makes the assumption that He comes at the mid-point of the tribulation period which is right before the great tribulation begins.

The Secret or Silent Rapture Theory

The secret or silent rapture theory of the pre-tribulation and mid-tribulation views has been popularized by a series of books and movies. The problem is there are no verses in the Bible that support it. Why should Christians living when Jesus returns be spared tribulation when other Christians have had to suffer great persecution and even martyrdom throughout history? On what basis do they get to escape tribulation and testing?

The Bible is very clear that when Jesus returns it will be an event that every eye will see. It will be an amazing display in the sky.

¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:16-18)*

⁷ *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Rev. 1:7)*

²⁴ *For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. (Luke 17:24)*

When Jesus returns in the clouds it won't be silent to anyone. There will be such a shout from heaven by the archangel so loud that every person alive and dead will hear it. There will also be a trumpet blown that everyone will hear. Jesus is announcing His return for everyone to know and for every eye to see. It will be a glorious time for the church but for unbelievers this shout and trumpet will terrify them.

Post-Tribulation Rapture View

This view maintains that immediately after the seven year tribulation on Earth, Jesus Christ returns and the resurrection and rapture of believers takes place. Therefore, in this view all believers living during this period will go through the tribulation.

Note the following verses:

²⁹ *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall*

from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰
Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
³¹ *And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* (Matt. 24:29-31)

His return will happen at the last trumpet. Therefore, all those living through the seven trumpet judgments, saved and unsaved, endure them.

⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

The book of Revelation goes on to explain what happens after the seventh and final trumpet is sounded.

¹⁵ *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (Rev. 11:15)

¹⁸ *"The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."* (Rev. 11:18)

One of the strong points of this post-tribulation position is that it does have direct scriptural text on when the Lord will return in relation to the time of the tribulation:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days..." (Matt. 24:29-31)

This direct scriptural evidence is lacking in the other two views which makes assumptions or conclusions as to when Jesus returns. There is no secret or silent rapture in this view.

Common Agreement between these Three Views

One important thing the pre / mid / and post-tribulation views have in common is that they all believe in the millennium or 1,000 year reign of Christ on Earth. The pre-tribulation view has Christ coming in the clouds and secretly rapturing all believers up before the tribulation starts. The mid-tribulation view has the secret rapture taking place at the middle of the seven year tribulation. In both of these views Jesus doesn't come to Earth, just the clouds. Jesus then comes to Earth in power and glory at the end of the seven year tribulation to set up His millennial reign of 1,000 years. In the post-tribulation view the coming of Christ in power and the rapture of believers occurs at the same time right at the end of the tribulation. He comes in the clouds and then down to Earth immediately with all believers to put down the great rebellion and evil. Jesus then sets up His millennial reign. The millennium will be discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 3

When Did Jesus Christ Say He Would Return To Resurrect All Believers?

What I would like to do now is to show you from Scripture when Jesus said He would return. This is when the rapture or resurrection of believers will take place. Jesus is very clear when this happens.

The Resurrection

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

The first thing we notice from these two verses is that “all who are in the graves will hear His voice” when He returns. Everyone will then be resurrected, both the saved and the unsaved. What we have here is really two parts of one resurrection. The part for the saved is referred to as the resurrection of life and the part for the unsaved is called the resurrection of condemnation. Remember, they all come forth in the “hour” when Jesus returns and calls for them with the shout of the archangel and the trumpet of God.

This is one striking difference between the views covered in the previous chapter and what is being revealed in this chapter. According to the Bible both the saved and the unsaved are resurrected on the same day. The views of the previous chapter maintain that the saved are resurrected first and then the unsaved are resurrected at least 1,000 years later at the Great White Throne Judgment. I will have more to say about this judgment later.

Jesus Returns to Resurrect All Believers on the Last Day

There is repeated biblical text to prove that Jesus Christ will return on the very last day and the resurrection of the saved will happen at that same time.

³⁹ *This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.* (John 6:39)

⁴⁰ *And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:40)

⁴⁴ *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John 6:44)

⁵⁴ *Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John 6:54)

²³ *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."* ²⁴ *Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* (John 11:23-24)

When Jesus was talking to Martha right before He brought her brother Lazarus back from the dead, Martha proclaimed to Jesus that her brother would be resurrected at the last day. Martha had been taught about the resurrection and when it would happen. Jesus did not correct what Martha said about the resurrection being on the last day because it was the truth.

