

Universal OFFER of Salvation

Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come?

Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.



"Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry." (Ezekiel 37:2)

(Note: This is a DRAFT and NOT a completed booklet.

Copyright © 2019)

Bob Thiel, Ph.D.

Copyright © 2019 by Nazarene Books. ISBN. Booklet produced for the *Continuing Church of God and Successor*, a corporation sole. 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA.

Scriptural quotes are mostly taken from the New King James Version (Thomas Nelson, Copyright © 1997; used by permission) sometimes abbreviated as NKJV, but normally shown without any abbreviation.

Contents

1. Overview: Will All Be Offered Salvation?
2. Jesus Came to Save More than A Few
3. Salvation is Available When God Decides
4. Will God's Will Be Done?
5. The Only Ones Saved Now Are Those Who Accept The Call Now
6. God Does Not Hold People Accountable for What They Have Not Been Able to See
7. The Bible Clearly Teaches that Those Gentiles Who Have Been Subject to Condemnation Will Have an Opportunity for Salvation
8. Some Few Will Willfully Reject God's Generous Offer But Their End Will Be Swift
9. All Israel Will Be Saved
10. The Prophets Spoke About This
11. Protestants Generally Oppose Apocatastasis, Roman Catholics Claim Eternal Torment, But the Orthodox and Church of God Teach Differently
12. Conclusion: God's Loving Plan

1. Overview: Will All Be Offered Salvation?

The Bible teaches that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), God is good (Mark 10:18), and is all-powerful, all-knowing (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Would not such a God be wise enough to come up with a plan of salvation that works, and does not doom the overwhelming majority of humans that ever lived to eternal punishing?

Could that be a major part of why He sent His Son (John 3:16-17; 10:10)?

Is the view that God plans to *offer* salvation to all biblical?

Has such a view had at least a degree of historical support, even among certain religious leaders still praised by the Greco-Roman-Protestant churches?

Will salvation be offered to all who ever lived?

The answer to these five questions is, yes, absolutely! And this book is jam-packed with scriptures that prove that.

Sadly, however, most people who claim to believe the Bible have been taught that salvation will not be offered to all and most will therefore suffer eternally.

Notice, though, what the New Testament and the Old Testament plainly teach:

⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:6, NKJV. Note this verse is translated precisely the same in the Douay-Rheims Bible, DRB)

¹⁰ And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:10; also the same in the DRB)

Some have called versions of this teaching “the age to come” (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5) or “apokatastasis” (sometimes also spelled in English as “apocatastasis”).

Apokatastasis comes from the Greek word ἀποκατάστασις, meaning “restoration.” The Greek term ἀποκατάστασις is used in the Book of Acts 3:21 (Green’s Interlinear Bible. 1986, p. 824).

The Latin definition (per *The Catholic Encyclopedia*) is *restitutio in pristinum statum*, meaning restoration to the original condition.

What was the original condition?

³¹ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good (Genesis 1:31).

In theological terms, the concept of apokatastasis is sometimes used to support the teaching of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the Earth--and that is a part of it. But the millennium is not the focus of this book.

The main focus of this book is to provide scriptural evidence for what God's plan now is and how it affects the time after the end of the millennial reign--the time of the 100 year period (Isaiah 65:20)—and into eternity.

The view of the term apokatastasis in this book is related to the doctrine that God will at some time *offer* salvation to everyone, such as after the second resurrection (cf. Revelation 20:5,11-12)—there are also other views of it.

Here are comments from Catholic and Protestant scholars respectively:

Apocatastasis A name given in the history of theology to the doctrine which teaches that a time will come when all free creatures will share in the grace of salvation; in a special way, the devils and lost souls. (Batiffol P. Apocatastasis. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907)

Apokatastasis The term refers to the *prospect* of the final universal restoration of creatures to God. ... Though often equated with universalism (the salvation of all beings), early exponents couched the *apokatastasis* in God's eschatological victory over evil, which would still entail a purgatorial state. (Benedetto R, Duke J, eds. The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History: The early, medieval, and Reformation eras. John Knox Press, 2008, pp. 36-37)

Theologically, apokatastasis can be considered as a teaching that God has a plan of salvation that will result in salvation being offered to all and accepted by most.

Early Christians believed this.

In the early 2nd century, Ignatius of Antioch exhorted Polycarp of Smyrna to teach that all may be saved:

I entreat you, by the grace with which you are clothed, to press forward in your course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. (Ignatius. Letter to Polycarp, Chapter 1).

In the late 2nd century, Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

And on the sixth day, God having made the quadrupeds, and wild beasts, and the land reptiles, pronounced no blessing upon them, reserving His blessing for man, whom He was about to create on the sixth day. The quadrupeds, too, and wild beasts, were made for a type of some men, who neither know nor worship God, but mind earthly things, and repent not. For those who turn from their iniquities and live righteously, in spirit fly upwards like birds, and mind the things that are above, and are well-pleasing to the will of God. But those who do not know nor worship God, are like birds which have wings, but cannot fly nor soar to the high things of God. Thus, too, though such persons are called men, yet being pressed down with sins, they mind grovelling and earthly things. And the animals are named wild beasts [θηρία], from their being hunted [θηρεύεσθαι], not as if they had been made evil or venomous from the first — for nothing was made evil by God, but all things good, yea, very good — but the sin in which man was concerned brought evil upon them. For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him. For as, if the master of the house himself acts rightly, the domestics also of necessity conduct themselves well; but if the master sins, the servants also sin with him; so in like manner it came to pass, that in the case of

man's sin, he being master, all that was subject to him sinned with him. When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, those also shall be restored to their original gentleness. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 17)

And God showed great kindness to man in this, that He did not allow him to remain in sin for ever; but, as it were, by a kind of banishment, cast him out of Paradise, in order that, having by punishment expiated, within an appointed time, the sin, and having been disciplined, he should afterwards be restored. (Ibid, Chapter 26)

Theophilus was teaching that although God consigned humans to be out of Paradise, this was for the good of humanity so that humans could later be restored.

Researcher and Professor Ilaria Ramelli considers some passages from Ignatius and those just cited from Theophilus to be supportive of the early understanding of the doctrine of apokatastasis:

In *Ep ad Eph. 20*, Ignatius describes the destructiveness of evil and salvation brought about by Christ in strongly universalistic terms.

Every spell of evilness has been destroyed, every chain of evilness has disappeared; ignorance has been swept away; the old kingdom has fallen into ruin, when God appeared in human form for the novelty of the life that is absolutely eternal [αἰδίου]. What was established by God has begun: since then, all beings have been set in motion for the providential realisation of the destruction of death. ...

This destruction of death is a work of God, and the death at stake is not only physical, but also spiritual, since its disappearance is linked to the elimination of evil and ignorance. ...

In *Aut. 2, 17* Theophilus foretells the final restoration of both humans and animals to their original condition ... Theophilus expresses here a notion of apokatastasis ... Also, Theophilus at the same time interprets beasts as the symbol of evil human beings. (Ramelli I. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*). Brill, 2013, pp. 63, 65,66).

(Note: Professor Ramellia should have cited *Ep ad Eph. 19*, not *Ep ad Eph. 20*, for her translation in the section above.)

Though not a dogma, the idea that “non-elect’ humans will have an opportunity for salvation after death is a hope of the Eastern and Russian Orthodox churches (Benedetto, p. 37).

In the second century, Irenaeus of Lyon, wrote:

It is indeed proper to God, and befitting His character, to show mercy and pity, and to bring salvation to His creatures, even though they be brought under danger of destruction. “For with Him,” says the Scripture, “is propitiation.” (Fragments of Irenaeus, Fragment 10. Roberts and Donaldson)

Professor Ramelli brought out the following related to Irenaeus:

Irenaeus connects again ἀνάστα-σις and ἀποκατάστασις in fr. 10: “Life will seize humanity, will chase death away, and will restore [ἀποκαταστήσει] humanity. Likewise, at the end of fr. 15 from AH 5 Irenaeus refers ἀποκατέστησε to the work of Christ, who restores humanity to friendship with God, which was lost with the original sin. Humanity will be restored to its original condition, anterior to the fall, and to a better state. (Ramelli, p. 105)

Perhaps it should be pointed out that while Irenaeus’ writings do not show he believed all would be saved, some are consistent with the view that God has a plan to save more than just the elect of this age.

