

MORE REGARDING GOD’S SALVATION PLANS FOR THE NATIONS

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I have included extensive excerpts on the internet from my paper titled “A Verse-by-Verse Study of Six Important Eschatological Chapters of the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 24, 25; and Revelation 20-22: This Paper Deals Extensively with the Topic of God’s Ultimate Salvation Plans for the Nations,” published in November, 1998. The chapters dealing with 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 24, 25; and Revelation 20-22 are all included on the internet. Here I want to include the Table of Contents, the Introduction, and part of the lengthy Appendix of that paper. This added information deals in large part with God’s salvation plans for the nations. In the Appendix I quoted extensively from three books. I’ll only include a very small part of those quotations here. I had received permission to quote extensively from those books for the paper, but not for the internet. You could contact me for a copy of the original paper. This part of the original paper was slightly revised in June 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

The six chapters from the New Testament that are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in this paper (1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 24, 25; and Revelation 20-22) all deal with eschatology (the study of the last things; for example, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, glorification, great-white-throne judgment, and the new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem). None of these chapters is discussed in any detail (except for several key verses) in my book, *Mid-Week Rapture*. In my next two papers, I plan to cover Rev. 14:6-19:21, and then Rev. 1:1-10:11, passages not covered in any detail (except for several key verses) in *Mid-Week Rapture*. This paper and the following two papers will serve as supplements to *Mid-Week Rapture*. Also, when these papers are completed, all of the book of Revelation will have been discussed in a verse-by-verse manner. (This has been accomplished.)

A primary topic dealt with in this paper (because this topic frequently comes up in the passages of Scripture discussed in this paper) is God's ultimate salvation plans for the elect of the nations. (By "the nations" I'm speaking of that part of mankind that isn't part of God's true Israel. True Israel includes the old-covenant believers and the new-covenant believers. See Rom. 11:17-27. The woman of Revelation chapter 12 symbolizes/represents true Israel in her entirety. True Israel is the bride of Christ. The members of true Israel are bond-servants of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will reign forever [Rev. 22:3-5].) These plans teach us quite a bit about God Himself. About half of the pages of this paper deal with this topic, including most of the lengthy Appendix. The most important passages in the New Testament that deal with this topic are Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 14:4 ("first fruits" harvested, with more to be harvested); 15:3, 4; and 20:1-22:5. The primary discussions on God's ultimate salvation of the nations in this paper will be found under Matt. 24:30, 31; 25:31-46; Rev. 20:3, 5-15; 21:1-4; and 21:24-22:3; plus the Appendix.

There are two primary issues regarding the salvation of the nations. The first involves the millennial kingdom. It seems clear, based on verses like Rev. 15:3, 4; 20:3, and many verses from the Old Testament (see the Appendix), that God will leave a remnant of the nations to enter the millennial kingdom after His end-time judgment that will terminate after Armageddon, at the end of Daniel's 70th week. This remnant could easily number a billion people, or even more, which makes this a rather important topic. Many of these people will repent and be converted, and many of them and their offspring (apparently they will continue to have children throughout the millennium) will stay faithful to God throughout their lives in the millennium and will ultimately enter His eternal kingdom as part of the nations, as pictured in Rev. 21:1-22:3. There's widespread agreement among evangelicals with what I have said in this paragraph.

A second issue regarding God's ultimate salvation of the nations through Christ is more controversial, especially for evangelicals, but there is a trend in the direction of more acceptance all the time. This issue involves the question of whether any of the people who have died the last two thousand years who weren't Christians (especially considering those who never heard the gospel) will have their names found in the Lamb's book of life (as the elect of God) and will ultimately enter His eternal kingdom as part of the nations,

as pictured in Rev. 21:1-22:3. I assume that some of them are elect of God and that they will have a place in God's new earth, with its new Jerusalem. I have been teaching these verses this way for many years, *but I have always taught, and I still do teach, this viewpoint with reserve and caution, and in a non-dogmatic way. Also, I try to always warn (as I do in this paper) that there is a slippery slope we must be aware of. We must be careful not to go beyond what the Scriptures teach, as many have.* (I also assume, and deal with this topic in this paper, that some of the people who lived in the days before the incarnation and the gospel who would not have been classified as believers will have a place in God's eternal kingdom as part of the nations.)

It's rather easy to abuse the idea that some may ultimately be saved as part of the nations who didn't hear the gospel during the time they lived on the earth—we must be aware of such abuses, and we must do everything we can to avoid such abuses. Some can be tempted to put off learning of Christ and the gospel, and submitting to Christ and the gospel, when God is dealing with them, because of an inappropriate hope that they may still be saved as part of the nations. Such a response is very inappropriate and very dangerous. Also, Christians can be tempted to back off from sharing the gospel with others and from doing their part (as led by God) to take the gospel to the nations.

This paper doesn't answer every question regarding God's salvation plans for the nations; it isn't the last word to be said on this topic.

The study of Matthew chapter 24 in this paper, by itself, constitutes a rather comprehensive study on eschatology. (As I mentioned, Matthew chapters 24, 25 have been split off as a separate paper on my internet site.) For one thing, I have included many cross-references there to discussions of topics/passages of Scripture in my book, *Mid-Week Rapture*.

The Table of Contents for this paper (included above) will enable the reader to see where we're going. All quotations from the Bible are from the NASB (1977 edition), unless otherwise noted. It's more important every day for Christians to understand what the Bible teaches on eschatology; we're certainly getting very close to the end. I'm especially interested in the book of Revelation; it's a very special book, as we'll discuss in this paper.

I'm writing this Introduction last. May God's will be accomplished through this paper, and may His people be edified!

APPENDIX

1. SOME PASSAGES THAT DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD WILL LEAVE MANY PEOPLE FROM THE NATIONS AFTER HIS END-TIME JUDGMENT (at the end of Daniel's 70th week); this remnant of the nations will enter the millennial kingdom, and they (at least many of them) will be converted. Ultimately the nations (excluding those who rebel during the millennial kingdom or in the major rebellion at the end of that kingdom) will have a place in God's eternal kingdom (which starts after the millennium).

A Few Introductory Remarks. This section is very relevant to the topic of God's ultimate salvation of (the elect of) the nations. The passages listed here demonstrate, for one thing,

that God will leave a substantial remnant of the nations after His end-time judgment of the world to enter the millennial kingdom. (“The nations,” as these words are used, for example, in Rev. 20:3, apparently embrace all the peoples living on the earth that aren’t part of God’s true Israel. Apparently none of them ever will become part of true Israel [but cf. Isa. 66:21]. According to my understanding, any that did become part of true Israel would no longer be classified as part of the nations.) The nations will still have natural bodies throughout the millennium; true Israel (apparently all the members of true Israel) will have been glorified by the time the millennial kingdom begins.

Most of the passages listed in this section are from the Old Testament, but it’s very significant that the book of Revelation confirms that there will be an intermediate, millennial kingdom before the eternal state is initiated. We learn many of the details regarding the millennial kingdom from the book of Revelation, including the mention of a thousand years. (Millennium, from the Latin, means a thousand years.) The millennial kingdom can be considered a first installment of God’s gracious salvation plans for the nations. Several of the passages I list here in section 1 could have been listed in section 2, and vice versa. For one thing, most of these Old Testament prophecies don’t make a distinction between entering the millennial kingdom and entering the eternal kingdom. Anyway, there are plenty of passages listed to demonstrate that there will be an intermediate kingdom before the eternal kingdom fully begins.

It’s significant that several of the passages we’ll discuss in this section (and in section 2) seem to teach that God will save some from the nations who will have died before the millennial kingdom begins. (They will be resurrected at the end of the millennial kingdom to be judged at the great-white throne judgment.) Especially see Isa. 25:6-8; 26:18, 19; and Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-4; 21:24-22:3 (all listed, and discussed, in this section); and Psalm 87; Ezek. 16:44-63 with Matt. 10:15; 11:23, 24; and Luke 10:12 (listed, and discussed, in section 2). Also see under Jer. 48:47; 49:4-6, 11, 19, 38, and 39 in section 1 for some more verses similar to Ezek. 16:44-63, and see on Matt. 25:31-46 in this paper (under Matthew chapter 25). Essentially everything in this Appendix, and much of the content of this paper, is relevant to this topic. (My paper “Verse-by-Verse Studies of Selected Eschatological Prophecies from the Book of Isaiah: Most of these Prophecies Deal with God’s Salvation Plans for the Remnants of Israel and of the Nations after His End-Time Judgment of the World” is available now. It includes Isaiah chapters 24-27.)

Here in section 1, I’m not attempting to list all the passages that could be listed, but I’ll list many of them. It’s somewhat surprising just how many such passages there are, especially in the Old Testament. I’ll quote some key verses, and include some discussion, but the reader will be required to read most of these passages from their Bibles, preferably from the NASB, which I’m using here. If you don’t have a NASB, I suggest you get one; it would be worth the cost just for this one study. I’m confident that you’ll find that these passages are quite important, interesting, and relevant to our topic. I’m quite impressed by many of these passages.

NOTE: I have discussed many of the relevant passages in subsequent papers in more detail, including papers discussing key eschatological passages from the books of Psalms, Isaiah, and Zechariah. These papers are included on this internet site.

Deut. 32:43 with 31:14-32:52 (Cf. Rev. 15:3, 4 [discussed later in this section]. “The nations” in Deut. 32:43 are those who will be left from the nations after God’s end-time judgment, at the end of Daniel’s 70th week, as in Rev. 15:4.); Psalm 46:8-10 with 46:1-11; Psalm 47 (The “peoples” of 47:1, 3 [Hebrew *amim*] are the peoples of the nations, excluding Israel; in 47:3, 8 they are called the “nations” [Hebrew *goyim*]. In 47:3 I would translate “He subdued,” with the NIV. The “inheritance” of [true] Israel [47:4] apparently includes inheriting the earth and reigning over the nations. For the nations to be under the God of Israel is a great blessing. That’s why they are exhorted to rejoice and praise God throughout this psalm. The “shields of the earth” in 47:9 apparently refer to the “princes [nobles/rulers] of the people” spoken of in the first line of 47:9. I would translate the “princes [nobles/rulers] of the peoples”; the Hebrew has the plural *amim*, which was also used in 47:1, 3. Later in this verse, we have “the people [Hebrew *am*, from which the plural *amim* was formed] of the God of Abraham.” This psalm, like so many of the passages we are considering in this section, will not be fulfilled in the full and final sense until after God’s end-time judgment.); Psalm 82 (This significant psalm speaks of the need for God to arise and judge the earth [cf. 82:8]. The “congregation” of God in 82:1 speaks of mankind worldwide. God is the God of all people. The “rulers” in 82:1 are the rulers of mankind worldwide, who have, for the most part, been doing a very poor [sinful] job [cf. 82:2-5]. To fully understand this psalm it must be recognized that “rulers” in 82:1 is a translation of the Hebrew *elohim*, the same word translated “gods” in 82:6. [The KJV, NKJV, and NIV have “gods” in 82:1 and 6.] However we translate *elohim* in 82:1, the rulers/judges of mankind worldwide are being spoken to in 82:2-4, 6, and 7. As the BDB Hebrew Lexicon shows, *elohim* is sometimes used of rulers/judges. As rulers under God [cf., e.g., Rom. 13:1-7], they have an important, privileged position, which is reflected by the word *elohim*. The plural noun *elohim* is translated God most of the time [the Hebrew plural is used to denote honor/majesty when it is used for God]; the NASB translates *elohim* as God 2,325 times; it translates gods 204 times.); Psalm 96 (This significant psalm, as with many of these psalms, will not be fulfilled in its ultimate sense until God has judged the earth at the end of this age. Note 96:13. At that time the nations will forsake their “gods/idols” [cf. 96:4, 5], and they will worship God, the only One worthy of worship. The “new song” of 96:1 will praise and exalt God for His new work of salvation [based on the atoning death of the Lamb of God]; His saving work very much includes judging and removing the unrepentant.); Psalm 98 (When it says in 98:3 that “All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God,” it refers especially to Christ’s end-time judgment of the earth and His salvation of true Israel; however, from our new-covenant point of view, we realize that the salvation manifested at His second coming flows out of His all-important first coming.); Isa. 2:1-4 ((Also see Micah 4:1-5.) **The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. (2) Now it will come about that In the last days** [Isaiah 2:10-22 help demonstrate that the things prophesied here in Isa. 2:2-4 will not come to pass in the full and final sense until after God’s end-time judgment of the earth. Cf., e.g., Rev. 6:12-17.], **The mountain** [Mt. Zion at Jerusalem] **of the house** [referring to the temple] **of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains** [Cf., e.g., Zech. 14:9, 10. Mountains sometimes represent kingdoms. God’s kingdom, centered in Jerusalem, will reign over all kingdoms/nations/peoples, excluding those who will be removed by judgment.], **And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations** [*goyim*] **will stream to it. (3) And many peoples** [*amim*] **will come and say, “Come, let us go up**