When Will the Dead Unbelievers Be Resurrected?

We saw in John 5:28-29 that "all" that are in the graves will hear the Lord's voice when He returns and will come forth or be raised up. Notice the following verse:

⁴⁸ *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)*

Here it is clear that the unsaved or unbelievers will be judged on the last day. That is the exact phrase used for when Jesus returns and resurrects the saved. This is another proof that the dead unsaved will be resurrected on the last day and must stand before the judgment for their sins and rejection of Jesus Christ on that very day.

Parable of the Wheat and Tares

The parable of the wheat and tares gives us an excellent study of when the resurrection will take place. Jesus explains to us the resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved.

²⁴ *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' ²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'" (Matt. 13:24-30)*

Notice that the "harvest" is the resurrection. Also notice that it is the tares or the unbelievers that are the first part of the resurrection. The wheat or the believers are resurrected after the tares or unbelievers.

Parable of the Wheat and Tares Explained by Christ

³⁶ *Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."*

³⁷ *He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matt. 13:36-43)*

Jesus explains that the harvest is the end of the age. This age ends on the last day. The KJV says the end of the world. This makes it clear the unsaved and saved are part of the same resurrection on the last day.

Of special importance are verses 28-40. The servants (angels) ask the sower of the good seed (Christ) if He wants them to pull up the tares (unsaved) out of the field. The owner (Christ) says no because he doesn't want the wheat (saved) to be uprooted. He tells the servants to let them both grow together until the harvest and then the separation will take place. Jesus is saying that there is no early resurrection (1,000 years) of either the saved or unsaved. They are not separated until the harvest or the resurrection which takes place at the end of the world on the last day. This proves that an early resurrection of the saved cannot be correct.

The Parable of the Dragnet

⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 13:47-50)

In this parable we see another example of the last day resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved. Notice that the fish that was gathered was some of every kind, both good (saved) and bad (unsaved). The net was full meaning all people are involved. When the fish was pulled up on the shore the separation or resurrection took place at one time. The good were put into vessels but the bad were thrown away. Jesus then explains this parable. He says this is the way it will be at the end of the age or the end of the world (KJV). The angels will come and at the resurrection will separate the saved from the unsaved. The saved (sheep) will be placed on the right hand side of Jesus who sits on the throne of His judgment and the unsaved (goats) will be placed on His left hand side. The unsaved will be cast into the furnace of fire which is the lake of fire. (Matt. 25: 31-34, 41) There is no period of time (ex. 1,000 years) between the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved.

The Last Trumpet

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

In this verse we see that the resurrection or rapture of all believers happens when the last trumpet sounds. Those believers

who are alive when Jesus comes undergo a bodily change just like those who come out of their graves. They will receive their glorified bodies all in a twinkling of an eye. Doesn't it make sense that the last trumpet would sound on the last day? Especially since it has already been proven biblically that the resurrection takes place on the last day.

Can There Be a Day after the Last Day?

I once had a pastor who had a favorite saying. He would say, "To ask the question is to answer it." When Jesus said repeatedly that the resurrection of the saved would take place on the last day He meant the last day. Some would argue that Jesus meant the last day (of the age) not the very last day. The last day of the age to them would be at the end of the tribulation period. However, this changes the clear meaning of Scripture. We are not allowed to add our own words to the words of Jesus.

If Jesus truly meant to say the very last day, how else could He have said it? We have to give Jesus the benefit of the doubt when it comes to His words. He could have added the words "of the age" but clearly did not. No, the last day means the very last day as Jesus said.

What about the Millennium?

If the resurrection, which includes all the saved and unsaved, happens on the last day, then what happened to the millennium? We will examine that topic in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Millennium

The 1,000 Year Reign

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6)

This passage makes it clear that there is definitely a millennial reign. The question is how literal or symbolic are we to understand this passage? Also, where does it take place?

First, the book of Revelation is the most highly symbolic book in the entire Bible. We just can't take everything literally. Here is an example:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and

followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:1-4)

This passage is a description of the beast or Antichrist. Does he really come out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns? No, this is symbolic language that has a deeper meaning. Much of what is written in Revelation is symbolic language. The difficulty is trying to discern what to take literally and what to take symbolically.