Andreas Andreopoulos wrote the following related to the 4th century Eastern Orthodox bishop Gregory of Nyssa:

Gregory does not accept the restoration of all and the subsequent forgiveness of all as an inescapable necessity. Nobody will be saved without going through repentance, cleansing and forgiveness, and his view of the apokatastasis is merely the belief that everyone will be able to see truth as it is at the end, and everyone will be given the chance to repent ... The restoration of all however, a valid possibility according to the Church, although not a doctrine, has a special place in the hopes of saints who pray for the redemption of their enemies, and it expresses our hope for the charity of God. Possibly the honorable silence expresses this hope, which in spite of the danger of determinism, becomes almost a certainty in this light: If even one human being is able to forgive and pray for the salvation of the entire cosmos, wouldn’t God’s providence find a way to make it happen? (Andreopoulos A. Eschatology and final restoration (apokatastasis) in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor. *Theandros an Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Practice*, Volume 1, number 3, Spring 2004)

Dr. Ilaria Ramelli wrote (**bolding** in source):

It clearly emerges that for Gregory, just as for Origen, the doctrine of apokatastasis is a Christological, and indeed Christocentric, doctrine. In their view, it is a specifically **Christian** doctrine. This is also why Origen was at such pains to distinguish his own, Christian notion of apokatastasis from the Stoic. Both in Origen’s and in Gregory’s view, universal apokatastasis is made possible, not by any metaphysical or cosmological necessity, but by Christ’s inhumanation, sacrifice, and resurrection, and by the grace of God. The very fact that for both Origen and Gregory the eventual universal restoration begins with, and coincides with a holistic vision of, the **resurrection** makes it clear that their concept of apokatastasis is thoroughly **Christian**, given the Christian—and not “pagan” or “Platonic”—roots of the doctrine of the resurrection. (Ramelli, p. 390)

Despite numerous issues that Origen of Alexandria and others had, the idea that God has a plan to offer salvation to those not called in this age is a Christian doctrine—and is consistent with the Bible as well as the writings of Ignatius and Theophilus.

It should be pointed out that some have erroneously claimed that Origen invented this doctrine. That view is clearly erroneous, since in his *Commentary on John*, Origen called it the “so-called apokatastasis” he obviously learned of it from an earlier source (such as Clement of Alexandria or elsewhere). Professor

Ilaria Ramelli agrees (ibid, p. 3), and throughout her books, she cites scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that support the view that this is a biblical doctrine.

In the 4th century, Alexandrian Didymus the Blind also believed in some version of apokatastasis (Daily B. The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology. CUP Archive, 1991, p. 90).

Even Roman Catholic Hans Urs von Balthasar (who was named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II, but died shortly before being formally inducted into the College of Cardinals), in his book titled *Dare We Hope: "that All Men be Saved"?*, laid out biblical and historical positions he felt were in favour of such a hope.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, referring to a time around the Protestant Reformation, states:

The doctrine of apokatastasis viewed as a belief in a universal salvation is found among the Anabaptists ... (Batiffel P. Apocatastasis. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume I. Published 1907. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, March 1, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

Yet, it should be pointed out that Protestant reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin did not hold to it, but instead condemned it.

In the 19th century, some Sabbath-keepers published the *Messenger of Truth* which "vigorously promoted the age-to-come doctrine until the paper closed in 1858" (Bull, Malcolm; Lockhart Keith. *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*. Indiana University Press, 2007).

In the 19th century, people including James P. Stephenson taught versions of the "age to come" and a "fair chance" (Stephenson JP. *God's Plan of Salvation*. Thomas Wilson, Chicago, 1877, pp. 70, 268--though J.P. Stephenson himself was falsely accused of going insane in his later years by an opponent group that still perpetuates that story; see Stilson JT. *Biographical Encyclopedia: Chronicling the History of the Church of God Abraham Faith*. Word Edge, 2011, pp. 248-254). Church of God (Seventh Day) leader A.N. Dugger also taught about an "age to come" (Porter CW, Dugger AN. *The Dugger Porter Debate {of 1921}*. FIRM FOUNDATION PUBLISHING HOUSE, 1942, p. 66). The old Worldwide Church of God taught the "age to come" in the 20th century (Schroeder JR. *God's Annual HOLY DAYS: Sneak Preview of Your Future! Plain Truth*, March 1979).

Is there any biblical truth to an "age to come" teaching?

Yes.

Since most who claim some version of Christianity believe that what they teach is at least partially supported by scripture, this book which contains a listing of hundreds of verses in the Bible supporting apocatastasis, as well as related comments, may be helpful for those who wish to receive their doctrine from the Bible.

Can you believe what the Bible teaches?

The Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and the Greek Scriptures (the New Testament) show that the Bible supports the *Continuing Church of God (CCOG)* view of apokatastasis.

And what is that view?

God will *offer* salvation to all that ever lived. That is what the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3) teaches in His word.

The *Continuing* Church of God (CCOG) believes that the Bible teaches that all will ultimately be given an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 17:3; Luke 3:6) and that nearly all (perhaps over 99.9%) people who ever lived will accept that opportunity and thus gain eternal life in the kingdom of God and the relatively few who do not will not be eternally tormented, but will be put out of their misery.

Therefore, although the CCOG does not teach universal salvation, we teach that the opportunity for salvation will be offered to all. Either in this age, or the age to come.

While the scriptures shown in this book support apocatastasis and they are grouped together for ease of emphasis, a reading of them demonstrates that God’s plan of salvation as understood and taught by the CCOG has broad scriptural support.

Will you read the scriptures with a prayerful and earnest desire to know the truth of this matter?

World cut off from God

After God made the first humans, the Bible records that all God made was “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

God gave the first humans, Adam and Eve, free choice. He allowed them to decide which direction they would go. God allowed them the choice of totally obedience to Him and the possibility to sin.

29 ... God created people to be virtuous, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path (Ecclesiastes 7:29, New Living Translation)

The Bible shows that the after being influenced by Satan, they disobeyed God. They decided, apart from God’s word, what they thought was right and wrong. They chose not to submit to God’s laws and live God’s way of life.

Deceived by Satan and their own reasoning, they choose to go their own – actually Satan’s – way.

From that time forward, God closed off easy access to Himself as well as to the tree of life and His Holy Spirit from Adam and Eve and others, except those who choose to work with or call in this age:

²²Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24).

Irenaeus of Lyon wrote:

Wherefore also He drove him out of Paradise, and removed him far from the tree of life, not because He envied him the tree of life, as some venture to assert, but because He pitied him, [and did not desire] that he should continue a sinner for ever, nor that the sin which surrounded him should be immortal, and evil interminable and irremediable. (Irenaeus. Against Heresies, Book III, Chapter 23, Verse 6)

Irenaeus appears to be teaching that Adam was denied access to the tree of life because God wanted Adam to have a chance. And that is part of why God does not call all to eternal life in this age.

Related to this disbarment, in the 20th century, the late Pastor General of the old Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong, wrote:

(Gen. 3:22-24). Thus, ALL MANKIND WAS BARRED from access to God or receiving eternal life — all but the comparative FEW God would specially call for some performance leading to the Kingdom of God.

In effect, God said to MANKIND through Adam and Eve: “You have made your own decision. You have rejected me as your God and your Ruler, Revealer of knowledge and Savior. Therefore I have cut you and the whole world that will spring from you off from all contact with me. Go and form your own governments, your own religions, your own production and dissemination of knowledge. However, I shall reserve the prerogative to specially call into my service such as I shall choose, for a part in preparing for the Kingdom of God. Otherwise, the world that will develop from you is CUT OFF from all contact with me for 6,000 years, when the Kingdom of God shall be established, ruling ALL NATIONS!”

Far from trying to get every human saved spiritually during the 6,000 years, God CUT OFF all humanity — save the comparative FEW He would specially call.

THAT is WHY Jesus said, “No man can come to me” during this 6,000-year period, except God the Father specially calls them — and He has called this few not just for salvation, but for a special service preparing for the Kingdom of God, as well.

After that 6,000 years expires, Christ will come again to earth, this time in SUPREME POWER AND GLORY, to set up GOD’S GOVERNMENT. Satan shall be banished. Then, during the seventh thousand years, God will call EVERYBODY then living.

And after the seventh millennium, God will resurrect to mortal life all the billions of people who had not been called for spiritual salvation. (Armstrong HW. What Does Pentecost Mean to You? Good News, May 1979.)

The teaching of being cut off is consistent with what Theophilus (To Autolytus, Book 2, Chapter 17). People have been going their own way, cut off from God for almost 6,000 years since Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden.