to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (4) And He will judge between the nations [goyim], and will render decisions for many peoples [amim]; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation [goy] will not lift up sword against nation [goy]. And never again will they learn war. [This last verse helps demonstrate that this prophecy, like many of these prophecies, isn’t limited to the millennial kingdom that we learn about from Revelation chapter 20. A never-ending kingdom is in view. Revelation 20:7-10 show that a multitude from the nations, like the sand of the seashore, will gather to attack the camp of the saints at Jerusalem at the end of the millennium. It is only after the eternal state pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22 has arrived that the prophecy regarding no more war will be completely fulfilled.); Isa. 11:1-16, especially verses 3, 4, 9, 10 (At the beginning of 11:10, I would translate “And,” with the KJV and NKJV, or just leave the Hebrew untranslated with the NIV.); Isa. 14:1, 2 (This is one of many passages that mention the ultimate subordination of the nations to [true] Israel; many passages make it clear, however, that this will mean salvation and blessing for the nations.); Isa. 14:28-32, especially 14:32 (The primary fulfillment of this prophecy will take place at the end of this age. God’s “people” [14:32] here includes the remnant of the nations. Cf., e.g., Isa. 19:25. This interpretation of 14:32 becomes more obvious when considered together with similar passages in Isaiah, which are listed as we continue.); Isa. 16:1-5; Isa. 19:16-25 (Note that Egypt is called God’s “people” in 19:25. Cf. Rev. 21:3. Also note “they will return to the LORD” in 19:22. The people of Egypt, like the people of all nations, were created by God, and He is the God of all people.); Isa. 24:1-6, 13-16a (Isaiah 24:1-6 are discussed under Zech. 11:10 on pages 211-213 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. Isaiah chapters 24-27 are discussed in my paper on Isaiah, which is now available on my internet site.); Isa. 25:1-9, especially verses 3, 6-8 ((These verses are closely connected with those just listed from Isaiah chapter 24. Isaiah chapters 24-27 is sometimes called Isaiah’s Little Apocalypse. (The book of Revelation is John’s Apocalypse; the Greek noun translated “Revelation” is *apokalupsis*.) Isaiah 25:6-8 are extremely important, and especially when coupled with the next verses listed in this section (Isa. 26:18, 19) because they demonstrate that the kingdom that comes forth after God’s end-time judgment is not limited to those left alive on the earth (and their offspring); it isn’t limited to the millennial kingdom. God’s kingdom in its ultimate, eternal form includes those who are resurrected, apparently including the elect of the nations, not just those resurrected that are part of true Israel. (This same truth applies to some other verses listed in this section.) Let’s look at Isa. 25:6-8: **And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples [amim] on this mountain** [The mountain represents God’s kingdom, centered ultimately in new Jerusalem]; ... **(7) And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples [amim], Even the veil which is stretched over all nations [goyim]**. [There is widespread agreement that the covering/veil spoken of here is death. See 25:8.] **(8) He will swallow up death for all time** [See 1 Cor. 15:26, 54; Rev. 20:14; 21:4.], **And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces** [In Rev. 7:17 we see this prophecy come to pass for those of true Israel raptured in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week. In Rev. 21:4 (after the great-white-throne judgment at the end of the millennium), we see these words (including the swallowing up of death) coming to pass for those saved from the nations.], **And He will remove the**

reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. [Those saved from the nations will no longer look down on (reproach) true Israel and their God. They will be worshipping the God of Israel.]); Isa. 26:18, 19 (**We were pregnant, we writhed in labor, We gave birth, as it were, only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth Nor were inhabitants of the world born.** [God's people (true Israel) couldn't overthrow death (just spoken of in Isa. 25:7, 8) and give birth to (resurrect/glorify) themselves, much less could they give birth to the elect of the nations. God, however, through His Son, can, and will, totally overthrow sin, Satan, and death, and, at the right time, it will all be manifested. (On the end-time birth of true Israel, see under Rev. 12:5, starting on page 314 of *Mid-Week Rapture*; also see under Isa. 66:8 on pages 243-247 of the same book. The birth of the elect of the nations into the eternal life of God's eternal kingdom is confirmed by Isa. 25:6-8; Rev. 21:3, 4; 21:24-22:3; and Psalm 87 (discussed in section 2).] **(19) Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn** [The "dew" from God apparently represents His refreshing, life-giving, saving work.], **And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.** [All mankind will be resurrected, but not all mankind will be resurrected to eternal life (cf., e.g., Isa. 26:14; Rev. 20:11-15).]); Isa. 27:5, 6; Isa. 29:17-24 (Isaiah 29:19-21 are representative of a large number of verses that indicate that God's end-time judgment will be selective: He'll apparently just cut off [remove by judgment] such persons as "the ruthless...the scorner...all who are intent on doing evil [and aren't about to repent]" [Isa. 29:20]. The "children [of Jacob/Israel]" [29:23], taken in the fullest sense, includes all the saved/elect in God's eternal kingdom [true Israel and the nations]. On "the work of My hands" [29:23], see Isa. 19:25; 45:11; 60:21; 64:8; and Eph. 2:10.); Isa. 42:1-17 (The "you [You]," used four times in 42:6, refers to the "Servant" of 42:1, the Lord Jesus Christ. The "people" [42:6] apparently refer to the peoples of the nations. [The nation Israel could be included with the other nations here.] The singular "people" [*am*] is probably due to the use of the singular "people" [*am*], which clearly speaks of all people, in 42:5. [It's possible that "people" in 42:6 refers to Israel; many understand it that way. (BY THE TIME I WROTE MY PAPER ON ISAIAH [dated August 2000], AFTER FURTHER STUDY, I HAD CHANGED TO THE VIEWPOINT THAT THE PEOPLE IN ISAIAH 42:6 REFERS TO ISRAEL I STILL HOLD THE NEWER VIEWPOINT.) Even if "people" did refer to Israel in 42:6, the salvation of the nations is emphasized in this passage.] Like many of the passages we're looking at, Isa. 42:1-17 has some application for the first coming of Jesus Christ and this present age, but the primary fulfillment awaits His second coming.); Isa. 45:14-25 (This passage, like most of these passages, is worthy of extensive comment, but it's beyond the scope of this paper. [These verses are discussed in detail in my paper on Isaiah.] The primary message of these verses is the salvation of the remnant of the nations after God's end-time judgment, but there's some application for the salvation of Gentiles during this present age, as we become part of true Israel through salvation in Christ Jesus. I'll comment on the meaning of the words the "offspring of Jacob/Israel" of 45:19, 25. These words, as they are used here, apparently include all the saved/elect of the nations. All that enter God's eternal kingdom must be born into eternal life. All those saved through Jesus Christ, including those called "the nations" in Revelation chapters 21, 22, can be considered the offspring of Israel. For one thing, Christ is God's true Israel, as Isa. 49:1-4 show; note that He is called "Israel" in 49:3. All those saved are saved through Jesus Christ, as Rev. 21:27, for

example, shows. The nations are born into eternal life by coming to Israel [e.g., Isa. 2:2-4] in that they really are coming to God and His Christ. On being born of Israel, see above on Isa. 29:23; see Psalm 87 and Isa. 44:3-5 [both discussed in section 2 of this Appendix]; and Rev. 12:5, 17. I'll also comment on the last line of 45:24. I assume that "all who were angry at Him [God]" will then be humble and repentant and come to God in sincerity. They are ashamed, and rightly so, of their former ignorance, sinfulness, gods, and idols.); Isa. 49:1-26 ((The "Servant" in 49:1-8 is Christ Jesus. The "nation" in 49:7 is Israel. Isaiah 49:8 speaks of a "covenant of the people" [compare 42:6 (discussed above); AS I MENTIONED ABOVE, UNDER ISAIAH 42:6, AFTER FURTHER STUDY I HAD CHANGED TO THE VIEWPOINT THAT ISAIAH 42:6 REFERS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL BY THE TIME I WROTE MY PAPER ON ISAIAH (August 2000). SO TOO FOR THE "PEOPLE" HERE IN ISAIAH 45:8 AND 13. THIS FACT REQUIRES SOME MODIFICATION OF THE WORDS THAT FOLLOW, BUT I'M NOT DOING THAT HERE. MUCH OF THE REST OF WHAT I SAID AS I CONTINUED WITH THIS DISCUSSION UNDER ISAIAH 49:1-26 IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.]); every person that has a place in God's eternal kingdom enters through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God [cf. Rev. 21:27]. The "people" here in 49:8 apparently are the same as "His people," also called "His afflicted," in 49:13. [On His afflicted people, cf., e.g., Isa. 14:32; 19:25 (with 19:22).] Using the word people in the fullest sense [WHICH DOESN'T APPLY AT ISAIAH 42:6 OR 49:8, 13], all the peoples/nations that have a place in God's new earth are included. Instead of "land" in 49:8, we could translate "earth" with the KJV and NKJV; eventually God's salvation is worldwide [cf., e.g., Isa. 45:18; and Rev. 21:1, which speaks of the new earth]. One last comment on 49:8, I prefer the NIV's "I will answer" and "I will help." [The NASB has "I have answered" and "I have helped."] With "[He] will guide them to springs of water" [49:10], taken in the full, final sense, cf. Rev. 7:17; 21:6; and 22:1, 2. In 49:22, 23 we see the repentant nations [after God's end-time judgment] serving God and blessing [true] Israel. This coming to God at Jerusalem matches passages like Isa. 2:1-4 [cf., e.g., Isa. 60:1-22; Rev. 21:24-22:3]. It's a common prophetic theme for the nations to bring the sons of Israel to God [as an offering] after His end-time judgment [cf. Isa. 11:10-12; 14:2; 60:4, 9; and 66:12, 20.]); Isa 51:4-8; 59:15b-21, especially verse 19; 60:1-22 (The remnant of the nations come to Israel after judgment, starting about the end of Daniel's 70th week. We learn from Revelation chapters 20-22 that the millennial kingdom will ultimately yield to the super-glorious eternal state with the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem. Note that Isa. 60:11, 19 have features pictured in Rev. 21:25, 26 and 21:23; 22:5. Also, the words of Rev. 21:24, 26 about the glory of the nations being brought into God's new Jerusalem [they bring everything they have, especially themselves] has much in common with Isaiah chapter 60. There's no reason to limit many of Isaiah's prophecies dealing with the coming kingdom to the millennial kingdom. "Kedar" and "Nebaioth" [60:7] descend from Ishmael [cf. Gen. 25:13.]); Isa. 61:1-11 (True Israel will be "priests of the LORD" [61:6]. Cf. Rev. 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6. I assume this priesthood will continue into the eternal state of Revelation chapters 21, 22. Revelation 22:5 shows that the reigning continues. The "double portion" given to [true] Israel [61:7] fits the idea of [true] Israel being God's first-born son, with a privileged position [cf. Deut. 21:15-17; Ex. 4:22; Psalm 89:27; Jer. 31:9; and Heb. 12:23]. Hebrews 12:23 speaks of the "church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven." In the Greek "first-born" is plural; each member of God's true Israel has the privileged position of a first-born son. I'll also comment on the second