Second, this 1,000 year reign is only mentioned in this one verse in all of the Scriptures in the most symbolic book in the Bible. This verse does not say this reign is on Earth.

Third, can we glean something about this time frame from another book in the Bible that is not a symbolic passage?

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

In these verses Jesus is saying that the coming kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. One will not be able to observe it with the eyes. The reason is because this kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that is within us. As Christians we are presently in His kingdom, serving Him and spreading His gospel around the world, adding others to His kingdom.

Three Millennial Views

Pre-Millennialism

This view maintains that Jesus Christ one day will return to the Earth with all believers, those who were resurrected from the dead or raptured while alive. Therefore all believers will have their glorified bodies. Jesus will set up a literal 1,000 year reign on Earth and will rule from Jerusalem.

During these 1,000, years Satan will be bound or limited in his ability to deceive the nations. After the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed and will gather the nations to do battle against the beloved city Jerusalem. God will crush this rebellion and cast Satan into the lake of fire. Most believe that there are two different judgments. The Judgment Seat of Christ for believers at the first resurrection and 1,000 years later for the unsaved at the Great White Throne Judgment. Some hold that those people living during the millennium will also be at the Great White Throne Judgment to be judged.

Post-Millennialism

This view maintains that Satan was bound during Christ's earthly ministry by the spreading of the Word of God, His casting out demons, His victory over sin by His crucifixion and His resurrection. This binding limits Satan's power to deceive the nations. The millennial reign and kingdom started during Christ's earthly ministry and is successfully progressing to the very end of the world when most people will be Christians. The 1,000 years is a symbolic number for a very long period of time. (Others believe the binding of Satan and millennial reign will take place at

some future time when the successful preaching of the gospel will diminish Satan's ability to be effective. The 1,000 years may be literal.) There will be an uprising after Satan is loosed from his bounds but it will be short lived and put down immediately by the returning Christ in power and glory on the last day. There will be a last day general resurrection and general judgment of all mankind.

A-Millennialism

This view is improperly named. The a-millennial view does maintain that there will be a millennium. In some respects it is very similar to the post-millennial view. The millennium and Satan's binding started during Christ's earthly ministry for reasons mentioned in the previous view. Some hold that this reign of believers is taking place in heaven right now with Christ. Others hold that it is a spiritual reign within our hearts as we live and serve Jesus daily. The 1,000 years is symbolic of a very long time period. This view sees sin and evil progressing to the end until Jesus Christ returns on the last day and defeats Satan, who has been loosed, and all evil. There will be a last day general resurrection and general judgment of all mankind.

A Verse by Verse Examination of the Millennium

(Rev. 20:1-6)

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Who is this angel? Perhaps it is Michael who is considered the mightiest of all angels. Some think this angel may actually be referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. This appears to be symbolic language with the words key, a great chain, and a bottomless pit.

² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Satan is often referred to in Revelation as a dragon and serpent. This mighty angel binds Satan for a thousand years. Is this a literal 1,000 years or rather symbolic language of a very long period of time?

³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

This binding is more of a limitation rather than a complete restriction from all activities. Satan is limited in his power to deceive the nations. He still has power to deceive individuals.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.

John sees thrones and people sitting on them. Judgment was committed to them. Where are these thrones? John mentioned earlier in Revelation that he saw thrones in Heaven.

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev. 4:2-4)

Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Notice that John said that he saw the souls of martyred saints or believers. These people had been murdered for their faith in Jesus. Souls are separate from their bodies. It appears that these martyred saints are in heaven living in their spirit form before they have received their resurrected, glorified bodies which will take place on the last day when they return to Earth with Christ at the resurrection. They are reigning in heaven with Jesus Christ, sitting on thrones, and their reign is for a very long time symbolized by 1,000 years. This verse does not say they reign on Earth in a temporal way.

⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This verse confirms that we have been talking about dead people whose souls are in heaven on thrones reigning with Christ. Who are the rest of the dead? They must be the dead unsaved who will be resurrected on the last day and thus will live again to face their judgment before Christ.

This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.