And humankind has reaped the dreadful outcomes – the sick, deteriorating, evil world in which we live.

God, who holds all power and all destiny, states:

¹ “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.
² But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Sin has separated God from humanity.

Contrary to the views of many, God is not attempting to save the entire world now, beyond those He predestined to be called in this age (Romans 8:28-29). He has allocated 6,000 years of a 7,000-year plan for humans to go the way that leads to death (Proverbs 14:12) and learn that obeying God is the only way to happiness (information on calculations related to the 6,000 years is available at www.cogwriter.com).

Although His ear is not heavy, His timing and thoughts are often different than those of humans: He has a plan to “abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7-9).

But humans, often think their own ways are best and often do not study enough of His word to truly understand it. They shut their eyes and their ears are heavy (Isaiah 6:10).

Many think they have heard it all, when they have not. They often assume that their religious teachers would have to see the truth, while only few understand very much of the truth.

Understanding Clouded

Astounding as it may seem, God has deliberately clouded the meaning of His message so the vast majority would not understand. God explains:

¹³ But the word of the Lord was to them, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little,” That they might go and fall backward,
and be broken And snared and caught. (Isaiah 28:13)

God purposely wrote His Word in a way that it could be misunderstood.

Did you see that God said that the word was such that many would be snared and caught—not that most would initially understand it?

Don’t you think that an all-knowing Creator would have a fantastically good reason to do it that way?

Consider also that the Apostle Peter wrote that some things were “hard to understand” and that people wrongly twisted the meaning of various scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).

God intended that only those whom He is calling and choosing would understand in this age.

Since God wants all saved (1 Timothy 2:2-3), why would He have His word written that way unless He had a plan to ultimately call everyone?

Notice something about the timing:

⁹ And He said, “Go, and tell this people:

‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’

¹⁰ “Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “Lord, how long?”

And He answered:

“Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, ¹² The Lord has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. (Isaiah 6:9-12)

In other words, the Word of God teaches that the bulk of the people are not to understand ***until after a time of utter desolation.***

Since that desolation still has not happened—this must happen in the future!

Furthermore, the Bible reveals that God has prohibited idolaters to have proper understanding:

¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” ¹⁸ They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand. (Isaiah 44:17-18)

Thus, is God going to permanently condemn those who worship idols for what He has not let them understand?

Protestant theology tends to say yes.

Those in the *Continuing* Church of God say no.

Unless the idolater has committed the unpardonable sin, they will be judged as other uncalled people are. Jesus taught that an opportunity for forgiveness will happen “in the age to come” (Matthew 12:32).

Salvation will be offered to all who ever lived. A relatively few to properly get that offer in this age, and everyone else in the age to come (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30).

It may be of interest to note that early Christians did believe in an age to come where God will call others.

For those who consider this to be an “un-orthodox” belief, remember that even the Eastern *Orthodox* believe in a version of this (cf. Ware T. *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin Books, London, 1997, p. 262) as have some others in various ‘mainstream’ churches.

The Apostle Paul Makes the Point that Not All Have Been Called Yet

The Apostle Paul wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else.

Look how he makes it clear that God did not call all of Israel and that God has allowed people to be blinded until it is time, but that eventually “all Israel will be saved”:

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and **the rest were blinded**. ⁸ Just as it is written:

“God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.”

⁹ And David says:

“Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them.

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always.”

¹¹ I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. ¹² Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. ²² Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that **you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; ²⁷ For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.

²⁸ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. (Romans 11:7-31).

Notice that many were blinded. God did not allow them to see in this age, but plans to offer them mercy. And these include those that have long been dead. The blindness partially happened until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in—something that still has not fully happened (though, to a degree, it is happening—more Gentiles are responding to the call in the 21st century).

When the Apostle Paul uses the term “all Israel,” he looks to be referring to “spiritual Israel” (as opposed to just physical Israel), for he wrote:

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

All Israel includes Gentiles who will be saved.

So, are various ones doomed to eternal torment by a loving God because He allowed them to be blinded now?

No.

Jesus explained, “If you were blind, you would have no sin” (John 9:41).

Surely Jesus understands the plan of God--surely that was at least part of why His words were recorded. That way, all would know that there is hope even for many that would seem to be the hopeless.

The late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote the following related to Romans 11:

One of the most wonderful chapters in the Bible is the eleventh of Romans. Few seem to understand it — yet it’s plain. Some, today, say God has rejected and utterly cast away the Jewish people. They suppose the Jews are Israel, whereas actually they are of the House of Judah, which separated from the House of Israel in the days of kings Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Nevertheless, Romans 11 speaks undoubtedly of all the tribes of Israel.

This marvelous chapter says God has not cast away His people Israel. But it reveals that only a small portion of Israel (our English-speaking peoples are the birthright tribes of Israel) are of the election of GRACE at this time.

The rest are blinded spiritually, and GOD blinded them — deliberately and for a purpose — not permanently, but until the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in” — and then what?

Then, we read in Romans 11:26, “all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer” — Christ, at His second coming — “and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” Israel is spiritually blinded, now. God blinded them. They are not now being called to salvation. They are not being given any chance, now, at all! The wonderful opportunity that shall come to them after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in — after the Deliverer comes, and they are no longer blinded — shall not be a second chance — they have never yet had any chance. ...

It includes, undoubtedly, most of these departed loved ones who died without having accepted Christ and becoming converted. They may have heard the name of Christ, but they did not understand. God never called them, during their lifetime in this age. Of course they did not die automatically saved — but, on the other hand, neither did they die lost!

That’s the comforting truth. The overwhelming majority of our peoples, today, are neither saved nor {permanently} lost — they simply have not, yet, been called. ... their call is coming later. They shall be resurrected back to life, and given their fair chance. And you, if you are called — if God reveals this wonderful truth to your mind — are having your one and only chance now — your chance to prepare and fit yourself to be used of Christ in the loving labor of helping to save them, then! (Armstrong HW. Predestination - Does The Bible Teach It? WCG booklet, 1973, pp. 13-14,21)

God has a plan that works!

God’s merciful plan should be comforting to those concerned about living and deceased loved ones.

⁷⁶ Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, (Psalm 119:76)

Accept what the word of God teaches and “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

The teaching that God will offer all salvation, either in this age or the age to come, is a comforting doctrine to earnestly contend for.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God do have a God of love and understanding.

Furthermore, notice:

³³ ... they crucified Him ...³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:33-34)

Notice that Jesus prayed to the Father that those who beat and crucified Him in ignorance would be forgiven. Will the Father not listen to the prayer of His Son?

If the hope of those was cut off, there would have been no reason for Jesus to have made that prayer.

Since Jesus felt those who physically saw Him, heard Him, and had Him crucified/executed (“impaled” is perhaps the most literal translation of the actual Greek term) should be forgiven, certainly Jesus does not think that those who do not understand about Him now (or never knew about Him) should be condemned.

Does your church understand this?

Do your church leaders understand that those that killed Jesus rejected Him as their Lord and Saviour, yet Jesus wanted them to be forgiven for a reason?

What would be the point of them being forgiven if they were destined to spend eternity frying in eternal torment as they clearly rejected Jesus?

Well, there would be no point.

You may say, but, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and all will be judged (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

And you would be right for saying so.

All will be convicted of sin (cf. John 16:8; James 2:9).

Many who write against the doctrine of true apokatastasis have improperly claimed that it does not allow for judgment. That is an error in their understanding as they do not understand His judgments.

While critics are correct that the Bible shows that all will be judged (e.g. Romans 14:10), they seem to overlook/misunderstand statements such as the following:

⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:6)

¹³ Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

So, yes, people can be judged and found guilty, but still receive mercy. God can make them stand.

How else could mercy triumph over judgment?

Joel pointed out that God relents of punishment for those who will turn to Him:

¹² “Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:12-13)

God’s mercy and judgments are unsearchable for most:

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34)

God's mercy is beyond what most people seem to think it is. Many do not understand how the mind of the Lord loves.

Furthermore, the Bible teaches:

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face. (Psalm 89:14)

"God is love" (1 John 4:8,16).

Here are some comments from the 19th century Anglican priest, Dr. Herbert Luckock, who also believed in an opportunity after death for many:

God is a Being of absolute justice. "*Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy Throne.*" "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*"

It cannot be consistent with these Divine attributes to consign to the company of the devil and his angels, vast masses of men, who have never been taught the better way, who have been born and grown up and died without one ray of knowledge to lead them to God. (Luckock HM. The Intermediate State between Death and Judgment being a Sequel to After Death. Longmans, Green, & Co., London, 1896, p. 181)

Notice something that Jesus came to do:

²⁹ ... Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

God is willing to forgive sins. Jesus came and died that the world might be saved (John 3:16), not so most would be condemned by Him (John 3:16-17).