line of 61:8, “I hate robbery in the burnt offering.” In the margin the NASB has, “or, with iniquity.” The NIV has, “I hate robbery and iniquity.” I prefer a translation like, “I hate robbery in injustice.” The idea seems to be that God hates the injustice done to His people [true Israel] and He will make everything right for them.); Isa. 66:12-24; Jer. 3:17; 4:2; 16:19, 20; 48:47; 49:4-6, 11, 19, 38, and 39 ((The sons of Ammon are called a “backsliding daughter” [49:4]. In that Moab [48:47]; Ammon [49:6]; and Elam [49:39] have ceased to exist as nations, these verses fit well with [the elect of] the nations being saved in the eternal state, after the resurrection. Also consider Isa. 16:1-5 [Moab]; 19:25 [Assyria]; and Ezek. 16:44-63. This passage from Ezekiel, which speaks of ancient Sodom, is discussed in section 2. Quite a few more candidates for those who have died but may ultimately end up among the saved/elect of the nations in God’s eternal kingdom are listed in section 4 of this Appendix. I’ll just mention one of those listings here, ancient Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire [note Assyria listed above]; see Jonah 3:1-10; 4:1, 2, 11; Matt. 12:41; and Luke 11:32.); Dan. 7:9-14, 18, 22, and 27 (Daniel chapter 7 is discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.); Amos 9:11, 12 with Obad. 1:21 (As the margin of the NASB shows, “nations” [*goyim*] in Amos 9:12 could be translated Gentiles. The primary fulfillment of these verses will take place for those left from the nations after God’s end-time judgment. Cf. Acts 15:15-18.); Mic. 4:1-5 (See Isa. 2:1-4 above.); 7:9-17; Hab. 2:12-14; Zeph. 2:9-11 ((11) **The LORD will be terrifying to them** [the remnant of the nations after God’s end-time judgment (cf. Zeph. 1:14-18)], **for He will starve** [In the margin the NASB has, “literally, make lean.” The KJV has, “he will famish”; the NKJV has, “He will reduce to nothing”; and the NIV has, “he destroys.”] **all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations** [The NIV has, “The nations on every shore.”] **will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.** [The point is, when God is done judging the earth, the remnant of the nations will no longer worship any false gods; they will worship the one true God. A big part of what judgment day is all about, according to the book of Revelation, is the judgment and removal of Babylon the great harlot. This harlot symbolizes all false religions/gods and all the other things the devil uses to seduce men from God.]; Zeph. 3:8-10 (It’s probably better to translate Zeph. 3:10 something like “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers [speaking of the repentant remnant of the nations] shall bring My dispersed people [speaking of the scattered sons of (true) Israel] as My offering [as an offering to God, as discussed above under Isa. 49:1-26]. Many commentators understand Zeph. 3:10 this way.) Zeph. 3:20; Hab. 2:6-9 (Cf. Heb. 12:26-29.); Zech. 2:9-13 (“**For behold, I** [Significantly, the Speaker here is the Son of God, the Angel of the LORD, the One sent by God the Father.] **will wave My hand over them** [In other words, He will judge/plunder the nations that have been plundering Israel (see 2:8)], **so that they will be plunder for their slaves.** [Before this judgment the people of Israel were “slaves” of the nations.] **Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me** [Christ Jesus]. (10) **Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,**” declares the LORD. (11) “**And many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.** [In 2:9, 11 we are told that the Angel of the LORD was sent by the LORD of hosts. (In Zech. 1:11, 12; 3:1, 5, 6, He is called the Angel of the LORD. When the NASB [and some other translations] has LORD with four capital letters, it shows that the Hebrew has *Yahweh*. For a discussion on the Angel of the LORD, see pages 165-179 of *Mid-Week*

Rapture, including the Notes.) One of the significant things about this passage is that the Angel of the LORD is apparently also called LORD (*Yahweh*) in 2:10, 11, 12 and 13. It seems clear that He is at least included with God the Father under the very important name *Yahweh* in these verses. Significantly, the first use of LORD in 3:2 clearly refers exclusively to the Angel of the LORD. These verses serve as a glorious Old Testament confirmation of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The things these verses say about the Angel of the LORD (including calling Him *Yahweh*) would be blasphemous if He weren't deity with God the Father. We are dependent on the much fuller revelation given in the New Testament to adequately understand the Angel of the Lord, the Son of God.] **(12) And the LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.** [This verse, like so many others, confirms the preeminent place of (true) Israel in relation to the saved/elect of the nations.] **(13) Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”**); Zech. 8:20-23; 9:7, 10; 14:8-21 (Zechariah chapters 9-14 are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*, starting on page 191. Zechariah chapters 1-8 are discussed in a paper on my internet site.); Rev. 15:2-4 (On these significant verses, see pages 244-246 in *Mid-Week Rapture*.); Revelation chapter 18 ((This chapter [and Revelation chapter 17] deals with God's judgment of Babylon the great, the harlot city [and kingdom] that stands in opposition to God's city [and kingdom]. The judgment of Babylon constitutes a major feature of God's end-time judgment. Beyond these two chapters, also see Rev. 14:8, 14-16; 16:19; and 19:1-6. Revelation chapter 18 deals with Babylon's seduction of the nations by enticing people to live for luxury, riches, commerce, occupations, arts, crafts, etc. Most of these things aren't evil in themselves, but they work for evil when people live for [and in many ways bow down before] these things, instead of living for God. The devil is behind this evil city/kingdom/world and all of its seductive deceptions. On the devil deceiving the nations, see Rev. 12:9; 20:3. All false religions, including apostate Christianity and the occult, are part of Babylon, and a primary feature in the devil's deceptive work.

I cannot be dogmatic on this point, but I believe an important part of the message of this chapter is that when God has judged and removed Babylon the great, those left from the nations [at least some of them], pictured in Rev. 18:9-19, will ultimately turn to, and begin to worship, God Himself. After God, in His gracious plan of salvation and judgment, strips away their false gods, they [at least some of them] will turn to Him. It's clear, based on Rev. 20:3, that [many from] the nations will be left to enter the millennial kingdom, and the devil will not be able to deceive them any longer, at least not for the duration of the millennium. The "one hour" of Rev. 18:10, 17, and 19 apparently covers all the second half of Daniel's 70th week [cf. Rev. 17:12]. For more details on Revelation chapters 17, 18, see my next paper (now completed), which will cover Rev. 14:6-19:21 in a verse-by-verse manner.); Rev. 20:1-15, especially verses 3, 11-15 (See my paper on Revelation chapters 20-22. Revelation 20:3 is very significant in that it confirms a literal interpretation of all the Old Testament prophecies [many of which are listed in this section] regarding God's leaving a remnant of the nations after His end-time judgment of the earth. This is not to say that all those left [and all of their offspring] will enter God's eternal kingdom after the millennium. Revelation 20:7-10 show that many of them, or at least many of their offspring, will rebel at the end of the millennium. [This time of probation for the nations, where the potential for sin is still all too real, isn't a new idea; see Dan. 7:12; Zech. 14:16-19; and cf. Isa. 65:20.] A key question for this study is whether the names of any of those

from the nations who will have died before the millennium begins will be found in the Lamb's "book of life" of Rev. 20:12, 15; 21:27 at the great-white-throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15. Without being dogmatic on this point, I believe some of these names will be found there. See under Rev. 20:11-15 in my paper on Revelation chapters 20-22.); Rev. 21:1-22:5, especially 21:1-4; 21:24-22:3 (These verses from Revelation chapters 20-22 are probably the most important verses in the Bible dealing with God's ultimate salvation of [the elect of] the nations.)

Some other passages to consider for further study are Psalms 9; 48, especially verse 10; Psalm 68:1-6, 18-23, 28-35 (In 68:6 the "rebellious" are those who will not submit to God. On 68:18, cf. Eph. 4:8-10. Verses 19-23 of Psalm 68 deal with the judgment of the unrepentant of God's enemies, who continue in their hatred and persecution of His people. "His enemies" [68:21] do not embrace all the peoples of the nations. Verse 22 apparently shows that there is nowhere His enemies can hide from Him. See the NIV on the first line of verse 28.); Psalms 76, especially verses 8-12; 99; 102:12-22; Isa. 18:7; 52:10; Jer. 12:14-17; and 33:7-9.

2. SOME PASSAGES THAT SHOW THAT SOME FROM THE NATIONS WILL ULTIMATELY HAVE A PLACE IN GOD'S KINGDOM.

The passages listed in this section are just as relevant to the topic of God's ultimate salvation of the nations as those listed in section 1. Some are more significant. The difference is that these passages in section 2 don't quite fit the pattern of those listed in section 1, though some of these passages could be listed there.

Gen. 49:10 (**The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes** [If we translate the last three words this way, "Shiloh" is a title for the Messiah, who came from the tribe of Judah. Another translation, given in the margin of the NASB, is, "Until he [He] comes to whom it [the rule] belongs."], **And to him [Him] shall be the obedience of the peoples** [*amim*.]); Psalm 2, especially verses 7-12 [This significant psalm is discussed on pages 257-265 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.]; Psalm 22:27, 28; Psalm 67; Psalm 72 (I believe the NIV translation is better in 72:8, "He will rule from sea to sea and from the River [the Euphrates river] to the ends of the earth." God's ultimate King, Christ Jesus, will reign worldwide, forever.); Psalm 86:8-10 (**There is no one like Thee among the gods** [*elohim*], **O Lord** [*Adonay*]; **Nor are there any works like Thine** [including works of saving and judging].) **(9) All nations** [*goyim*] **whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord** [*Adonay*]; **And they shall glorify Thy name. (10) For thou art great and doest wondrous deeds; Thou alone art God** [*elohim*.]); Psalm 87 ([This psalm is quite important for this study.] **(3) Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.** [This speaks of Jerusalem (Zion), including spiritual Jerusalem (Jerusalem above, heavenly Jerusalem) and new Jerusalem (cf., e.g., Gal. 4:26, 27; Heb. 12:22; Isa. 2:2-4; and Rev. 21:1-22:5).] **(4) "I shall mention Rahab [Egypt] and Babylon among those who know Me; Behold Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.'**" [During this present age, we can speak of Christians being born of Jerusalem above (cf. Gal. 4:26), but the birth into the fulness of

eternal life won't be available until the end of this age. (On this completed birth for true Israel at the time of Christ's return, see on Rev. 12:5 on pages 314-316 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.) This birth of Psalm 87, however, goes beyond the birth into the fulness of eternal life for true Israel and speaks of (or at least includes) this birth for (the elect of) the nations that will take place after the great-white-throne judgment, as the nations are given a place on God's new earth, with access to New Jerusalem, as pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22. The nations begin to come to Jerusalem, and more importantly to the God of Jerusalem, at the beginning of the millennium, but they will not experience the birth into the eternal life of God's eternal kingdom until after the millennium.] **(5) But** [I would translate "And" with the KJV, or "Indeed" with the NIV, or the equivalent.] **of Zion** [Jerusalem] **it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"** [speaking of those mentioned in verse 4, not that the listing in verse 4 was meant to be complete]; **And the Most High Himself will establish her** [Zion]. **(6) The Lord shall count when He registers the peoples** [*amim*], **"This one was born there."** [The final registering of the peoples won't take place until after the great-white-throne judgment. Compare the Lamb's book of life, especially Rev. 21:27.] **(7) Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, "All my springs of joy** [The words "of joy" were added in italics by the NASB. I would skip these added words, as do the NIV, KJV, and NKJV] **are in you."** ["You" here refers to Zion/Jerusalem, but it must be understood that all the life and blessings of Jerusalem, including new Jerusalem, come from God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. Revelation 7:17; 21:6 mention the "spring(s) of the water of life"; compare the "river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb" in Rev. 22:1, 2.]); Psalm 100 (**All Men Exhorted to Praise God. A Psalm for Thanksgiving. (1) Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. (2) Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. (3) Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us** [He is the God of creation, and of the new creation (glorification).], **and not we ourselves; We are His people** [*am*] **and the sheep of His pasture.** [Such words are normally reserved for Israel/true Israel, but here they include (the elect of) the nations.] **(4) Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. (5) For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.** [This remarkable psalm tells us a lot about God's attitude toward the nations, and of His ultimate plans for the nations. This psalm has much application for the nations in the millennial kingdom, but it will not receive its ultimate fulfillment until the new earth after the millennium.)); Isa. 44:3-5 (God is speaking to true Israel here [cf. 44:1, 2]. The "offspring" [44:3] of (true) Israel includes, as we have discussed, all the elect [saved] of the nations. Isaiah 44:5 clearly speaks of Gentiles/those from the nations. The life-giving work of the Spirit pictured in these verses will ultimately bring forth the birth into the fulness of eternal life for all those that have access to God's New Jerusalem, which is pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22.); Isa. 56:1-8; Ezek. 16:44-63, especially verses 53-55, 61 ((This chapter of Ezekiel seems to teach that we are to expect the ultimate salvation of some of the people from ancient Sodom. Assuming this interpretation is correct, we tend to expect some from most other nations/cities to have a place in God's new earth. **(44) "Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb concerning you, saying, 'Like mother, like daughter.'** **(45) You** [God is speaking to Jerusalem, the capital city of the nation of Judah (cf. 16:2, 3).] **are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children.**