If there is a first resurrection a second resurrection is implied. When is the first resurrection? Only the saved take part in this

first resurrection for they will be blessed and holy. This first resurrection takes place at the moment we become saved. It is a spiritual resurrection when we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life.

²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. (John 5:24-25)

Notice next that God made us, who were dead spiritually in trespasses and sins, alive spiritually and raised us up together to sit in heavenly places in Christ.

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph. 2:4-9)

Everyone who becomes saved takes part in the first resurrection at the moment of conversion. This is the spiritual new birth, being "born of the Spirit" or being "born again."

⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear

the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5-8)

“...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,...” (Titus 3:5)

The second resurrection is the physical resurrection that takes place on the last day when unbelievers and believers are resurrected from their graves to receive their eternal bodies and unite with their spirits. Those who are alive will also receive their eternal bodies at that time. All this will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when Jesus Christ returns in all His power and glory.

Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

If there is a second death there must be a first death. The first death is our physical death when we breathe our last breath. The second death is eternal damnation in the lake of fire. The second death has no power or dominion over believers in Jesus Christ because they have taken part in the first resurrection which is salvation or the new birth. They will reign with Christ a thousand years in heaven until they return with Him at the second resurrection or rapture on the last day.

Won't Jesus' Apostles Sit on Twelve Thrones During the Millennium?

Some would say that the following verses in the book of Matthew prove the pre-millennial view:

²⁷ Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "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. (Matt. 19:27-28)

Verse 28 is not referring to a millennial reign on Earth for several reasons. One, the regeneration that is mentioned is the New Heaven, New Earth, and the New Jerusalem of Rev. 21-22. After the Heavens and Earth are destroyed by fire (chapter 7), God brings about a regeneration or new birth in the eternal state. The New Jerusalem is most likely where the Apostles will sit on their thrones.

¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev. 21:14)

Two, the kingdom as we have already mentioned, does not come with observation for it is within us spiritually. (Luke 17:20-21)
Three, Jesus will be sitting on the throne of His glory when His apostles sit on their thrones. This will happen only after He has made all things new in the regeneration.

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. (Rev. 21:5-6)

Chapter 5

The Judgment

There is coming a day of judgment when all mankind will have to stand before the great Judge and give an account of their lives to Him. Mankind is responsible to God to live according to His Word. Just as a criminal must stand before a judge in a court of law, we too as sinners must do the same in front of God on judgment day. No one can escape this judgment. This coming judgment should motivate us to live as godly as possible for we will have to give an account for every word, deed, and thought we have committed.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. (Rev. 20:11-13)

Who is the Judge?

It is clear from Scripture that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, is the One who sits on this throne to be the great Judge of all mankind.

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

¹⁰ *But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.* (Rom. 14:10-12)

²⁶ *For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.* (John 5:26-27)

³¹ *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:...' "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:...' "* (Matt. 25: 31-34, 41)

Why does the Face of Heaven and Earth Flee This Judgment?

The unsaved will be terrified at the final judgment. They will know they were sinners in life. They will know that they did not accept God's gift of forgiveness by grace through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. They will mourn the Lord's coming on the last day knowing the time has come for them to be judged by the Son for their sinful deeds and then suffer the ultimate punishment of eternal damnation. However, there will be no place for them to hide. That will be impossible for judgment day has arrived.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of

Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
(Matt. 24:30)

Christians will not fear this judgment because their judgment is one of accountability for their life. It will not lead to condemnation and damnation because their sins have been forgiven by Christ because of their faith in Him and their repentance of sin.

³¹ *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."* (Acts 16:31)

⁵ *I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*
(Luke 13:5)

Is the Great White Throne Judgment Only for the Unsaved?

Many Christians believe that at this judgment only the unsaved will be present. They believe the saved will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ right after their resurrection or rapture some 1,000 years or so before the Great White Throne Judgment.

Other Christians who hold to the pre-millennial view believe that those people who are born and become saved during the millennium will also be present during the Great White Throne Judgment.

The Scripture tells us who will be there.

¹² *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.* ¹³ *The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them.* (Rev. 20:12-13)

These verses tell us that all the dead, both small and great, will stand before Christ. The sea gives up the dead who were in it. Death gives up all of those it had in its grip. Hades (Hell) also gives up those who are there.