The Angel Gabriel told Mary:

²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:19)

As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans, Jesus did not come just to save Jews, but also Gentiles. All people are children of God.

God's salvation is not forever closed to those that were blinded or otherwise unable (including geographical circumstances) to hear the true message. Otherwise, how could it be "that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17)?

That means MANY would be.

Hebrews 9:28 teaches:

²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Notice that Christ will bear the sins of *many*. That word in Greek, *polus*, means “a great number” or “high on a scale of intent” (Danker FW. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 3rd ed. University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 847,849).

So, while not all will accept His sacrifice after He returns again, clearly many will.

The reason that most people are not being called now is NOT because God is a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), but so that the most possible number of people can be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). While this goes against a lot of natural human logic, God who sees the end from the beginning (cf. Isaiah 46:10) has figured out that calling relatively few now will result in the most to ultimately be saved.

Please realize the concept that God does not allow some to understand is repeated in the New Testament where Jesus and the Apostle Paul state that this was hidden for all except the saints:

²¹ Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight (Luke 10:21).

²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. (Colossians 1:27)

There is a reason that this has been hidden. It is better that people NOT to be called now to receive the Holy Spirit, then to receive It and turn against God (Hebrews 10:26-27; Mark 3:28-29).

But there are some are being called now (see also the free online book: *Is God Calling You?*).

Both those called now and those who will have an opportunity later are part of the plan.

Peter wrote:

^{3:19} Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive **until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.** ²² For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ ²⁴ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. ²⁵ You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be

blessed.’ ²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

^{4:1} Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, ² being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (Acts 3:19-4:2).

Notice that the Bible makes clear that the idea of *the times of restoration of all things*, the *apocatastasis*, is not just a term limited to Acts 3:21 (where the Greek term for *apocatastasis* is actually once used), but that Peter is teaching that it is what God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began--essentially this is the theme of the Bible--how the God of love will offer salvation to all.

Notice that this time of restoration IS NOT YET here for all. But it will come to pass.

Peter was teaching that Jesus will be in heaven until “**the times of restoration of all things**” and that all the families of the earth would be blessed, and that this has to do with *the resurrection from the dead* (there were no chapter breaks in the originally inspired text). That time is when Jesus will return a second time, for salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

Also, related proof exists in the Old Testament as information in the Psalms seem to be related to what Paul wrote in Romans.

Note that the following prophecy which has not been totally fulfilled yet:

⁷ Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad (Psalm 14:7).

The above was not a reference to either Jesus’ first coming nor the Israeli nation forming in 1948. This is a reference to what will happen after Jesus returns.

Notice also that God promises to:

²⁸ pour out My Spirit **on all flesh**; (Joel 2:28)

Since God has not done that, He must therefore have to do that after some type of resurrection of all flesh.

Check out the following passages in Isaiah:

⁷ “For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. ⁸ With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” Says the LORD, your Redeemer (Isaiah 54:7-8).

² Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. ³ Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the

LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, **And nations who do not know you shall run to you** (Isaiah 55:5).

¹⁸ Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore **He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice**; Blessed are all those who wait for Him (Isaiah 30:18).

We see that Isaiah 54:7-8 shows that God has forsaken some temporarily, but that He will have mercy. Isaiah 2:2-3 specifically shows that all nations and many people will come to learn God’s ways. We see in Isaiah 55:5 that nations who did not know God will come to God! And Isaiah 30:18 shows God will wait and have mercy--because He is a God of justice!

Consider then the following:

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, **So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.** (Isaiah 61:10-11)

After referring to salvation the above shows that, in the future, all nations will praise God. All nations have not done that, but will after they understand the plan of salvation and righteousness.

Does anyone honestly feel that the general Protestant (and the general historical Roman Catholic) position that the majority who have ever lived (including those that are now living) are doomed to suffer forever?

Certainly, the God of love and justice did not come up with a plan that would fail for most of humankind.

Now when will they be saved?

They will be saved and have their sins forgiven after the return of Christ.

Notice:

²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins”. ²⁷ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. (Romans 11:26-27)

How else do we know that this does not occur until after Christ returns again?

Because “all Israel” has not yet been saved!

For Christ will come again out of Zion and “He will turn away ungodliness.”

Furthermore, notice that Paul is teaching that those to be saved include those who are now enemies concerning the gospel. Thus, even those among the enemies of the gospel will be saved.

How can that happen without a resurrection when these enemies will have a proper opportunity for conversion?

Hundreds of Scriptures

There are hundreds of scriptures that back up the CCOG's position that God is offering salvation to the predestined elect now, but will offer salvation to others later.

Most of the rest of this book will be focused on those scriptures.

A Sabbath-keeping church leader (not in CCOG) twice told me that he would like to believe that God has a plan to offer salvation to all who ever lived, but he was not familiar with scriptures that taught that.

I sent him an earlier draft of much of what follows.

Yet, despite his claim to believe the Bible, his church still does not teach this, though some of that church's members seem to understand at least parts of it.

Please, be like the Bereans of old who after hearing from someone they earlier did not know, "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Also, believe the word of God (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

While the scriptures shown in this book support apocatastasis (and they are grouped together for ease of emphasis), a reading of them clearly shows that God's plan of salvation as understood and taught by the CCOG has broad scriptural support.

2. Jesus Came to Save More than A Few

Did Jesus come only to save the relatively few elect like Calvinists and most other Protestants believe or nearly all who ever lived?

Certain Calvinist beliefs suggest (to this author at least) that no more than 2% of humans will be saved and since none deserved this salvation, that this shows that God is love. The Calvinists consign the rest of humanity to eternal torture which they feel is deserved, despite the fact that they teach that humans have no choice in getting or not getting saved.

Calvinists teach a concept called “limited atonement.” Here are statements from some Calvinists related to that:

Rev. John Sladen informs his hearers, “All that God designed to save he saves; but he actually saves some only, therefore, he designed to save only some of fallen Adam's children, for, if we consider God as infinite in wisdom, and of almighty power, there can not be a more rational way of arguing than from his acts to his designs.” This is similar to Symington's argument, who says in behalf of a limited atonement, “The event is the best interpreter of the divine intention.” Dr. Nehemiah Adams says, “Not one more, not one less will be saved than God purposes” “God never designed to save every individual; since, if he had, every individual would and must be saved; for his counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.” (Harris DF. CALVINISM: CONTRARY TO GOD'S WORD AND MAN'S MORAL NATURE. Harris, 1890)

Yet, Jesus said:

²⁸ Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

Doesn't that sound like Jesus has a plan to offer salvation to more than a limited atonement of the elect of this age?

Now, it is not just strict Calvinists that misunderstand. Here is something from Protestant writers Bert Thompson and Jim Estabrook wrote (**bolding** in source):

Paul wrote in Romans 2:12: “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law.” ...

When people are lost, it is due to their having **sinned against God**. ... Man is lost as a result of being afflicted with the horrible “disease” of sin—a condition that, unless treated, always is fatal (Romans 6:23). ...

Those who never have heard—and thus never have obeyed—the truth of the gospel message **will** be lost! (Will Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel Be Lost? Apologetics Press. <https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=423> Accessed 01/09/19)

It is appointed for all to die once, and after this will come the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Yet, those judged can attain mercy upon repentance (cf. James 2:13) and even those lost can be found (cf. Matthew 10:6-

13). Perhaps it should be pointed out that babies who die are not lost for sinning against God. Nowhere in the Bible does it state that those who never heard the truth of the gospel message will be lost.

It should be noted that Roman Catholic theology, while normally allowing for a higher percentage of people receiving salvation than what most Protestant and Baptist groups seem to teach, also tends to condemn most who ever lived to eternal torment and torturing.

Since Protestants have claimed *sola scriptura* as their doctrinal source, and Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox point to scripture as a doctrinal source, it is to the Bible that Greco-Roman-Protestants should go for the answer to that question.

Despite claim "*sola Scriptura*," Protestant scholars have tended to reason around various biblical passages. Notice one such misreasoning example related to Luke 3:6 (**bolding** in the version cited):

And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. The writer makes plain at the outset of Jesus' ministry that He had a universal message. (from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press).

Contrary to the interpretation above, Luke 3:6 DOES NOT state that *the message* is universal--it teaches that all flesh SHALL see the salvation of God. ALL will have an opportunity for salvation. That will be now for the elect and later for the rest.