You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. [The “husband” (also “their husbands”) is God (cf., e.g., 16:8, 15, 32). The statement regarding loathing her children is apparently explained by 16:20, 21. The “sisters” are explained as we continue. On the last sentence of verse 45, see 16:2, 3. Apparently these satirical words were intended to insult sinful Judah and make the important point that Judah (in her sinfulness) is the offspring of Caananite paganism.] **(46) Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives** [The NIV has, “who lived.”] **north of you with her daughters** [Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom (with Judah being the southern kingdom). Many point out that the idea was greater, or larger, not “older.” “Her daughters” are the other cities of the northern kingdom.]; **and your younger** [lesser/smaller] **sister, who lives** [lived] **south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. (47) Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they** [cf. Lam. 4:6]. **(48) As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “Sodom, your sister, and her daughters, have not done as you and your daughters have done.** [For one thing, Judah had received much more light and blessings from God than Sodom, and she was, therefore, much more responsible for her sin.] **(49) Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. (50) Thus** [I prefer “And,” with the KJV.] **they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.** [God’s judgment of Sodom had taken place over a thousand years before the days of Ezekiel. See Gen. 19:1-29.] **(51) Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous** [righteous by comparison with Jerusalem/Judah; cf. Jer. 3:11] **by all your abominations which you have committed.** [Samaria and the northern kingdom had already been judged by God through the Assyrians. Samaria had fallen in 722/721 BC, over a hundred years before the ministry of Ezekiel.] **(52) Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous. (53) Nevertheless, I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity** [I prefer the NIV’s, “However, I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and her daughters, and your fortunes along with them.” On “restore the fortunes of,” cf. Job 42:10 (restore the fortunes of Job); Jer. 3:23 (the fortunes of Judah; there are many other such verses regarding restoring the fortunes of Judah/Israel); Jer. 48:47 (restoring the fortunes of Moab); 49:6 (of the sons of Ammon); and Jer. 49:39 (of Elam). See under Jer. 48:47; 49:4-6, 11, 19, 38, and 39 in section 1.], **(54) in order that you may bear your humiliation, and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them. (55) And your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state.”** [Before God is done, He will take them far beyond their former state.] ... **(60) “Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.** [Cf., e.g., Isa. 61:8; Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-44; and Ezek. 37:24-28.] **(61) Then you will**

remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger [On older and younger, see under 16:46]; **and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.** [The nations never will become part of God's true Israel, but they will be saved by the God of true Israel and through the blood of His Son.] **(62) Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, (63) in order that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord GOD declares.** [For one thing, God's plans are designed to humble His people (including the elect of the nations) and make them know that we are all totally dependent on God's grace in Christ Jesus. Cf., e.g., Rom. 11:32-36.]

I'll quote part of what C. F. Keil said under Ezek. 16:53-63 (Vol. 9 of *Commentary on the Old Testament* by Keil and Delitzsch [Eerdmans, 1978 reprint, translated from the German]; this conservative, ten-volume set, which was written over a hundred years ago, is generally well respected. "The turning of the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, i.e. the forgiveness of the inhabitants of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, points beyond the present aeon, and the realization can only take place on the great day of the resurrection of the dead in the persons of the former inhabitants of Sodom and the neighboring cities. And in the same way the restoration of Samaria and Jerusalem will not be completely fulfilled till after the perfecting of the kingdom of Christ in glory at the last day.

... The words of our Lord in Matt. 10:15 [cf. Luke 10:12] and 11:24, to the effect that it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for Capernaum and every other city that shall have rejected the preaching of the gospel, teach most indisputably that the way of mercy stands open still even for Sodom itself, and that the judgment which has fallen upon it does not carry with it the final decision with regard to its inhabitants. For Sodom did not put away the perfect revelation of mercy and salvation [the gospel]. If the mighty works which were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, it would have stood to the present day (Matt. 11:23). And from this it clearly follows that all the judgments which fell before the time of Christ, instead of carrying with them the final decision, and involving eternal damnation, leave the possibility of eventual pardon open still. The last judgment, which is decisive for eternity, does not take place till after the full revelation of grace and truth in Christ."

Keil goes on to give his viewpoint regarding how this will work: He says that all who have died without hearing the gospel will have an opportunity to accept, or to reject, the gospel, and he mentions 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6 to back up this viewpoint. I don't believe the viewpoint that all will have an opportunity to accept the gospel after death, if they didn't hear it in this life, is satisfactory, and I don't believe these verses from 1 Peter teach this viewpoint. (Later in this Appendix we'll discuss the different viewpoints regarding the possibility of salvation for (some of) those from the nations who died not having a covenant relationship with God. We'll also discuss 1 Peter 3:18-4:6 at the end of this Appendix; these verses are also important for the topic of holiness and victory over sin.) Keil makes it clear that he doesn't want his view "to be confounded with the heretical doctrine of the restoration, i.e. the ultimate salvation of all the ungodly, and even of the devil himself."); Mal. 1:11; Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28-30; Luke chapter 15 (The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in this chapter, which has a lot to say about the will of God and His attitude toward sinners who repent, has some application for those saved from the nations

at the end of this age. That would be true even if this salvation were limited to those saved from the nations that enter the millennial kingdom, and their offspring.); Rev. 14:1-5 (The “first fruits” of Rev. 14:4 that are harvested into God’s eternal kingdom at the time of Christ’s mid-week return will be joined by the rest of the members of God’s true Israel who are saved after the rapture and, significantly, by the large multitude from the nations that eventually are harvested into God’s eternal kingdom [as pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22]. Revelation 14:1-5 are discussed in chapter 23 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.)

3. SOME PASSAGES THAT DEMONSTRATE SOMETHING OF GOD’S CONCERN FOR, AND INVOLVEMENT WITH, MANKIND WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING THE NATIONS. The topic of this section is, of course, relevant to the topic of the ultimate salvation of the nations.

Gen. 1:26-29; 3:15, 21; 5:1, 2; 8:13-9:19 ((Genesis 9:1-17 [cf. 6:18] speak of the “everlasting covenant” that God made with every living creature, but especially with man. Genesis 9:5, 6 deal with a prominent feature of this covenant. Some don’t believe that Gen. 9:1-7 are part of the everlasting covenant. Even if that were the case, these verses spell out part of what God requires of all people that live on the earth. On the covenant with all people, see pages 212, 213 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. **And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. (6) Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.** [These verses certainly demonstrate God’s hatred of murder; He required the death penalty for intentional murder. Cf., e.g., Ex. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; and Num. 35:9-34. It’s significant that God still speaks of man as created in His image, even after the fall. The offspring of Noah’s three sons [cf. Genesis chapter 10] were all spiritually dead, but the death wasn’t complete, and they weren’t totally depraved [at least not most of them]. As I read through the Old Testament, I don’t get the impression that almost all of these people are destined for hell.)); Gen. 12:3 (Cf., e.g., Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14. God’s covenant with Abraham was designed to ultimately provide salvation for the nations, through Abraham’s offspring, Christ Jesus. This promise of blessing for the nations goes beyond the salvation of those Gentiles who become part of true Israel, which includes all true Christians.); Gen. 16:1-16 with 21:9-21 (Here we see something of God’s concern for Hagar and Ishmael. Isaac, not Ishmael, was the son of promise [in the line of true Israel; cf., e.g., Gen. 17:19-21; 21:12; 22:2; and Gal. 4:29], but I don’t believe this means that essentially all the family of Hagar, Ishmael, his wife (Gen. 21:21), and his many descendants (Gen. 25:12-18) were destined for hell.); Gen. 41:1-57 (Here we see God’s concern for many nations [especially for His covenant people (cf. 45:7)] in raising up Joseph to prepare for the coming famine. God used Joseph, but Pharaoh also played a prominent role. Also see Gen. 50:20.); Ex. 7:5 (This verse is representative of many throughout the Old Testament where God does things to make the nations know that He is God. Part of His motivation for this is that many will repent and submit to Him. Also see Josh. 4:23, 24; 1 Samuel 17:46; 1 Kings 8:41-43, 60 with 2 Chron. 6:32, 33; 2 Kings 19:19; Psalms 67; and 106:8.); Ex. 19:5, 6 (**Now then, if you** [speaking to the sons of Israel, not long after the exodus from Egypt] **will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession** [In the margin, the

NASB has “or, special treasure.” The NIV has, “treasured possession.”] **among all the peoples** [*amim*], **for all the earth is Mine; (6) and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation** [*goy*]. These verses show that Israel had a special relationship with God, but they also show His involvement with, and concern for, the other nations. The fact that the people of Israel were to be priests before God was for the benefit of the nations. Christians [true Israel] fulfill this role now in some ways, but in a much fuller sense in the future [cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; and Isa. 61:6]. These verses don’t make it clear, but apparently true Israel will continue in this intermediary role [as priests] in the eternal state. [It’s clear that true Israel will continue to reign in the eternal state (cf. Rev. 22:5). True Israel includes all of the believers from the Old Testament and all true Christians.] To the extent that Israel wasn’t a holy nation [and more so for the Christian church], they didn’t fulfill their role as priests for the benefit of the nations. That problem certainly won’t exist for true Israel in the millennium, since they will have been glorified before then.); Ex. 22:21 (This verse, with many others, shows that the Israelites were commanded to not mistreat strangers/aliens/foreigners. Other verses show they were required to be generous with them, even loving them as themselves. See Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:9, 10, 33, 34; 23:22; and Deut. 10:18, 19; 14:28, 29; 24:14-22; 26:12, 13; and 27:19); Num. 15:14-16; 35:14, 15; Deut. 16:11, 12, 14; 23:7, 8 (It didn’t automatically follow that exclusion from the “assembly of the LORD” meant exclusion from God’s eternal kingdom [cf., e.g., Deut. 23:2, 3].); 32:8; 2 Kings 6:15-23; Psalms 8; 24:1; 65, especially verses 2, 5, 8; 66:1-8; 99; 107; 113; 117; 138:4-6; 145; 148, especially verses 11, 12; Jer. 1:5, 10; 6:18, 19 (In 6:18 the nations are called God’s “congregation” [cf. Psalm 82:1]); Jer. 7:6; 18:1-12; 27:1-11; 29:7; Ezek. 18:32; Matt. 4:23-25; Luke 9:51-56; 10:29-37; John 1:1-18, 29; 4:5-42; 12:31-33; Acts 10:34, 35 (These significant verses certainly don’t teach that men may reject the gospel and be welcome to God. See on page 122 of the original version of this paper on Acts 10:35); 14:14-17 (Acts 14:16, 17 don’t fit well with the idea that essentially all the Gentiles of past generations were destined for hell. Also see Acts 17:30a; Rom. 3:25); 17:22-34, especially verses 24-31; 27:23-44, especially verse 24 (This passage isn’t of supreme importance for our topic, but it’s worth mentioning that God “granted [Paul] all those who [were] sailing with him.” Undoubtedly some of these persons submitted to God through this experience and their encounter with Paul. Paul’s interaction with the natives of Malta, described in Acts 28:1-10, is also instructive.); Rom. 3:25, 29; 13:1-10; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 3:1-4; Heb. 12:9; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 John 2:2; Rev. 1:7 (With the positive, repentant sense of mourning pictured in Zech. 12:10-14, it’s quite possible that we could see some positive, repentant mourning on the part of the “tribes of the earth” here too, especially with the positive implications for the nations of Rev. 1:6 and the positive things said regarding the nations other places in the book of Revelation; Matthew 24:30, however, doesn’t seem to include anything positive in the mourning of the tribes of the earth at Christ’s return. Quite a few commentators see a positive mourning here in Rev. 1:7. Revelation chapters 20-22 demonstrate that many of these people will be saved, but it’s also true that Revelation has much to say regarding the removal of many by judgment.); Rev. 14:6, 7 (Even after judgment day has begun [mid-week], God is still calling men to repent and submit to the gospel. I assume that those who answer this gospel call will include many Gentiles; they will become part of true Israel.); Rev. 14:8 (As discussed in section 1, under Revelation chapter 18, this judgment and destruction of Babylon the great will apparently work for the great good of the [elect of] the nations.)

4. SOME PROBABLE/POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR GENTILES THAT MAY ENTER GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM WITH THE NATIONS, AS PICTURED IN REVELATION CHAPTERS 21, 22.

When the person(s) listed is a king/leader, others may well enter with them. Some of those listed are more likely candidates than others. Also, some of them may prove to be part of true Israel, rather than part of the nations.