³¹ *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.* ³² *All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.* ³³ *And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.* (Matt. 25:31-33)

The saved (sheep) will be on the right hand of God and the unsaved (goats) will be on His left hand. Every person who has ever lived will be there to give an account of his or her life.

The Unserved Will be Judged on the Last Day

We have determined after looking at a number of scriptural texts that all the saved will be resurrected or raptured on the last day. The unsaved will also be resurrected on the last day. We saw in the parable of the wheat and tares that both grow together until the harvest which is the resurrection at the end of the world on the last day. When will the unsaved be judged?

⁴⁸ *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."* (John 12:48)

Therefore, all the following events take place on the last day:

- The return of Christ in the clouds and then to the Earth
- The resurrection of the dead both unsaved and saved
- The rapture of living believers on Earth to Christ in the clouds
- The judgment of all mankind

The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment are one and the same. This judgment takes place on the last day.

The judgment of the saved will not be for salvation but they must still give an account of the things they did in their lives. The unsaved will be condemned for their sin and lack of faith in Jesus Christ and will receive everlasting fire as their punishment.

What are these Books?

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (Rev. 20:12)

There are books that are opened as mankind stands before Christ at the judgment. I have an opinion as to what these books are. One book is the book of works that has recorded in it everything that all men and women have done in their lives. This includes every deed, spoken word, and every thought. We must give an account for all our actions in life. One book is the Holy Bible. The standard we are judged on is God's Holy Word. The last book that is opened is the Book of Life. In that book are listed only the names of people who have believed in God and His Christ. Jesus purchased their forgiveness by His shed blood on the cross. They are in the Book of Life because they have everlasting life.

Christians will Receive Rewards for their Faithful Service at the Judgment

As Christians who have been bought by the precious blood of Jesus we should be motivated to run the race of life to give faithful service to our Lord. God has made provision to reward us on the day of judgment for our Christian lives and testimony.

The crowns He will give us one day are not temporal and do not fade away like crowns or rewards we can earn on Earth.

²⁴ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* ²⁵ *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.* ²⁶ *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.* ²⁷ *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.* (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

¹¹ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* ¹² *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* ¹³ *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.* ¹⁴ *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.* (1 Cor. 3:11-14)

¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* (2 Cor. 5:10)

¹¹ *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.* (Rev. 3:11)

The Crown of Righteousness

⁶ *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.* ⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* ⁸ *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

This is a crown we, as Christians, should all receive. All those who eagerly look forward to Jesus returning will receive this crown. It is called the crown of righteousness because only those who have lived righteously will be looking forward to Christ's return and giving an account of their deeds.

The Crown of Life

¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

This crown is given to all those who love Jesus Christ. How much do they love Him? They love Him so much that they are willing to suffer great tribulation and even death for Him.

Crown of Glory

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

This crown is given to those church pastors, ministers, elders, deacons, and overseers who have served their congregations well and have been excellent examples of Christ to them.

Crown of Rejoicing

¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

²⁰ For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thess 2:19-20)

Perhaps this is not a crown we will receive; however, when we see people at Jesus' coming which we influenced in a godly way, they will be like living crowns of ours. We will rejoice because God used us to help them become Christians or grow as Christians. What a time of rejoicing that will be to see the fruit of our lives in these people.

Casting our Crowns before the Throne of God

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Rev. 4:9-11)

Because of the previous verses it is thought that after receiving our crowns from the Lord for our Christian service, we will cast our crowns before the throne of God. Why would we do this? It is because we do not feel worthy to receive such great honor as the only One who is worthy is Jesus Christ.

Christians Will Judge Angels on the Last Day

³ *Do you not know that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3)*

The Apostle Paul is telling us that we will judge the fallen angels or demons. What an honor for believers in Christ to have this responsibility. Although no time is given as to when this takes place it stands to reason that it will take place on the last day for that is when we, as believers, are resurrected and receive our glorified bodies and then are given our rewards. After the judgment of all mankind, I believe the judgment of demons will take place. After their judgment, these evil beings will be cast into the lake of fire to receive eternal torment and suffering for their rebellion against God.

Chapter 6

The Lake of Fire

The lake of fire sounds terribly frightening and horrible. The very thought of having to endure eternal punishment, torment and pain in a lake of fire is something none of us want to think about. This topic is certainly not politically correct in our society. However, that doesn't make it any less real. The Word of God is absolutely clear. There is a place of eternal torment and suffering and that place is called the lake of fire.