Plus the message is not universal if most in the universe never hear it.

Luke 2:10, states:

¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

There is to be good tidings for ALL PEOPLE. All will have an opportunity for salvation (cf. Luke 3:6).

Jesus will be joy to all people who will accept Him.

Is there joy is in eternal torment and torture?

Of course not!

It should also be noted that the Bible does not teach some version of the Infernus from 14th century writer Dantes' *Divine Comedy* that many seem to think it does.

It is a human tragedy that pagan influence, secular writers, and non-biblical traditionalists have influenced most who profess Christianity to be misled that God's plan is not a source of joy for most, but tortuous suffering for vast majority of those who have ever lived.

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, Paul clearly shows that it does not matter how much anyone preaches, it is God who will give the increase:

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase.** ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but **God who gives the increase.**

Thus, it should be clear that God has a plan about who will respond to the preaching (as well as when).

The Gospels show that Jesus came to save the lost:

⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰ for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:9-10)

¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. (Matthew 18:11)

Notice that Jesus came to save the lost, not just a small amount of elect people. If the lost could not be saved, why would Jesus then have come?

Saving those who are currently lost is part of God's plan as Ezekiel 34:11-16 shows:

¹¹ 'For thus says the Lord God: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord God. ¹⁶ "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

Notice that the lost were driven away but God will bring them back and FEED THEM IN JUDGMENT. While Jesus sought to reach various ones who were lost, God did not gather the people from the countries the, hence this is for a future time.

Furthermore, doesn't "feed them in judgment" sound fairly positive?

In John 12:47, Jesus stated:

⁴⁷ And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world ...

The idea of Jesus coming to save more than a few is clearly being taught. Will He not succeed?

In 1 John 4:14, John states:

¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

Again, how can Jesus be Savior of all without offering salvation to all?

John 12:32, Jesus stated:

³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.

Is Jesus intending to draw all to Him in order to eternally punish most or to save most?

In order to draw all people, all must have an opportunity.

Related to John 12:32, Dr. Ilaria Ramelli wrote:

Ignatius of Antioch. In his *Letter to Christians in Smyrna*, § 2 of the middle recension, the salvation of all humans is mentioned as an effect of the work of Christ. “The Logos when his flesh was lifted up like the bronze serpent in the desert, attracted all *human beings* to himself, for their eternal salvation.” (Ramelli, p. 63)

If that portion of the middle recension has not been tampered with (and that is a legitimate academic question—there are debates about which parts his letters that Ignatius wrote and if others later added materials that he did not), it further supports the view that the plan of salvation is not limited to those considered to be the elect in this age—and that this was known in the 2nd century.

God is Love

The overwhelming theme of the Bible is that God is love and that because of His love He sent His Son, Jesus, so that humans would have the opportunity for salvation through Him.

In 1 John 4:8-11, 16, John wrote:

8 ... God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another ... 16 God is love ...

The overwhelming theme of the Bible is that God loves us and that God has a plan for us.

Many who profess Christianity accept this, but most still do not understand the truth about God’s plan.

Would not a God of love have a plan that results in nearly all humans being saved as opposed to most being permanently lost?

Love, salvation, and making eternity better are what God’s plan is all about.

John 3:16 and the Unsaved

In John 3:16-17, Jesus said:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him **might** be saved.

Notice that love was the motivator for God to send His Son to die so that the world may not be condemned but may be saved. This means that ALL MIGHT be saved (not that all will be saved). All will have an opportunity. God's plan is NOT limited to a few elect like many groups teach—God's plan includes the vast majority of human beings, which have often been categorized as the "unsaved."

Do you believe that Jesus died for the world or only a relative few? Would not a God of love have a plan that would result in nearly everyone being saved through the sacrifice of His Son?

A book from A.O. Hudson starts with the following the following:

"I have eight thousand souls in my parish whom I want to get to heaven. It seems to me at the present time only about two percent will for certain arrive there."

So wrote a Bristol vicar, despondently, in his parish magazine some years ago. One can sympathize with his solicitude for the salvation of those unheeding parishioners. But -- is this the right view of the matter? Is it true that the mass of unbelieving mankind is headed straight for Hell, or whatever the equivalent which modern times have substituted for the old-time fire and brimstone, and only a relatively few pious folk manage to escape to Heaven, as it were by the skin of their teeth? Are we to conclude that Divine wisdom and power is unequal to any more than this scanty fruitage of all that God has said and done since the dawn of history? Is this hopeless creed really what Christianity is all about? (Hudson AO. Future Probation In Christian Belief, Chapter 1. Bible Fellowship Union, 1975)

Note that the quote by the British cleric was he felt only 2% of attendees were likely to be saved. While he did not understand even that properly, the point to consider is that in his theology (where he only counted those who attended church, even though most people did not), apparently less than ¼ of 1 percent (and actually much less than that) would be saved.

Does God have a plan which results in the overwhelming majority of humankind not being saved?

Further down, A.O. Hudson's book states:

Belief in Jesus is necessary to eternal life. This is insisted upon by the New Testament and has been the conviction of the Church through the centuries. ...

That it is the intention of God to ensure that every man and woman of the human race attains that state of knowledge and has that power and opportunity which enables him or her intelligently to accept or reject Christ with full appreciation of the consequences is implicit in Scripture. ...

If all this be true, it involves the obvious difficulty that many -- the greater proportion -- of men have lived their lives, and died, without having so much as heard of the Name in which alone they may find life. Even among those nations to which Christ has been preached, there are the

mentally sick, those who have died before reaching years of discretion, and too, so many to whom Christ has been presented in so miserably distorted a fashion that by no stretch of the imagination could it be said that they have heard the Gospel. Despite all the efforts of all the missionaries and evangelists and Christian workers for two thousand years past, the fact must be accepted that the majority of men pass into death without in any sense of the word coming into vital contact with Divine truth or knowing anything of the issues which are eventually to determine their destiny. ...

What is the Divine purpose for these, and others like them of past generations, all creatures of God's hands, to whom he has given life and endowed with such marvelous potentialities?

Medieval theology had a simple answer. These are the non-elect, born outside the purpose of God and destined to be cast away as the wastage of his Creation. Later thought rejected this callous dismissal of the problem and a number of hypotheses have been suggested through the years and found acceptance in many quarters although they are hypotheses only without Scriptural foundation and in some cases are directly at variance with the basic principles of Scripture.

The greatest problem is concerned with those who never knew, the "unsaved heathen", those who never had Christ preached to them, which includes not only so many in all Christian ages but also the whole of the ancient world before Christ came. His Name obviously could not have been preached to these latter. All these, it is so often suggested, will be saved in their ignorance provided they have lived good lives according to their own light and understanding. Strangely, however, if at some time in their experience they should have Christ preached to them, and, in the exercise of that same understanding, fail to be convinced and so do not believe, they are lost forever, having rejected the opportunity. That is the orthodox Christian theology and constitutes much of the driving force behind missionary endeavor and evangelistic revival efforts. One might be pardoned for suggesting that if this be indeed the case and all that is necessary to salvation is a good and honest life, with or without Christ, it were better that the Christian evangel be not preached to the ignorant, for without it they would certainly be saved whereas with it the issue could be in doubt! (Hudson AO. Future Probation In Christian Belief, Chapters 1,2,3. Bible Fellowship Union, 1975)

God certainly does have a plan for those who have not heard (or properly heard) the message. And what is considered to be "orthodox Christian theology" has generally not understood it—and since there is an intelligent and loving Creator, He did not come up with a plan that illogically dooms people.

Notice the following:

¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:13-14)

Humans, including those not called in this age, have had dead works. The blood of Christ can cleanse the conscience, even of those who have died to serve the living God.

Consider that Jude 20-21 teaches:

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Notice that it is teaching that is the love of God that brings eternal life. Does God love everyone or only a few?

In Romans 8:37-39 Paul teaches:

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Does God have this type of love towards all or only an elect few? And if it is towards all, then will not God do whatever is necessary to give all a real opportunity for salvation?

God Can SAVE

Isaiah 59:1 shows:

¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

Thus, God's hand certainly can save!

Psalms 145:8-9 reminds everyone that:

⁸ The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. ⁹ The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.

Notice that it is God's tender mercies that *are over all His works*. Love is what God really is.

Since God is good to ALL, ALL will have an opportunity for salvation!

Does any thinking person really think that a merciful God created humans so that most would suffer endlessly throughout eternity?