Consider, for example, the Pharaoh of Egypt mentioned in Gen. 12:10-20; the allies of Abram (Abraham) mentioned in Gen. 14:13-24; Abimilech, the king of Gerar mentioned in Gen. 20:1-18; 21:22-34; Hagar, Ishmael, and some of his offspring (see under section 3 of this appendix; regarding [some of] Ishmael's offspring, see under Isa. 60:1-22 in section 1); some of the children of Abraham (and their offspring) by his later wife Keturah spoken of in Gen. 25:1-6; Abimilech, king of Gerar, mentioned in Gen. 26:1-33 (apparently a later king than the one who interacted with Abraham); the daughter of Pharaoh, who rescued Moses (Ex. 2:1-10; Acts 7:21); Jethro, Moses' father in law (e.g., Ex. 2:16-3:1; 18:1-27); some of those who helped King David (Consider, for example, Uriah the Hittite (e.g., 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25; 23:39; 1 Chron. 11:41; it's possible, of course, that Uriah had become part of true Israel); Zelek the Ammonite (2 Sam. 23:37; 1 Chron. 11:39); the commentaries point out that a few other names listed as David's mighty men were foreigners. Also consider the king of Moab (1 Sam. 22:3, 4); those who helped David mentioned in 2 Sam. 17:27-29; the king of the sons of Ammon (1 Chron. 19:1, 2); and Obil the Ishmaelite (1 Chron. 27:30); the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-10; 2 Chron. 9:1-12; Matt. 12:42; and Luke 11:31); the widow Elijah was sent to, and her son (1 Kings 17:8-24; Luke 4:25, 26); Naaman, the leper who was healed (2 Kings 5:1-27; Luke 4:27); Huram, king of Tyre, who helped Solomon build the temple (e.g., 2 Chron. 2:11-16); Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Dan. 2:1-4:37, especially 2:46-49; 3:24-30; 4:1-37; and see 5:17-29); some of the people of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:1-10; 4:1, 2, 11; Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32; also consider the sailors mentioned in Jonah 1:4-16); Cyrus, king of Medo-Persia (Ezra 1:1-11; Isa. 44:28-45:13); King Darius (Dan. 5:31-6:28; cf. Dan. 11:1); King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1-28; Neh. 1:1-2:9); King Ahasuerus, husband of Esther (Esth. 5:1-10:3); some of the people mentioned in the book of Job (I assume that believers like Job, Abel [Gen. 4:1-8; Matt. 23:35; Heb. 11:4; and 1 John 3:12]; Enoch [Gen. 5:18-24; Heb. 11:5, 6]; and Melchizedek [Gen. 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; and Heb. 5:6, 10] are part of God's true Israel.); some of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:3-10:15; 2 Sam. 21:1-14); some of the magi from the east (Matt. 2:1-12); some of the people of ancient Sodom (Matt. 10:15; 11:20-24; Luke 10:12; see above under Ezek. 16:44-63 in section 2); some of the people of Tyre and Sidon, especially thinking of those from Old Testament days; these cities existed in Jesus' day too [cf. Luke 6:17] (Psalm 87:4; Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 10:12-14); Gentiles like the centurion whose servant was healed (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10); the Canaanite woman whose daughter was healed/delivered (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30); and the Samaritan who was cleansed of leprosy (Luke 17:15-19) [It's quite possible that each of these three persons became born-again Christians (members of true Israel)]; and last I'll mention some of those Gentiles who helped the apostle Paul in various ways, but, for one reason, or another, didn't become born-again Christians (Consider, for example, some of

the Roman authorities and soldiers, and the natives of the island of Malta. [Acts 28:1-10; this account in Acts doesn't mention that any of them became Christians, but that doesn't necessarily mean that none of them did.] For one thing, some of those encounters were quite brief. In some cases Paul was planting seeds that would later come to fruition when some of those people became born-again Christians. In other cases it's possible that, in accordance with God's plans, some of those people will be found to be among the elect of the nations [cf., e.g., Matt. 25:31-46].)

The New Testament contains many examples of Gentiles who became Christians, and, of course, many Gentiles have followed them throughout the past two thousand years, joining those like Rahab and Ruth who became part of God's true Israel by faith. The first point I want to make here is that I don't believe we should assume that almost all of the Gentiles who lived in the days before Christ were totally depraved and necessarily destined for hell. And, secondly, I don't believe we should assume that all the Gentiles who have lived the last two thousand years who didn't hear the gospel (and in some cases even where they did come in contact with true Christians/the gospel) should be classified as being irreconcilably unrepentant and necessarily destined for hell. I assume that some of them are elect of God and will ultimately be saved as part of the nations. Anyway, our assignment, as was Paul's, is to share the message that all are called to repent and submit to the gospel.

5. VARIOUS VIEWS REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION OF (SOME FROM) THE NATIONS (dealing mostly with the unevangelized).

This topic relates to those from the nations who lived in the days before the new covenant, and those who have lived the last two thousand years who never heard, or at least never adequately heard, the gospel. I don't claim to be an expert on these viewpoints; I'll mostly quote from others in this section, but I'll interact with the quotations and make quite a few comments. I'll quote from three books, all of which I read for the first time this past year. As I mentioned I'm only including a small part of the quotations for this internet version that I had in the original paper.

A. No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized [Eerdmanns, 1992]. This book written by John Sanders, an evangelical Christian, is the most comprehensive of the three books, so we'll start here. In the preface Sanders tells us that he has been "reading and reflecting on the issue of the destiny of the unevangelized" ever since, as a freshman in college (he was born in 1956), he was asked by a non-Christian about the fate of the millions of people who have never heard the gospel. On page 15 he tells us that he includes among the unevangelized "those who have been driven away from Christ not by the gospel but by the poor testimony or lifestyle of professing Christians."

On pages 15, 16, Sanders gives some statistics regarding the extent of the unevangelized. "It is estimated that in A.D. 100 there were 181 million people, of which one million were Christians. It is also believed there were 60,000 unreached people groups at that time. By A.D. 1000 there were 270 million people, 50 million of whom were Christians, and 50,000 unreached people groups. In 1989 there were 5.2 billion people, of whom 1.7 billion called themselves Christian, and there were 12,000 unreached people groups. [In a footnote he says, "The figures are from the *World Christian Encyclopedia* as cited in *World*

Evangelization 16 (1989): 40.”] Although there is no way of knowing with certainty how many of these people were unevangelized, it seems safe to conclude that the vast majority of human beings who have ever lived never heard the good news of grace regarding the God of Israel and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He goes on to point out that such numbers make this a very important topic.

On page 21 Sanders points out that although the majority view among evangelicals is that all who die without having heard the gospel will perish, not all evangelicals hold this position, and the trend is in the other direction. He refers to some statistics in a 1987 book (James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism* [University of Chicago Press], pages 34ff., 174) which show that one-third of evangelical college and seminary students “hold to some kind of hope for the possible salvation of the unevangelized,” and “among college professors at evangelical liberal arts colleges, only 56 percent ruled out all hope for the unevangelized.” “[Hunter] notices a growing trend among evangelicals to allow more hope for the unevangelized even though these same evangelicals firmly maintain the necessity of Christ for salvation.”

Sander’s chapter 2 is titled “Restrictivism: All the Unevangelized Are Damned.” Some verses used to back up this viewpoint are Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16, 18, 36; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 11:14; Rom. 3:9; 10:9-14; Eph. 2:1-3, 12; 4:18; and 1 John 5:11, 12. (This is not a complete listing of all such verses. We’ll consider several other such verses as we continue, but even then we won’t deal with every verse that could be considered. For one thing, there’s no way that I could begin to cover in a paper like this all that Sanders covers in his 315 page book that is packed with details.) These verses demonstrate that salvation is found only through Christ and His atoning death. Sanders (page 30) points out that all the views presented in this book agree that salvation is available only through Christ, not that they all believe that everyone must hear and accept the gospel before they die to be saved through Christ. On pages 62-68 Sanders shows that most of these verses don’t clearly speak to the issue of those who haven’t heard the gospel.

A few of the verses just listed (cf. Eph. 2:1-3, 12; 4:18) are more directly applicable to the issue of the unevangelized. Sanders doesn’t deal with these verses except to say (on page 28) that verses like Eph. 2:3 (“children of wrath”) and Eph. 2:12 (“having no hope and without God in the world”) must be held in balance with other verses that speak of the wideness of God’s mercy. ...

I agree with Sanders that we must hold the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches; however, I frequently find myself in disagreement with the interpretation of verses used by those with a wider hope. I’ll give an important example from Sanders (page 28): “According to Romans 2:6-16, the Gentiles are capable of fulfilling the law by faith even though they do not have the written law, and thus they will receive ‘glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.’ ” I consider this to be a serious misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching. Throughout most of Romans chapters 1-3, the apostle was laboring to make one primary point, namely, that all men, Jews and Gentiles, are sinners that need to repent and to submit to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn’t believe that “the Gentiles (or the Jews) are capable of fulfilling the law by faith” until they have become born-again Christians (cf. Rom. 2:26-29; 8:1-4).

Paul is demonstrating that all men need salvation through Christ, because, for one thing,

only through Him can men receive the Holy Spirit, who will enable them to fulfill the law. When Paul speaks (in Rom. 2:7) of receiving “glory and honor and immortality, eternal life,” he is speaking of born-again Christians. It must also be noted that Paul doesn’t say in Rom. 2:14, 15, as claimed by some wider-hope proponents, that the conscience of non-Christian Gentiles defends them because they have done what is right, but that it *sometimes* defends them, at other times it accuses them. (Based on what Paul says in Romans chapters 1-3 [and other places], you could draw the conclusion that he was saying no pre-Christian Jews, or Gentiles, could be saved; however, he clearly was not inferring this. I’ll say more on this in the next two paragraphs.)

... The believers from earlier days were destined for glory, not eternal wrath, even though they lived in the days before salvation through Christ (which includes the new birth and the attendant power over sin) became available.

Note that “we” of Eph. 2:3 includes all the Jews who (like Paul) had now become Christians. Paul could afford to speak in the most negative terms now that he had the antidote to the sin/death/Satan problem in the gospel which he preached. Paul’s gospel was designed for, and aimed at, the people of his generation, who had the opportunity to submit to the gospel. He spoke to the people of his generation in the strongest possible terms, arguing his case for the new-covenant gospel with great power and persuasiveness. It’s also relevant that by the time Paul wrote Romans (about AD 55) he assumed that the gospel had pretty well covered the world (Rom. 10:18).

The most important question for our study is what about those who live in the days after Christ but never hear the gospel: Are they all destined to experience God’s *wrath* in eternal judgment? Restrictivists insist they are. As discussed in this paper, I believe it is quite possible (even probable) that some of those people are elect of God and will experience His eternal salvation.

On page 51 (still in chapter 2) Sanders lists, and discusses, three “Leading Defenders” of Restrictivism. First he lists Augustine: “Augustine, bishop in the north African town of Hippo from A.D. 396 to 430, has exerted an enormous influence on this topic. His ideas on soteriology [how God saves us] and the destiny of the unevangelized have cast long shadows throughout church history, particularly among restrictivists.” His last paragraph in this section on Augustine reads, “Augustine believed that hearing the gospel of Christ was necessary for salvation, and he considered all those dying unevangelized to be damned to hell. ...” (page 55). On page 74 Sanders points out that “neither Tertullian nor Ambrose (both of whom influenced Augustine) seem to have had any hope for the heathen.”

After Augustine, Sanders lists Calvin: “The Reformer John Calvin followed Augustine in many points of theology, including his views on the destiny of the unevangelized. Calvin also agreed with Augustine that those who lived prior to the incarnation of Christ were saved only by believing in a mediator who was to come. ...” (pages 56, 57). For the record, Sanders lists R. C. Sproul next.

Sander’s chapter 3 is titled “Universalism: All the Unevangelized Are Saved.” ...

In chapters 5-7 Sanders deals with three “wider hope” viewpoints that fall between restrictivism and universalism. The first of these viewpoints is discussed in chapter 5,

which is titled, “Universal Evangelization—before Death.” There are three views listed, and discussed, here, and there are variations within these three views. “The first view...is that God sees to it that all unevangelized persons who seek him will, in one way or another, be exposed to the gospel of Christ so they can make a decision” (page 152). He goes on to show that some who hold this view believe that a human messenger must be sent, while others (including Arminius) leave room for God to deal with them directly by His Spirit, or through angels. “The second view is that all people have an evangelistic encounter with Christ at the moment of death. The third view is that God will judge the unevangelized on the basis of how they would have responded had they heard the gospel” (page 151).

Chapter 6 is titled “Eschatological Evangelization.” The idea here is that all who have died without being adequately confronted with the gospel in this life will have an opportunity after death to accept (or reject) the gospel. This is sometimes called “postmortem evangelism.” ...

Hebrews 9:27 is discussed on pages 190, 191. I agree with those holding postmortem evangelism that this verse doesn’t say that the final judgment of men is necessarily settled at the time of death. It only speaks of death, which is to be followed by judgment. I agree with the restrictivists, however, that this verse doesn’t fit well with the idea of submitting to the gospel after death. I believe we can leave some room for the repentance, etc. of the unevangelized after death, but I believe we should put the emphasis on God’s choice (judgment) that takes place before the foundation of the world, and is manifested at the end of the age. We don’t know everything about God’s judgments, but they certainly aren’t arbitrary, and they are based on factors like what’s in the heart (which includes faith) and works (which result from what is in the heart). It’s important to understand that no one will be in heaven because they earned a place there—it’s all of grace by salvation through Christ Jesus.