In chapter 1, it was mentioned that the unsaved at death go to a temporary place of torment in fire called hell. This is where those who do not have faith in Jesus Christ will suffer while they await the resurrection, their judgment, condemnation, and then their ultimate destiny, the lake of fire. Hell is also the temporary abode of torment of the fallen angels who have been imprisoned there by God.

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Rev. 19:20)

The beast here is the Antichrist and the false prophet is his evil partner. The beast seeks the worship of men and the false prophet works great signs and wonders that deceive those who receive the mark of the beast (666) and who worship the image of the beast. These two are cast alive into this lake.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 20:10)

⁴³ *If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— ⁴⁴ where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'*

⁴⁵ *And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— ⁴⁶ where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'*

⁴⁷ *And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— ⁴⁸ where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'* (Mark 9:43-47)

Satan, the devil, will also be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are. We notice that they are tormented day and night forever. The "worm" refers to the unsaved who are cast into the lake of fire to endure eternal torment. There is no annihilation as some teach where there is a cessation of torment because the resurrected body is just burned up out of existence. No, those who are cast into this lake of fire will suffer unimaginable pain and torment forever and ever.

¹⁴ *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.* (Rev. 20:14-15)

Even death is cast into the lake of fire for there will be no more death. The temporary place of punishment called hell will also be thrown into this lake. Finally, the unsaved, those who never believed in Jesus Christ, whose names are not written the Book of Life, will also be cast into this eternal of fire of suffering.

Chapter 7

The Destruction of the Heavens and Earth

There is something else that is going to take place on the last day. God is going to destroy the heavens and the Earth by fire. Just as God destroyed all life except for Noah and his family by the great flood, so too will He destroy the heavens and the Earth.

⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:5-7)

We know this will take place on the last day because the Lord tells us in verse 7 above that the heavens and Earth are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and the perdition of ungodly men. We saw in the previous chapter that the judgment day takes place on the last day. The unsaved or ungodly men will be cast into the lake of fire on the last day.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:10-13)

The day of the Lord as a thief in the night and the coming day of God are references that show us that the burning up of the heavens and Earth are also on the last day.

Why Will God Destroy the Heavens and the Earth?

The answer to this question is sin. With the exception of Noah and his family, God destroyed all the inhabitants of the Earth with the great flood because of mankind's great wickedness.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. (Gen. 6:5-8)

God is going to destroy everything and start all over again like He did in Noah's day. As we will see shortly, God is going to create a new Heaven, a new Earth, and the New Jerusalem. However, this time there will be no more sin, sickness, or death. Satan and the demons sinned in heaven and mankind sinned on Earth. God will destroy the old sin tainted heaven and Earth by fire. He will simply alter the elements and cause all matter to be consumed in fire.

Chapter 8

A New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem

After the old heaven and Earth have been consumed by fire, God will create a new heaven, new Earth, and a New Jerusalem.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."
(Rev. 21:1-4)

What a wonderful Paradise this new heaven, new Earth, and New Jerusalem will be. No more evil or sin will be there. Believers, forgiven of their sins by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, will have eternal life of happiness and contentment worshipping God forever. There will be no more tears, sorrow, pain or death. All those things of grief will have passed away. Jesus is preparing many mansions for us in heaven.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)

What a comfort to know that Jesus has a very special place for each of us who are believers in Him. It will be so wonderful that we can't even imagine it in our minds.

⁹ *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9)*

⁵ *Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."* ⁶ *And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."* ⁷ *He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son." (Rev. 21:5-7)*

God gives us a picture of how beautiful the New Jerusalem will be:

¹⁹ *The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,* ²⁰ *the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.* ²¹ *The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. (Rev. 21:19-21)*

This glorious place is what Christians have to look forward to as their final resting place with God.