God MADE humanity in order to give love and so that there would be more love in the universe and that eternity would be better (see also the free online, available at www.ccog.org, book: *Why Did God Make Anything?*).

God did NOT make humanity just so humans could worship Him in some vain act.

In Colossians 1:16, Paul states:

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Does Jesus intend for most of His creation to suffer eternally?

Is God not intelligent enough to plan a creation that will result in nearly all being saved?

In Romans 5:15-21, Paul states:

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶ And the gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even **so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Since Jesus' free gift is for all, will not all humankind have an opportunity to receive it? It is not a free gift if people do not properly know about it.

Since *by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous* certainly many does not mean a few.

For grace to reign, does this not mean that most will accept it?

Therefore, at least most must be offered it. But it will be ALL, not just most, that will be given the opportunity.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul states:

²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

All died in Adam, all will be made alive in Christ. All will have an opportunity for salvation, not just a few.

Now, let's look at the *Christian Standard Bible* translation of Romans 5:18-19:

¹⁸ So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. ¹⁹ So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.

Compare that to what 1 John 2:2 teaches:

² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Notice that John is teaching that Jesus was not just a propitiation (an atoning offering) for the elected Christians, but for the entire world.

Jesus was not an offering for the others in order for none of them to be saved. He was an offering for everyone!

Jesus Even Preached to Angels that Sinned

While some have taught that angels, once they have sinned, were permanently lost, Jesus even preached to them:

¹⁹ ... He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:19-21)

Some have been confused about when that happened, and came up with a view that is not biblical. As far as the New Testament goes, let's start with a statement from the late French Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie Danielou:

The Descent Into Hell ... This doctrine appears nowhere in the New Testament,¹

¹ So W. Bieder, *Die Vorstellung von der Hollenfahrt Jesus Christi*, p. 128

(Danielou, Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Translated by John A. Baker. The Westminster Press, 1964, p. 233)

Anyway, Jesus was dead and in the grave for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity upon incarnation (Philippians 2:7) and did not receive it back until He was resurrected (cf. John 20:24-29), so He was not preaching when He was dead.

As far as WHEN He preached to certain fallen angels, the idea is claimed to come from 1 Peter 3:18-20). So let's look at one view of that:

Jesus Christ was the same God who walked and talked with Moses in the wilderness — the same "I AM" (see Ex. 3:14) who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Paul makes this plain. "I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the [Red] sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.... For they drank from the same supernatural Rock which followed them, and the ['that,' KJV] Rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:1-4).

This same Personage in the Godhead presided over the Flood in Noah's day. Peter gives us the facts: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put. to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he [Christ] went and preached unto the spirits [demons] in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few,

that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:18-20, KJV). (Schroeder JR. Who Was Jesus? Good News magazine, November 1975)

The timeframe of the ‘descent’ was the time of Noah and that flood.

So, why bring any of that up here?

Professor Ilaria Ramelli felt that this was showing that God was willing to save others who sinned essentially as an ante-type of what would happen in the future (Ramelli, p. 42).

And while there are issues with her details about this (as she mistakenly believes Jesus is speaking to disbelieving humans), the reality is that yes, God does care enough to have a plan to reach those who have rejected Him as 1 Peter 3:19-20 demonstrates.

Consider also that God told Jonah to preach to the wicked city of Ninevah that their city would be overthrown, and while scripture does not show that Jonah told them to repent, they did repent and Ninevah was not then destroyed (Jonah 3:2-4). God “relents from doing harm” (Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:12).

God Will Do What is Right

Notice what Abraham declared in Genesis 18:25:

²⁵ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Certainly properly offering salvation to everyone is the right thing a loving God would do. Does your church believe that God will do right by all?

In Colossians 1:20, Paul states:

²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Notice that Jesus will reconcile all to Himself having made peace through His sacrifice. A sacrifice that will be made available to all.

Notice something from the Old and New Testaments:

⁶ “For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts. (Haggai 2:6-7)

³ “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! ⁴ Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.” (Revelation 15:3-4)

See that ***all the nations shall come and worship*** God. All nations have NOT already done so.

Notice also that the implication of verse 4 is that only very few will not glorify God's name.

John 5:21-22, Jesus taught:

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

Has your church judged those that even God the Father has not judged? Does Jesus want to give life to the many or to the few?

What does your church teach?

Should not your church teach that God is a loving God who has a plan that will offer salvation to all and that nearly all (probably over 99.9%) will accept Jesus' offer of salvation.

Did Paul teach that Jesus is the Saviour of all men or only a few?

⁵ ... Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

Notice that Jesus gave Himself as a ransom/Savior for ALL IN DUE TIME and this should be taught. Notice how the Berean Literal Bible translates 1 Timothy 2:6:

⁶ the *One* having given Himself *as* a ransom for all, the testimony in their own proper times,

Jesus is a ransom for ALL IN THEIR OWN PROPER TIMES. For some, the proper time is to be called now. For others, this is not the time and they will be given that opportunity later.

And that helps explain part of the following:

⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach. (1 Timothy 4:9-11)

God is the Savior of all—some in this age and others in the age to come.

Notice also two literal translations of what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:17:

¹⁷ Now to the King of the ages, the immortal, invisible, only God, be honor and glory to the ages of the ages. Amen. (B:B)

¹⁷ and to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only wise God, is honour and glory -- to the ages of the ages! Amen. (YLT)

God is King of all the ages—the one we are in as well as the age to come. Paul also taught that there was a “purpose of the ages” (Ephesians 3:11, BLB/YLT).

Wouldn't maximizing potential salvation be one of the purposes of the ages?

Jesus is able to save the uttermost as Hebrews 7:24-27 teaches:

²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Consider that Jesus is able to save the uttermost—those that are not now near to Him—that Jesus died for all and not just a small amount of elect.

Isaiah 25:6-9 teaches:

⁶ And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. ⁷ And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. ⁹ And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Notice that this feast is for all people, that the veil over all the nations will be destroyed, death will no longer occur, and salvation will come.

Psalms 145:21 teaches:

²¹ My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.

Now, while the Hebrew terms commonly translated as "all" do not necessarily mean every single one, certainly they mean at least the vast majority. The only way that most flesh shall bless God's name is if He has a plan that will give them an opportunity to understand His loving plan of salvation later.

Revelation 21:6 shows:

⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts..."

Does this sound like Jesus intends that salvation will be available to all or only a relative few?

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul teaches:

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Notice that Paul clearly teaches that Jesus has **died for all**. Not only a few elect (like the Calvinists essentially teach), not the relative few that accept Christ in this age (as most Protestant/Baptist/Evangelicals teach), not a minority of humankind (as most Roman Catholics have taught).

For Jesus to die for all, ALL must have an opportunity for salvation. And since God is all knowing, certainly He knows how to have a plan of salvation where the most possible will be saved.

The New Testament shows:

⁶ ... **all flesh shall see the salvation of God.** (Luke 3:6)

¹⁸ ... through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men (Romans 5:18).

The free gift of salvation will be offered to all who ever lived, with a relative few understanding the offer in this age, and everyone else in the age to come.

Does your church understand and teach this?

3. Salvation is Available When God Decides

Even though Jesus came so that all could be saved, He was not originally sent to *call* everyone when He was here as He taught in Matthew 15:24:

²⁴ "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Similarly, notice what He taught in John 4:22:

²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

And that this would CHANGE in John 4:23-24:

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

In Luke 1:68-75, notice what Zacharias was inspired to say after the birth of John the Baptist:

⁶⁸ "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, ⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, ⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, ⁷² To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Please stop, think, and consider that Satan (a word that means enemy or adversary) and other enemies have always been around, but that a time for all is coming where there will not be any enemies of the true faith (cf. Revelation 20:1-3). This simply has not yet been fulfilled, but will come to pass.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition calls Isaiah 30:8-17 the "Doom of incorrigible sinners."

Mercy

Yet, notice what God has recorded in Isaiah 30:18:

¹⁸ Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.

So, this section in Isaiah is NOT about the ultimate doom of sinners, but instead shows that God will wait that He may have mercy on them. These sinners were not so incorrigible that God gave up on them.

Furthermore, notice these passages:

¹³ Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted. ¹⁴ But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."

¹⁵ "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you ..." (Isaiah 49:13-15)

¹⁷ "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; (Obadiah 17)

God will not forget, though many act like He will. He will also have mercy. That should be comforting to all.