In this chapter Sanders refers to many Christians, including quite a few evangelicals, who hold the viewpoint discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 7 is titled “Inclusivism: Universally Accessible Salvation apart from Evangelization.” This is the view Sanders holds. “Some advocates of the wider hope maintain that some of those who never hear the gospel of Christ may nevertheless attain salvation before they die if they respond in faith to the revelation they do have. ... Briefly, inclusivists affirm the particularity and finality of salvation only in Christ but deny that knowledge of his work is necessary for salvation. ...” (page 215).

On page 216 he says, “Inclusivism has its roots in the early church, and since the time of the Reformation it has steadily increased in popularity. Today...it is beginning to challenge restrictivism for supremacy within evangelical circles.” In a footnote he adds, “A survey conducted at the 1975 Urbana missions conference indicated [that] 37 percent of the five thousand evangelicals who responded could be classified as restrictivists, while 25 percent could be classified as inclusivists....” He goes on to say that the percentage of inclusivists would be much higher today. ...

Under “Leading Defenders” of inclusivism Sanders lists, and discusses, John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, and Clark Pinnock. “... Regarding the means by which the unevangelized could be saved, (Wesley) held that God had given them general revelation and that some peoples

had retained traditions handed down from the time of Noah.” I quoted several pages from what Sanders said regarding inclusivism in my original paper. He mentions quite a few Christians who have held that position throughout the history of the Christian church.

B. Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, edited by John Sanders [Inter Varsity Press, 1995]. As you know from section A, John Sanders holds the inclusivist viewpoint. Gabriel Fackre’s viewpoint is called “Divine Perseverance” here, but it can also be called “postmortem evangelism.” Ronald Nash holds the restrictivist viewpoint.

The Introduction is by Sanders. On page 7 he says the question regarding the fate of those who die never hearing the gospel is “far and away...the most-asked apologetic question on U.S. college campuses.”

In a chart on page 20 Sanders briefly defines inclusivism: “The unevangelized may be saved if they respond in faith to God based on the revelation they have.” He lists the “key texts”: John 12:32; Acts 10:43; and 1 Tim. 4:10. All three of these verses seem rather weak to me. ...

On pages 11, 12, Sanders points out that whereas he and Fackre “affirm what is known as unlimited (or indefinite) atonement, where Jesus died for every single individual...,” Nash, who teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary, “affirms what is called definite (or limited) atonement, where Jesus died for a specific group of people, the elect.” In other words, Christ didn’t die for all. ... It seems clear to me that the Calvinists (Reformed) are wrong regarding limited atonement and their interpretation of such verses. It’s true, however, as Calvinists say, that all men won’t be saved, just the elect. All restrictivists aren’t Calvinists (and, as Sanders shows, some Calvinists hold to a wider-hope view of salvation), but, as this Appendix shows, restrictivism receives much of its impetus from the Augustinian/Calvinistic viewpoint. On the chart on page 20, Sanders lists the (key) adherents of inclusivism as Justin Martyr, John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, Clark Pinnock...and himself.

From the chart on page 20, I’ll include Sanders brief definition of the other two views presented in this book and the (key) adherents he lists. For restrictivism, “God does not provide salvation to those who fail to hear of Jesus and come to faith in him before they die. Augustine, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Carl Henry, R. C. Sproul, and Ronald Nash.” For postmortem evangelism, “The unevangelized receive an opportunity to believe in Jesus after death. Clement of Alexandria, George MacDonald, Donald Bloesch, George Lindbeck, Stephen Davis, and Gabriel Fackre.” ...

On pages 25-35 Sanders deals with the “fewness” texts (Matt. 7:13, 14; 22:14; and Luke 13:23-30) to try to show that they “do not rule out the wider hope for the unevangelized” (page 35). His pages 33-35 are under the heading, “The Great Reversal.” ... “Jesus’ teaching about the ‘few’ occurs in the context of the theme of reversal and should not be construed as teaching that the majority of the human race will end up in hell. [At least it need not be construed to teach that 90 to 95 percent will necessarily end up in hell.] In fact,

when we consider that elsewhere he says ‘many’ people from ‘all nations’ will be accepted into the kingdom (Matt. 8:11; 22:10; 25:32; Luke 13:29; 14:23), that he compared the kingdom of heaven to a wheat field with some weeds (Matt. 13:24-30) and that Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 speak of a vast crowd of people [Revelation 7:9, which speaks of the multitude just raptured from the earth at the time of Christ’s mid-week return, says, “After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...” This great multitude doesn’t include all the members of true Israel (it doesn’t include the large number who will have died before Christ returns, or those saved after He returns), and it doesn’t include any of the multitude to be saved as part of the nations.], it sounds as though heaven will not lack for population. ...” (pages 34, 35).

I believe Matt. 8:10-12; 22:1-14; Luke 13:22-30; and Luke 14:15-24 do help show the “fewness” texts were aimed (at least for the most part) at the sons of Israel, who tended to (wrongly) feel secure regarding their place in God’s kingdom because they were Jews. (It is important to understand that the Greek verb [*kaleo*] translated “invited” [in several different forms] by the NASB in Matt. 22:3, 4, 8, 9; and Luke 14:16, 17, and 24 is normally translated “called” [in some form]. In fact, the Greek adjective [*kletos*] translated “called” in Matt. 22:14 was derived from *kaleo*.) See Luke 13:1-5 for a powerful statement by Jesus regarding the sinful state of the nation of Israel at that time; He said that if they didn’t repent, all would perish. Most generations of the nation Israel had much need for repentance (so too for the Christian church, very much including our generation), but they typically were slow to see their sin and need for repentance. Jesus’ “fewness” texts (and similar texts) were designed to emphasize the need for repentance and submission to the Messiah, and to make God and His kingdom and righteousness top priority. They were/are powerful warnings/exhortations.

John Stott, a well-respected evangelical leader (*Evangelical Essentials* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1988], pages 327, 328) commented, “...I cherish the hope that the majority of the human race will be saved. And I have a solid biblical basis for this belief. True, Jesus said that those who find the narrow road that leads to life were ‘few’ (was he referring to the little remnant of his own day within the nation Israel?). But we need to remember that God is the Creator of all humankind, and remains infinitely loving, patient, and compassionate towards all whom he has made.” I believe the last sentence I quoted from Stott misses the Biblical balance.

I’ll include another excerpt from Sanders (page 25), “The nineteenth-century theologian [a Calvinist] William G. T. Shedd...says, ‘Two errors are to be avoided: First, that all men are saved; secondly, that only a few men are saved.’ [Then in an endnote, Sanders says, "*Dogmatic Theology*, 3 vols. (Zondervan), 2:712. Shedd admits that some Calvinists affirm that the number of saved is small in comparison to the damned, but he cites a number of leading Calvinists of his day who held to the ‘wider hope’ along with him.”]”

On page 36 Sanders says, “According to the inclusivist view [In an endnote here, Sanders says, “There are varieties of inclusivism, ranging from the more liberal version of Karl Rahner to the more conservative stance of Clark Pinnock, which aligns well with my own.”], the Father reaches out to the unevangelized through both the Son and the Spirit via general revelation [contrasted with special revelation, the revelation contained in the Bible], conscience and human culture. God does not leave himself without witness to any

people. Salvation for the unevangelized is made possible only by the redemptive work of Jesus, but God applies that work even to those who are ignorant of the atonement. God does this if people respond in trusting faith to the revelation they have. In other words, unevangelized persons may be saved on the basis of Christ's work if they respond in faith to the God who created them." On page 43 Sanders says, "In his book *Eternity in Their Hearts*, missionary anthropologist Don Richardson has documented numerous cases where God was at work redemptively with people groups prior to Christian missionaries."

On pages 37, 38 Sanders says, "I am in no way against knowledge; in fact, my definition of faith includes it. The issue is the degree of knowledge necessary for entering into a trusting (saving) relationship with the God of grace. The central problem of salvation is not knowledge of God but faith in God. Having a right attitude toward God is much more important than doctrinal information.

The unevangelized may be reconciled to God on the basis of the work of Christ even though they are ignorant of Jesus. I classify these people as 'believers' in God, while those who know about Jesus and exercise faith in God through him are called 'Christians.'" We have already briefly discussed the inclusivist's overly generous viewpoint regarding what it means to be a believer/to have saving faith on pages 120-122 [of my original paper]; we'll discuss this important topic further here, and we'll say more regarding this topic as we continue. I believe we can learn quite a bit from John Sanders and the inclusivists, but it seems clear to me that they are going beyond the typical Scriptural meaning of the words believe, believer, and faith/saving faith. As I have said before in this paper, I believe we must consider the elect (saved) of the nations to be in a somewhat different situation/category than the believers (true Israel), who are spoken of throughout most of the Bible. For one thing, most of the believers spoken of in the Bible were in covenant with God, through the old covenant established through Abraham and Moses, or through the new covenant. It's probably appropriate to think of the elect of the nations having faith in God in a somewhat limited sense (which is reflected in their works), but I don't believe we should speak of them being saved by faith (the faith that they had as they lived on the earth) as we would speak of Abraham, David, or Christians being saved by faith. See, e.g., John 4:22.

I agree with Nash (page 112) that Sanders misunderstands Rom. 10:18. On page 68 of *No Other Name*, Sanders says, "Moreover, restrictivists commonly overlook Paul's appeal to the creation revelation in Romans 10:18. Quoting the great creation hymn Psalm 19, Paul says that the 'gospel' has gone out to all the world. Inclusivists argue that what Paul is saying here is that all who respond to the revelation they have by calling out to God will be saved by Jesus Christ, since calling out to God is, in fact, calling upon the Lord Jesus." When we read Rom. 10:18 in its context, Paul is speaking of the fact that there was no excuse for the unbelief (referring to unbelief with respect to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ) remaining in the world of his day in that the gospel (not general revelation) had spread across the world.

C. Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* [Paulist Press, 1992]. The Roman Catholic author, a Jesuit, has taught theology for many years at Gregorian University in Rome.

His chapter 2 is titled, “The Fathers Prior to St. Augustine.” I’ll quote his second to last paragraph at the end of this chapter (page 27). “Three points stand out in the thinking of the writers of this period. The first is their generally positive attitude on the possibility of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles who had lived before the coming of Christ. The second is their uniformly negative attitude about the possibility of salvation for Christians who were separated from the great church by heresy or schism. ... The third point is that it is only toward the close of the fourth century, when Christianity had become the official religion of the empire, and the majority of its citizens adhered to it, that we find the axiom ‘No salvation outside the church’ being explicitly applied to pagans and Jews. Here the negative judgment was based on the assumption that by now everyone had had the opportunity to accept the Christian message, that its truth was evident to all, and that those who refused to accept it were closing their eyes to the truth by which they could be saved.”

I’ll also quote three sentences from his last paragraph of this chapter, “...the exclusion of pagans and Jews was seen as the consequence of their willful rejection of the truth. In no case was the exclusion of people from salvation seen as an arbitrary judgment on the part of God. If people were damned, it was not because God did not will their salvation; it was because they had refused the means of salvation he had provided for them.”

Chapter 3 is titled “St. Augustine and His Followers.” At the beginning of this chapter, Sullivan points out that one reason for devoting a chapter to the teaching of St. Augustine “is the massive influence that he has had on the history of Christian thought, including that on the possibility of salvation for people who die outside the church” (page 28). Then on page 31 he says, “While Augustine recognized that some kind of obscure faith in Christ could have been sufficient during the pre-Christian era, he was absolute in his conviction that once the gospel had been preached and the church had been established, there was no possibility of salvation without orthodox Christian faith and membership in the true church, which for him was the catholica: the worldwide church in communion with Rome.”

On page 36 (still in chapter 3) Sullivan has a heading, “ ‘No Salvation for Unbelievers’ – Even for Those Who Had No Chance To Hear the Gospel Preached.” I’ll quote part of what he says under this heading. “...in his letter to Deogratias, referring to Gentiles who might have had no chance to come to saving faith, Augustine insisted that no one lacked this opportunity who was worthy of it, and that if God refused it to anyone, it was because he foresaw that if it were offered the person would refuse it. In other words, Augustine’s earlier solution was to lay the blame on the individual for the fact that the opportunity to come to faith was not given to him.