Chapter 9

Epilogue

Summary of Events on the Last Day

We have learned from this book that the following will happen on the last day:

- 1.** The day and hour Jesus Christ will return is a secret. It could be at any time. No one can predict when it will be.
- 2.** Jesus Christ will return only one more time. It will be in great power and glory when He comes in the clouds with His holy saints and angels. Everyone on Earth will know it because there will be a great shout by an archangel and a trumpet blown. Every eye shall see and every ear shall hear Jesus coming in the clouds in power, glory, and wonderful majesty.
- 3.** Immediately the resurrection occurs. The bodies of dead believers will come out of their graves and join with their spirits in the clouds to meet with Jesus in the air. Those who are alive when Jesus comes in the clouds will have their bodies changed into eternal bodies and be translated upward to Christ also. This all happens in a twinkling of an eye. They immediately come to Earth. Christ will put down all rebellion against Him and cast the Antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire to receive eternal torment. The bodies of the dead unsaved will also be resurrected from their graves to be joined with their spirits who have been in hell. At the resurrection the saved will receive their eternal glorified bodies and the unsaved will receive eternal bodies in which they will endure everlasting torment.
- 4.** Then the Great White Throne Judgment will occur, also known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. All men will stand before Jesus Christ to give an account of the things they have done in their lives, every deed committed, every word spoken, and every

thought they have had. Christians will be on the right hand of Christ and the unsaved will be on His left hand. The books will be opened and every one whose name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, those on the left hand of Christ, will be condemned. Those on His right hand will give an account of their lives and rewards will be given to them for their faithful service. Christians will also judge the fallen angels (demons).

5. The unsaved will be cast into the lake of fire to receive eternal torment. Also thrown into the lake of fire will be Satan and the demons to receive eternal torment and suffering. Death and hell will be thrown into the lake of fire.

6. God will destroy the heavens and the Earth by a consuming fire.

7. God creates a new Heaven, a new Earth, and the New Jerusalem. The saved will receive eternal happiness and glory in this new Paradise. They will experience God in their presence forever and will be one family. What a glorious family reunion that will be with Jesus Christ forever and ever.

How Can All These Things Take Place on One Day?

This is no problem for God.

But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26)

God can do all things. God once stopped time so that Israel could defeat their enemies.

Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." ¹³ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is

this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. ¹⁴ And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. (Joshua 10:12-14)

God can move time backwards.

⁴ And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, ⁵ "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. ⁶ I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.'" ⁷ And this is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing which He has spoken: ⁸ "Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it had gone down. (Isa. 38:4-8)

God can do all these things in a second simply by stopping time if He wants to. Nothing is too difficult for Him.

Do Some Churches Place too much Emphasis on End Time Events?

There are some churches and religious organizations that have as part of their doctrinal statement the requirement for members to believe in a pre-tribulation rapture and a pre-millennial earthly reign. Yet there is not one verse in the Bible that directly states that there is a pre-tribulation rapture or a pre-millennial earthly reign. It is this author's opinion that Christian organizations should only be as dogmatic on such issues as the Bible is dogmatic. In areas that are not clearly defined in Scripture, Christians must be allowed some freedom and flexibility.

What is Really Important Here?

Although we can't know when the last day will be, what is important is that we live each day like it is our last day on Earth. We are commanded to watch for Jesus can come at any time. We must be prepared each day for His blessed return. If we do that we will be living for Him. We will be prepared and love the thought of His coming soon. We will receive a crown of righteousness.

Although we can't determine when Jesus will return, we can be sure of this. He will come back one day. This is a promise we can rely on. So let's get ready for that blessed event!

Now is the Day of Salvation

For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2)

If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior then ask Him to save you from the eternal torment and agony of hell and the lake of fire. Believe in Him and His holy word. He has promised to save everyone who calls upon His name just like the thief on the cross.

³⁷ *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (John 6:37)*

And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.' (Acts 2:21)

³¹ *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)*

Don't put your salvation off. The Lord will come when you least expect it. Come to Jesus Christ in faith while there is still time. Those who don't will receive the wrath of God.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

As I close this book I would like to make a suggestion. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ I would invite you to read the fourth book in the New Testament, the gospel of John. I hope that it will open your eyes to the truth of salvation in the Lord Jesus. The most important decision one can make in this life is to believe in Jesus Christ. There is no second chance after death. We must trust and believe in Jesus during our lifetime.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

God bless you my friend. It is my desire that if you don't know Jesus Christ that you will become a believer and follower of His. If you are I hope that you will grow in the Lord as you prepare for the last day.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
(Rev. 22:20-21)*