Mercy is so important, that the English term "mercy" is shown 282 times in the NKJV of the Bible and 289 in the Douay-Rheims Bible.

Notice, for one other example, how Jesus referred to it in Matthew 23:23:

²³ ... the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.

Mercy is one of the weightier matters of the law. It is more important than most realize.

It has been claimed that "The Mercy Seat of the Holy of Holies was the earthly representation of the very Throne of GOD in heaven" (Armstrong HW. Plain Truth, June 1967). The expression "mercy seat" is used 28 times in the Bible (NKJV). It is shown as a place that God speaks from (Exodus 25:22).

Does God have a mercy seat because He expects to mainly provide eternal condemnation at the white throne judgment of Revelation 20 like many seem to think?

Obviously, since there is a mercy seat (cf. Exodus 25:17-22; Hebrews 9:5), this is a clue that God plans to have mercy.

While judgment will happen in Revelation 20:11-12 and people will be found guilty (as "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" per Romans 3:23), it will not be eternal condemnation.

Why? Because, God will plead with His handiwork (Jeremiah 25:31) and mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

Is not that what mercy is for?

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines mercy as:

compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power

also: lenient or compassionate treatment ...

a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion

Furthermore, mercy is not just for those who are truly Christians in this age.

While God has mercy on those called now, God will have mercy on those not called to be firstfruits in this age.

But, this teaching is hard for many to understand now as Romans 11:30-33 teaches:

³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For **God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.** ³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

Notice that God's plan *has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.* Also notice that Paul is teaching that God's mercy and judgment is apparently not easy for most to figure out.

Is it someone's fault that they were born in an area that no one knew or taught Christ? Or if Christ was taught, He and God's plan were taught wrong?

God knew that most would not at first obey, but that He has a plan to have mercy on them.

Thus it should be clear that God INTENTIONALLY is allowing some to be disobedient now, so that they will get mercy later and that those called now (the firstfruits) will have mercy now.

And God has done this so that He might have **mercy on all**--this apparently could not have happened any better way. The only way for God to have mercy on ALL is for salvation to be *offered* to all in a manner they can properly comprehend.

Yet, these concepts are offensive to many.

Because of their traditions, miseducation, biases, and pride, many cannot accept that God is so merciful.

Many who followed Jesus were offended after He spoke and turned away from Him, despite seeing miracles (see John 6:1-66). Many will not believe what we in the *Continuing Church of God* point out that the Bible teaches--this includes most who claim to believe the Bible.

Yet, it is only those who intentionally reject God's mercy, who will be destroyed in the lake of fire, the second death (Revelation 20:14) to put them out of their misery (cf. Revelation 21:4).

Many Disbelieve

Reasons like disbelief are why God 'hardened Pharaoh's heart' (Exodus 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10;14:8).

Now Pharaoh actually hardened his own heart a couple of times first (Exodus 8:15,32) as well as at least once after God did (Exodus 9:34).

The reality is that Pharaoh was not in a place he would truly repent in that age.

God, however, had a plan that would be best for not only the Israelites, but also the Egyptians and ultimately Pharaoh himself.

The plan included the death of Egyptians (e.g. Exodus 14:8-9), whose hearts God also hardened (Exodus 14:17-18).

However, God did not view the loss of life of the Egyptians who followed Israel across the sea and got stuck and drowned (Exodus 14:26-28) as truly lost--as He knew His plans for all (Psalm 33:11) including specifically the Egyptians (Isaiah 19:19-25).

According to the prophet Samuel, Pharaoh and the Egyptians hardened their own hearts (1 Samuel 6:6) and Samuel urged that the people should not follow their example (1 Samuel 6:6-9).

Many harden their hearts now and, thus do not truly wish to be part of the firstfruits of God's plan. Yet, all who hear the truth should repent and want to be part of the Kingdom of God (cf. Acts 17:30, 28:23).

In Romans 8:23, Paul wrote the following:

²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

Recall that it was the Holy Spirit that was first given on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). And that was a type of the firstfruits of the Spirit.

Who are the firstfruits according to Revelation 14:4-5?

⁴ These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

But what about Jesus? Wasn't He a type of firstfruits?

Yes, He certainly was. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23:

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Christ is the fulfillment of the wave sheaf offering in Leviticus 23:10. He is the sheaf of firstfruits. He fulfilled that wave sheaf role when He ascended into heaven on the Sunday (the wave sheaf offering was done by the Levites on a Sunday) after He was resurrected (John 20:1,17).

Does not the concept of a firstfruits specifically imply that there will be later fruits? Also, the Day of Pentecost is also called, "the feast of firstfruits" in the Bible (Exodus 34:32). And even today, it pictures that God is only calling some now, but will call all others later.

In 2 Peter 3:9, Peter explains that God's schedule is not the same as some:

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Notice that God is longsuffering so that more will come to repentance.

Yet, many people seem to want to put God on their timetable.

In 1 Timothy 2:1-5, Paul wrote:

¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³ For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

Notice that God desires that all are to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Cannot God make His desire, His will, come to pass?

Since people have been blinded from the truth, and most have not heard it, God must give everyone an opportunity “to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Also notice that Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all--not just the relatively few elect--and His testimony will come to pass in time. Are some improperly judging before due time? Or, as the Berean Literal Bible says, before the “proper times”?

The firstfruits are called now, they are part of an earlier rain, but a latter rain will come:

³ Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth. (Hosea 6:3)

²³ Be glad then, you children of Zion,
And rejoice in the Lord your God;
For He has given you the former rain faithfully,
And He will cause the rain to come down for you —
The former rain,
And the latter rain in the first (Joel 2:23).

This rain that will come in the future represents a harvest according to James 5:7:

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Others will be called later and we should patiently wait for that time.

In Ephesians 1:10, Paul states:

¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.

Notice when He will gather all: *in the dispensation of the fullness of the times*. This is a prophecy that God will gather people to be Christians.

Does your church teach this?

If not, does it really understand what the Bible teaches?

Psalm 77:7-9 asks:

⁷ Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? ⁸ Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?

Since the intended answer to all those questions is “no,” then it should be obvious that a time for God to be favorable and pour out His mercies will still come.

God’s mercy will not cease forever. God is not going to have humans fry in torment for eternity.

In Isaiah 25:9, we see the following prophecy:

⁹ And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

Notice that these people are not yet saved. This is a time in the future. When is the time? Actually it is the time the veil over then nations will be destroyed (Isaiah 25:7)—then salvation will come to many!

Isaiah 40:5 teaches about something has not yet happened:

⁵ The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, **And all flesh shall see it together**; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

All flesh certainly has not seen the glory of the Eternal God together yet. But that will happen.

Psalm 65:1-2 shows that there is a time in the future that all flesh will come to God:

¹ Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; And to You the vow shall be performed. ² O You who hear prayer, **To You all flesh will come**.

God does hear prayer and understands that you want your loved ones saved.

Does your church really understand that ALL FLESH will come to God?

Psalm 22:27-28 teaches:

²⁷ All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD’s, And He rules over the nations.

Has this happened?

No.

In the 19th century, Joseph Marsh wrote:

Psa. xxii. 27. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."

This promise never has been fulfilled. It cannot have its fulfillment in the gospel age; for it is to terminate in the time of a great departing from God. Consequently, it must be fulfilled in the Age to come. The same truth is taught in Psa. lxxii. 11; lxxxvi. 9. (Marsh J. THE AGE TO COME OR GLORIOUS RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL THE HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN. ADVENT HARBINGER OFFICE, 1851, p. 98)

Furthermore, are not many of the original families of the earth dead as nearly all perished in the great flood?

Well, since they do not get resurrected until after the thousand years is finished (cf. Revelation 20:4-5), this is a time period after the millennium.

This is a prophecy for the future when all will truly have an opportunity for salvation.

Psalm 72:4-5 teaches:

⁴ He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor. ⁵ They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations.

Has this happened? Is this not for the future? Since this discusses "all generations" is it only for a millennium?

Some have asked how Philippians 2:12-13 will apply to those that are called later, so let's look at those passage:

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

God is working with even the uncalled in this age (cf. Psalm 33:13-15; Proverbs 16:9), though in a different way.

Furthermore, as many scriptures cited in this book show, people, at or after the time of the white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-13), will fear (e.g. Psalm 64:9; 67:7; 72:5)--and repentance will be required (Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:25-32). So, yes verse 12 will also apply.

And as far as trembling, Hosea 11:10-11 teaches:

¹⁰ “They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, Then His sons shall come trembling from the west; ¹¹ They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, Like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,”

In the future, they will loathe themselves as Ezekiel 20:43-44 shows:

⁴³ And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. ⁴⁴ Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for My name’s sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel,” says the Lord God.