In his later, anti-Pelagian period, Augustine proposed a new solution to this problem [How could God condemn those who hadn’t heard the gospel?]: namely, that the universally contracted guilt of original sin was sufficient to justify God in condemning not only infants who died without baptism, but also adults who died in ignorance of the Christian faith. ... (page 38).” ...

6. **1 Peter 3:18-4:6.** [These verses put a strong emphasis on the need for Christians to live in righteousness and holiness (by the saving grace of God in Christ). Note that the verses just preceding the verses we are studying (1 Pet. 3:8-17) speak of the need for Christians to

live in righteousness and holiness (by God's enabling grace through faith). In every chapter of this epistle (and in every chapter of his second epistle), the apostle Peter emphasizes the need for Christians to be righteous and holy. This is a big part of what Christianity is all about.

It's very important to see that Peter does a lot more than just exhort his readers to righteousness and holiness. Like the apostles Paul and John (and others), he bases his exhortation to be righteous and holy totally on what Christ has done for us: He died for us to set us free from spiritual death and slavery to sin, and to earn for us the right to receive and walk in the life-giving, sanctifying Spirit of God. Three times in this rather short epistle Peter specifically mentions that our redemption from the kingdom of sin came through the atoning death of Christ Jesus. One of these passages is the one we are studying. The other two are 1 Pet. 2:24, 25 and 1:13-19. We'll look at these very important verses in the two following paragraphs. (This glorious truth that Christians are redeemed out of the kingdom of sin and sanctified through the atoning death [and resurrection] of Christ is discussed at length in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* [and now also in my later book, *Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin*].)

First Peter 2:24, 25 say, "He Himself bore our sins [with the guilt and the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin and demons] in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds [literally, "wound"; this mortal "wound" embraces all that He bore for us, especially His death on the cross; the KJV and NKJV have "stripes."] you were healed. [The primary healing Peter is speaking of here is the healing from bondage to spiritual death and sin and demons (e.g., 2:25), but physical healing and every other form of healing are provided through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. See under Isa. 53:4-6 on pages 19-24 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.] (25) For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." Sin, Satan, and death (spiritual death and physical death) gained authority over man through the sin of Adam. (See Rom. 5:12-19. Genesis 2:17; 3:3, 19, 22-24 show that death, very much including spiritual death, came as a penalty for Adam and Eve's sin.) And the sin problem was intensified by all subsequent sin. But Jesus bore our sins [with the guilt and the penalties—especially the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin and demons] so we could be forgiven, redeemed, born again, sanctified, and, at the right time, glorified. (First Peter 2:24, 25 are discussed on page 40 of my paper, *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.)

First Peter 1:13-19 are especially relevant in that 1:18, 19 demonstrate (along with 1 Pet. 2:24 and 3:18-4:6) that our redemption out of the kingdom of sin, and our transformation to the holiness and righteousness of God's kingdom, come through the atoning blood of Christ. First Peter 1:18, 19 say, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile [sinful] way of life inherited from your forefathers, (19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." (See pages 190-194 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on 1 Pet. 1:13-19.)

The verses we are studying (3:18-4:6) have been interpreted several different ways. For the most part, I'm limiting this study to what I consider to be the correct interpretation.] **(18) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He**

might bring us to God [We couldn't have been brought to God in any full sense without being forgiven, born again, and sanctified through Christ's atoning death.], **having been put to death in the flesh** [[The last three words of the English translation are from one word in the Greek; the Greek has the word for flesh in the dative/locative/instrumental case. I understand these words in the sense, "having been put to death so far as the flesh is concerned." The NAB has, "He was put to death insofar as fleshly existence goes." These words regarding the atoning death of Christ were undoubtedly written in a form that Christians could identify with (in that we share in His atoning death and resurrection). The New Testament makes it clear that, because of Jesus' atoning death, Christians are enabled to die to their former existence of living/walking in the flesh and under sin.

For man to be in the flesh (as the word flesh is often used in the New Testament) means that he is not in the Spirit (the Spirit of life) and he is, therefore, spiritually dead, without the grace/power to live in righteousness and holiness. See, e.g., 1 Pet. 4:1-6; Rom. 6:1-21; 7:4-6 (Romans 7:4 uses the same Greek verb that was just used in 1 Pet. 3:18. Romans 7:4 has, "...you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ [speaking of His atoning death in our place]...." In these verses Paul shows that the bottom line is that Christians are enabled to live above the flesh—in/by the Spirit—in righteousness and holiness with victory over sin. In order to do this Christians had to die to the Law and the old covenant to become united with Christ in new-covenant salvation. These words regarding dying to the Law were mostly, if not totally, applicable to those who had been under the Mosaic Law, the Christians from a Jewish background.); Rom. 8:1-14; and Gal. 5:16-25. (These verses in Romans and Galatians, and many similar verses, are discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Some verses that speak of Christians' dying/being dead to sin/the flesh (old man)/the world/the Law through Christ's atoning death are Rom. 6:2, 6, 7, 11; 7:4, 6; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; Gal. 2:19, 20; 5:24; 6:14; Col. 2:12, 20; 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; and 4:1.]], **but made alive in the spirit** [In the margin the NASB has, "or, Spirit." I believe the [Holy] Spirit is being spoken of here. As with the word flesh used earlier in this verse, the words "in the spirit" are all one word in the Greek; the Greek has the word for Spirit/spirit in the dative/locative/instrumental case. I understand these words in the sense, "but made alive so far as the Spirit is concerned, that is, but made alive by the Spirit." The NIV and NKJV have, "but made alive by the Spirit." The KJV has, "but quickened by the Spirit." Christ was made alive by the Spirit in His resurrection. Christians, in union with Christ, are made alive in a preliminary sense when they are born again (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:4, 5, 8-11), and they will be born into the fulness of eternal life at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:11, 13, 23; 1 Cor. 15:22, 23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; and 12:5). The same Greek verb translated "made alive" in 1 Pet. 3:18 is also used of the resurrection in Rom. 8:11 and 1 Cor. 15:22. Romans 8:11 shows that this resurrection is accomplished by the Spirit.]; **(19) in which** [I would translate "by [or, through] whom." The NIV has, "through whom"; the NKJV has, "by whom."] **also He went and made proclamation** [I prefer the more simple "preached" of the NIV, KJV, and NKJV. The Son of God (the Angel of the Lord of the Old Testament) went and preached by/through the Holy Spirit. Significantly, the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Christ" in 1 Pet. 1:11; also see Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; and Phil. 1:19.] **to the spirits now in prison** [[The NASB added the word *now* in italics. This added word isn't needed, but it probably does help the reader understand these words. I agree with the common view that the Son of God went and preached (by/through the Spirit) to the people of Noah's generation while they were still alive on the earth in the days before

the flood (before they became imprisoned spirits). Much, if not all, of the preaching, came through Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5), who called his generation to repentance, and all the more so in view of the impending judgment of the flood. (The Greek noun [*keruks*] that was translated “preacher” in 2 Pet. 2:5 was derived from the Greek verb [*kerusso*] translated “made proclamation/preached” in 1 Pet. 3:19.) The people of Noah’s day didn’t repent, and *now* they are spirits in prison (cf. 2 Pet. 2:9), awaiting the great-white-throne judgment.

If Christ, after His death, had gone to preach to the spirits of people who had died in sin and were now in hades, as some teach, it would be very surprising for Him to just have gone to the people of Noah’s day, who perished in the flood. That was certainly one of the most wicked generations, if not the most wicked. What about all the other generations? And if He actually went to them in hades, what did He preach to them? Some say He went to tell them they were damned. That hardly seems like a necessary, or a fruitful, trip. Some say He went to offer them salvation through repentance and submission to the gospel. I’m quite confident that Peter wasn’t saying this. For one thing, as I mentioned, if this was what Peter was saying, he certainly wouldn’t have singled out Noah’s generation. Furthermore, such an unexpected teaching would certainly be given in a clearer fashion and would be confirmed by other texts in the Bible.

Why did Peter bring up the people of Noah’s generation? He was setting the stage to use the judgment of the flood as a powerful foreshadowing/type of God’s end-time judgment, and as an effective illustration for Christian water baptism. We’ll discuss the details under the next two verses. But there’s still another question to ask: Why did Peter speak of the “spirits [now] in prison, who formerly were disobedient”? Why didn’t he just say that Christ went by/through the Spirit to preach to the people of Noah’s day, who formerly were disobedient? Peter could have done that, and he still could have used the judgment of the flood as a type for the final judgment, and as an illustration for water baptism. However, by speaking of the people of Noah’s day as “spirits [now] in prison,” he more effectively warns all who would spurn God’s present offer of salvation and disobey His Word in the face of His impending (end-time) judgment: They too will end up spirits in prison.], **(20) who once** [or, “formerly” with the NKJV] **were disobedient** [I agree with Wayne Grudem (*1 Peter* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1988], pages 159, 160), “The phrase who formerly did not obey is better translated ‘when they formerly disobeyed,’ thus specifying that this was the time when Christ ‘in spirit [Spirit]’ preached to these people: i.e. ‘when they formerly disobeyed when God’s patience was waiting in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark.’ ” This commentary by Grudem is quite helpful on 1 Pet. 3:19, 20, including his Appendix that deals with these two verses.], **when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark** [His patience is waiting now too, for His end-time judgment (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8-15).], **in which a few, that is, eight persons** [Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives], **were brought safely through the water** [or, “they were saved through the water”; the NIV and NKJV have, “were saved through water.”]. [[For Noah and his family to be brought safely through/saved through the water meant that God’s salvation plan for that day, centering in the ark, brought Noah and his family through the judgment of the flood. Instead of perishing in the flood with the rest of mankind, they were brought safely through/saved through that judgment. Corresponding to this, when people submit to the gospel in repentance and faith and are baptized (in water), they are (in a very real sense) having their

final judgment, and they are brought safely through/saved through this judgment. Water baptism is, in some ways, comparable with the judgment of the flood—Christ is our ark.

The reason we are brought safely through/saved through our final judgment is because Jesus Christ has already died for us, bearing our sins with the guilt and penalties (e.g., 1 Pet. 2:24). When we become Christians, we appropriate (by faith) His atoning death as our death (which is quite appropriate since He died in our place), and we are brought safely through/saved through the judgment, avoiding, for one thing, the penalty of the second death and eternal separation from God. But there's more to it: Now, having been united with Jesus Christ in His death and burial by faith, we are also resurrected with Him in a preliminary, spiritual sense (born again) by the Spirit, who indwells every true Christian (e.g., Rom. 8:9), and the Holy Spirit enables us to be holy and righteous. After this glorious transaction (transformation), Christians are enabled to be dead to the flesh (old man) and sin, and to be alive to God and His righteousness and holiness. The old man was buried that a new creation might come forth. (See the references under 1 Pet. 3:18.)

The apostle Peter (like the apostle Paul) didn't teach, however, that born-again Christians automatically have the victory over sin, nor did he teach that all will be well when we stand before God the Judge if we don't make God and His righteousness top priority (cf., e.g., 1 Peter 1:7, 17; 2:1, 2, 11, 12; 3:8-12; 4:1-6, 17, 18; 5:6-10; Rom. 2:6-8; 6:11-23; 8:12-17; 1 Cor. 6:8-11; Gal. 5:16-25; and Eph. 5:1-7). Although it's true that in a very real sense born-again Christians have already had their final judgment, and died to the old man and been resurrected to newness of life (cf., e.g., John 5:24), things fall apart when Christians don't press on in faith (by grace), as required by the (new-covenant) contract with God. Many Christians in our day don't adequately understand the new covenant, and we can't respond in faith to what we don't know.], **(21) And corresponding to that** [These words are explained under 3:19, 20.], **baptism now saves you** [Water baptism by itself cannot save. There are other things much more important than water baptism (not that water baptism is presented as optional in the New Testament). We must hear the gospel and understand it (at least we must understand the basics); we must repent and submit to the gospel in faith (and we must keep running the race by faith until the end of the race); we must have all of the necessary work of the Spirit (e.g., drawing, convicting, teaching, making alive, and making righteous and holy). When the basics are in order, water baptism is the most appropriate (Biblical) occasion for us to complete the transaction of dying to the old man and becoming united with Christ through faith. (I'm not suggesting that people couldn't become born-again Christians before, or apart from, water baptism.) On water baptism, see under 1 Cor. 15:29 in this paper; and see under Mark 16:14-16 and Col. 2:11, 12 in my *Paper On Faith*. Christians are often out of balance (the Biblical balance) on the topic of water baptism; many overstate water baptism (leaving the impression, for example, that water baptism by itself causes the new birth, or that it is impossible to be saved before, or apart from, water baptism), and many understate the case (much of this problem traces back to an overreaction to those overstating water baptism).]—**not the removal of dirt from the flesh** [I trust everyone understands that the purpose of water baptism isn't to remove dirt from the body in a physical sense.], **but an appeal to God for a good conscience** [I prefer a translation like, "but an answer/response toward God of a good conscience." The NIV has, "but the pledge of good conscience toward God," but in the margin has, "or, response" instead of pledge. The KJV and NKJV, "but the answer of a good conscience toward God." On having a good conscience, see Heb.

9:14 (on this verse, see pages 160-162 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*); Heb. 10:22; 1 Tim. 1:5; and 1 Pet. 3:16. The idea is that born-again Christians are able to have a good conscience because they know that they're forgiven, born-again, and enabled to live in righteousness and holiness in union with Christ Jesus through the indwelling Spirit. The idea is included, as Peter continues with this sentence, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His exaltation to the right hand of God the Father make this salvation available to us; for one thing, all enemies (including sin, Satan and all his hosts, and death [both spiritual death and physical death]) have been subjected to Christ. He has all authority now (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11); however, it's clear that (in the plan of God) His enemies won't be abolished until the end of this age (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:24-26). It's also true that the resurrection of Christ demonstrated that His atoning death was effective.]—**through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (4:1) Therefore** [This word demonstrates the strong connection between what Peter just said in 3:18-22 and what he will go on to say here in the following verses.], **since Christ has suffered [suffered death]** [Significantly, as the margin of the NASB rightly shows, the Greek verb *pascho*, as it is used here (and often), means “suffered death,” not just “suffered.” Also see Luke 22:15; 24:46; Acts 1:3; 17:3; Heb. 13:12; 1 Pet. 3:18 (The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* [Fourth Revised Edition, 1993] takes *pascho* as the original reading in 3:18. It assigns a B rating to this decision, which indicates, from the editors' point of view, that “the text is almost certain.” The other Greek reading in 3:18 is the verb for died. I assume *pascho* was the original reading; if it was, it clearly was used of suffering death.); and 1 Pet. 4:1b. It's very important for us to understand how Peter used the verb *pascho* here in 4:1, especially in 4:1b, as we'll see.] **in [to] the flesh, arm yourselves with the same purpose, because he who has suffered [suffered death] in [to] the flesh** [The words “in the flesh” here, and earlier in this verse, are one word in the Greek, the word for flesh in the dative/instrumental/locative case, as in 3:18. The idea is that Christ has died so far as the flesh is concerned; He has died to the realm of the flesh and left it behind. We, in union with Christ, by faith, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, are to die to living in the flesh, which includes dying to living in sin. The translation “in the flesh” isn't acceptable for this second use of the noun in this verse. Something like “[suffered death] to the flesh” is required. This same translation, though not mandatory, would be preferable earlier in the verse too. It must be understood that we can die to sin and the realm of the flesh only through union with Christ in His atoning death, which He died in our place.] **has ceased from sin** [[What Peter said here (which is right in line with what he said in 1:13-19; 2:24, 25; and 3:18-22, and right in line with what Paul taught [e.g., Rom. 6:1-14; 7:4-6; 8:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 5:16-25; and 6:14, 15], and is found many other places in the New Testament) is that Christians, knowing the gospel, must submit to the gospel in faith and live/walk in righteousness and holiness by the grace/Spirit of God. By doing so they will ensure that they will truly be dead to the flesh (old man) and to sin; they will cease from sin. (The old man won't be able to manifest itself in sin.) This is, at least, the ideal, and the New Testament doesn't present it as an unrealistic or unattainable ideal.

It's sad that many Christians interpret Peter as saying that after Christians have suffered enough they can begin to experience something of victory over sin. It's true that chastening judgments can help wake Christians up, but this is far from what Peter was talking about

here. The sad fact is that many Christians don't believe that Christians can ever walk in victory over sin before Christ returns. But the victory over sin can only come by faith, faith in God and His Word. I'm convinced that the New Testament clearly teaches that Christians are called to walk in righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin, and that this is a big part of what salvation is all about. The issue, however, is whether the New Testament teaches victory over sin through the sufficient grace of God, obtained at a very high cost to Himself, not whether man in his strength or for his glory can stop sinning—he can't. We don't need more condemnation in the Body of Christ, but we do need much more transformation (by grace through faith [faith based on God and His Word] to the glory of God). Amen!

The following verses (4:2-6) strongly confirm the interpretation just given for 4:1.], **(2) so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh** ["The rest of the time in the flesh" here (cf. Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 10:3; and Phil. 1:22, 24) means as long as we still live in a physical body in this world. The "rest of the time" refers to the time that starts when we become born-again Christians and ends when we die, or when Jesus returns and we are glorified.] **no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God** [in truth, righteousness, and holiness]. **(3) For the time already past** [speaking of the days before they became Christians] **is sufficient for you to have carried out the [sinful] desire of the Gentiles** [Cf. 1 Pet 1:14, 18; 2:10-12. Peter was writing to Gentile Christians. These words make it clear that Peter was speaking of a once-for-all breach with sin, not a gradual break with sin, or a break with sin after suffering enough. The blood of Jesus sanctifies in the power of the Spirit.], **having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. (4) And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them** [like you used to] **into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you** [This explains where some of the suffering spoken of in this epistle that his readers were enduring came from (cf. 1 Pet. 1:6, 7; 2:12, 18-24; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; and 5:8-10).]; **(5) but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** [[Cf. 1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17, 18. All mankind will be judged at the end of this age, "the living and the dead." These words ("the living and the dead") are most often understood here of the ones still alive when Christ returns ("the living") and those who will have died before that time. (These words are sometimes used this way in the New Testament [cf. Rom. 14:9].) I'm quite sure, however, that that isn't the way Peter was using these words here. He was speaking of those who are born again as "the living" and the others as "the dead." When Peter mentioned the dead here in this context, he was thinking especially of those who were maligning (4:4) [and reviling (4:14)] the Christians. Note that the "they" of 4:5, who shall give account to God, speaks of the same people as "they" of 4:4 (used twice). First Peter 4:5, like all of 4:1-6, was aimed at the people of Peter's generation. The Christians were being warned that they must be ready to stand before God (as in 1:17), even though it may lead to some suffering now, and they were being reminded that the non-Christians will have to answer to God. For one thing, Peter was thinking in terms of Christ returning soon (cf. "who is ready" [4:5]; and 4:7, 17).

On being born again/having life (being among "the living") by the Spirit in 1 Peter, see 1:3, 23; 2:2, 5; 3:7, 18-21; and 4:6; also cf., e.g., 2 Pet. 1:3; Matt. 8:22; John 5:24-26; Eph. 2:1, 5; and Col. 2:13. The concept of being spiritually dead (without the Spirit), or of being spiritually alive (by the Spirit) is, of course common in the New Testament.] **(6) For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even** [I'll start with a detail that's not of

crucial significance. I prefer a translation without the word “even,” as discussed in the following parenthesis, but I would interpret this verse essentially the same with, or without, the “even.” (The first four words in the Greek [here translated “For...this purpose...even”] are exactly the same as those found in 2 Cor. 2:9, which are translated “For to this end also [I wrote]” by the NASB; the NIV has the much simpler, “The reason [I wrote].” The BAGD Greek Lexicon, under listing #4 of the word *kai*, which was translated “also” by the NASB in 2 Cor. 2:9, says this is one of those places where *kai* is being used in a sense that is “pleonastic [unnecessary/redundant] to a considerable degree.” That’s why the NIV could easily skip the word “also” in 2 Cor. 2:9. The word “also” doesn’t appear in the NASB translation of 1 Pet. 4:6, but it is found in the KJV and NKJV. The NASB translated *kai* as “even” in 1 Pet. 4:6. Even as the “also” in 2 Cor. 2:9 was redundant and not translated by the NIV, so here in 1 Pet. 4:6, I believe it would be better reflect the meaning intended by Peter to not translate the *kai*, whether translated “also,” or “even.” The NEB doesn’t translate the *kai* here, “Why was the Gospel preached to those who are dead?” The BAGD Greek Lexicon didn’t discuss the meaning of *kai* in 1 Pet. 4:6, but it did list 1 Pet. 4:19 under the pleonastic use of *kai*, where the NASB translated *kai* as “also,” but the NIV, KJV, and NKJV didn’t translate it.)] **to those who are dead** [or, better yet, “to the dead.” In the Greek this is all one word, the adjective for dead in the dative case. The dead here are the spiritually dead (cf., e.g., John 5:25 with 5:28), as in 1 Pet. 4:5. The gospel always comes (is preached) initially to those who are spiritually dead. All mankind is called to repent and submit to the gospel. At one time all of Peter’s born-again Christian readers (including us) had been spiritually dead, but after hearing the gospel and submitting to it in faith, they were born again; they became part of “the living” spoken of in 4:5.], **that though they are judged** [or, condemned] **in the flesh as men** [[First let’s discuss the last two words. For one thing, these two words come before “in the flesh” in the Greek, and it’s probably better to translate in the order of the Greek words. Instead of translating “as men,” I would translate “according to [or, in accordance with] men.” The Greek preposition *kata*, used here with the word for men, is normally translated this way. (This preposition isn’t translated “as” anywhere else in the New Testament by the NASB, but it is translated “according to” 140 times and “in accordance with” 12 times.) It’s significant that later in this verse *kata* is used; it’s translated “according to” by the NASB. As we have seen, Peter’s original Christian readers were being judged/condemned in accordance with the judgment of men (their non-Christian opponents). (First Peter 4:4 shows that they were being maligned by non-Christians; First Peter 4:14 speaks of their being reviled for the name of Christ.)

Now we’ll discuss the words “in the flesh.” These three words are one word in the Greek, the word for flesh in the dative/instrumental/locative case, as in 1 Pet. 3:18 and 4:1 (twice). Here the translation “in the flesh” would be acceptable, or we could translate “so far as the flesh is concerned,” or “in the realm of the flesh.” Spiritually dead men (men in the flesh, men without the Spirit) are doing the maligning/reviling/condemning. The “flesh” here is contrasted with the “Spirit” spoken of later in this verse, even as “in accordance with (*kata*) men” is contrasted with “in accordance with (*kata*) God.”], **they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.** [[The order of the words in the Greek is preferable to show the symmetry with “though they are judged/condemned in accordance with men in the realm of the flesh”: We could translate, “they may live in accordance with God in/by the Spirit.”

Let's discuss the verb "they may live." At least part of what this verb means here is that they have the life of God, by the indwelling Spirit, as born-again Christians. The BAGD Greek Lexicon says the Greek verb (*zao*) is used here with the meaning "have eternal life," as in, for example, John 6:51, 58; and 1 John 4:9. They are among "the living" of 1 Pet. 4:5, and it is understood that they are living righteous and holy lives (in accordance with God). Their faith and transformed lives were what brought about the judging/condemning of the non-Christians.

Now we'll discuss the words "according to/in accordance with [*kata*] God," which come before "in/by the Spirit (spirit)" in the Greek. The three words added in italics by the NASB ("the will of") are reasonable in the light of 4:2, which speaks of living for the will of God. I would, however, skip these added words in the translation. For one thing, this translation will better bring out the intended contrast with the words "in accordance with men" used earlier in the verse. For another thing, "in accordance with God" means more than living in accordance with the will of God. Our life by the Spirit comes from God and is in accordance with His nature and His plan of salvation. With His life/salvation comes His righteousness and holiness. The new man Christians put on is in accordance with (*kata*) God (see Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10). When judgment day comes, which was just mentioned in 1 Pet. 4:5, there is only one judgment that matters, the judgment of God, and He will judge us according to our works (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:17), works that come by grace through faith. First Peter 4:6 puts the primary emphasis on the need for Christians to make sure they are ready for judgment day, even though this may well involve some suffering, as it did for Peter's first readers. It's also true that the non-Christians ("the dead" of 4:5) will have to answer to God for their sin, including the sin of persecuting Christians (e.g., 1 Peter 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:4-6), and, significantly, for not submitting to, and obeying, the gospel (e.g., 1 Pet. 4:17, 18; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9).

The words "in/by the Spirit (spirit)" are one word in the Greek, the word for Spirit/spirit in the dative/instrumental/locative case, as in 1 Pet. 3:18. I understand these words here in the sense, "they may live as far as the Spirit is concerned, that is, they may have life in/by the Spirit." They are born-again Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit; they are among "the living" of 4:5. Because of this they have the power to live in righteousness and holiness, in accordance with God and His will.]]