Psalm 86:8-9 teaches:

⁸ Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; Nor are there any works like Your works. ⁹ All nations whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.

Since there would have been nations that died out during the flood and afterwards, how can this be unless God has a time in the future for this to occur?

Notice that while God currently lets the nations weary themselves in vain, Habakkuk 2:13-14 shows that eventually all will have knowledge of God:

¹³ Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

The fact that it is of God that they now do not know, clearly supports that God will offer salvation when He decides.

In Philippians 2:9-11, Paul states:

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notice that every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord.

How can they do that if they did not even hear the name of Jesus Christ in this life?

Now it is important to distinguish just acknowledging Jesus is the Christ does not grant salvation--even the demons know that (Acts 19:13-15; James 2:19). But certainly acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ is an important step and one that is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38-39, 4:10-12).

In Lamentations 3:31-33, Jeremiah teaches that God has a plan of compassion for those He has cast off:

³¹ For the Lord will not cast off forever. ³² Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. ³³ For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men.

God does not afflict willingly, but according to His mercies for the plan which will allow Him to show the most possible compassion.

So, does it not make sense that He has a plan of salvation to minimize affliction?

Jeremiah asks God something that He answers

¹⁹ O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things."

²⁰ Will a man make gods for himself, Which are not gods? ²¹ "Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the LORD. (Jeremiah 16:19-21)

God will cause those Gentiles who inherited lies to come to Him. God will at that time (after "the day of affliction") cause them to know Him. This simply has not yet happened, but will.

Also notice that this will be a time that people will realize that they have relied on false religious ideas of others (often called traditions—traditions that are not in conflict with scripture are normally fine—it is those in conflict, I am referring to).

Part of the reason that they inherited lies was that the vast majority of religious 'shepherds' are blind and ignorant themselves:

¹⁰ His watchmen are blind,
They are all ignorant;
They are all dumb dogs,
They cannot bark;
Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

¹¹ Yes, they are greedy dogs
Which never have enough.
And they are shepherds
Who cannot understand;
They all look to their own way,
Every one for his own gain,
From his own territory. (Isaiah 56:10-11)

Even many who have taken a 'vow of poverty' have shown themselves to be greedy in various ways.

Grace

Despite flaws of humanity, God is merciful as Paul states:

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that **in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace** in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Notice that His grace is to be further shown in the ages to come.

Has your church judged end of God's grace before the time?

Grace is unmerited pardon—God forgiving us. Grace is needed for humans, because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Here is a definition of *grace* from Christianity.com:

A shorthand for what grace is - “mercy, not merit.” Grace is the opposite of karma, which is all about getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve, and not getting what you do deserve.

Those who think that God will not give a real opportunity for salvation to all, because they all deserve condemnation, simply do not understand God's grace nor His plan.

In Titus 2:11, Paul states via the NKJV:

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Has the grace of God that brings salvation clearly appeared to all men yet?

No, of course not.

Thus, there is certainly a prophetic implication of this passage by Paul.

What about the expression “has appeared”? Does that mean that God's grace has been seen already by everyone?

No.

There is a mistranslation of word order.

Here is the literal word order with *Strong's* numbers:

2014.....1063..3588...5485 3588 2316. <9999 >..... 4992.....3956..... 444
hath appeared.. For.. the... grace... of... God..that bringeth..salvation.. to all.....men
(Interlinear Transliterated Bible. Copyright (c) 1994 by BibleSoft).

Thus, a more literal translation is that:

It has appeared that the grace of God brings salvation to all men.

Paul goes on to state that for those who now know, they need to living Godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:12).

The following translations of Titus 2:11 seem to convey this better than the NKJV:

¹¹ For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. (NLT)

¹¹ God has shown us undeserved grace by coming to save all people. (CEV)

God's grace is intended to save more than the elect in this age. All will be given an opportunity, an offer of salvation.

We in the CCOG believe that since God gave human beings freedom of choice, that this means that not all must be saved, but that all have an opportunity to be saved if they will accept it.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

For people to walk in the good works which God prepared, they need to choose to do so. They need to accept God's grace once they truly understand it.

That is also consistent with the following from the Apostle John:

³ Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. (2 John 3,9)

Free choice is alluded to above, and only those who will abide in the doctrine of Christ can have God.

Do Not Judge Before the Time

Jesus taught:

¹ Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:1-3)

Many seem to want to judge, write off, people that have not had a real chance as apparently worse sinners than themselves. That is an error (cf. Philippians 2:3).

Jesus also taught:

²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (John 7:24)

It is the word of God that is righteous (Psalm 119:123).

Since that is the case, notice that the Apostle Paul wrote:

⁵ Therefore **judge nothing before the time**, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Notice Paul wrote that the time of final judgment has not yet come. Notice, also, that God will be praised and that judgement is not be before the time when the Lord comes.

Why then do most professing Christians have a judgement that condemns most who have ever lived?

We in CCOG do not. But many others are "judging before the time" in opposition to what the Apostle Paul wrote.

In 1 Corinthians 15:28, Paul states:

²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Notice that this prophesy specifically states that a time is coming when all things will be subject to Him. This will be the time that all who have not had an opportunity will have an opportunity for salvation.

Revelation 21:3 teaches:

³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Notice that there is a future time when *they shall be His people*.

As the following verses show, the truth of God will be hidden until a certain time:

²⁶ For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. (Matthew 10:26)

²² For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. (Mark 4:22-23)

¹⁷ For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Therefore take heed how you hear. (Luke 8:17-18)

² For **there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known**. (Luke 12:2)

It should be clear to all that God has His time table for when He will have the truth known in order to call all. That time has not yet come.

It happens in the “age to come”:

³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matthew 12:32)

²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰ who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:29-31)

²⁹ So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.” (Luke 18:29-30:)

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Notice that **the only sin not to be forgiven in the age to come is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit**. This is further defined in Hebrews as knowing and willingly rejecting/neglecting the Holy Spirit, which is normally received after repentance and baptism during the church age (Acts 2:38).

The fact that almost all sins, including blasphemy against Jesus can be forgiven in the “age to come,” shows that even current sinners that deny Jesus now can still be forgiven after the resurrection.

The fact that many of the first shall be last and the last first (Mark 10:31) shows that there will be some called later in the age to come. The fact that the time all who blasphemed the Holy Spirit will realize that they are the only ones NOT forgiven in the “age to come” shows that all others can be.

God Forgives, Yet Part of this is a Mystery to Many

The Bible shows that God is willing to forgive all iniquities for those blinded who will respond to the truth:

⁸ Bring out the blind people who have eyes, And the deaf who have ears. ⁹ Let all the nations be gathered together, And let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, And show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; Or let them hear and say, “It is truth.” (Isaiah 43:8-9)

²⁵ “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. ²⁶ Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted. (Isaiah 43:25-26)

Notice the following parable in Mark 4:30-32:

³⁰ Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; ³² but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

Most simply do not understand that Jesus was teaching that although His kingdom would start off small, that eventually it would encompass the world--He was teaching that salvation would be available to more later than when He spoke.

In Ephesians 3:8-11, Paul mentions that he was going to be able to preach things hidden to some of the Gentiles:

⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of **the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God** who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In Colossians 1:26-28, Paul says basically the same thing:

²⁶ **the mystery which has been hidden from ages** and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

The mystery has to do with God's plan to offer salvation. God has had this plan since the beginning. It was HIDDEN from generations, hence there was no way that most could have had salvation prior to Christ. And it is still a mystery that most, even those who have actually read the whole Bible, do not know even today.

Jesus made it clear that the purpose of the parables was so that most would not be able to understand the MYSTERY and be converted today in Mark 4:11-12:

¹¹ And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know **the mystery of the kingdom of God**; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, ¹² so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'"

Part of that mystery has to do with a period of time after the millennium.

The Great White Throne Judgment and the One Hundred Year Period

The Bible tells of a time when the saints of the house of God—the Christians—will be resurrected, but that the rest of the dead will be resurrected later:

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

Satan will not be a problem during this one thousand years as he will be bound (Revelation 2:1-2). After that thousand years, he will be released for a little while (Revelation 20:3), but before the second resurrection he will be put into the “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:10).

The Bible then tells of a time called the great white throne judgment, which happens after the second resurrection:

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

So, the Bible tells of judgment for those not judged by God in this life. And that books would be opened. Yes, people will be found guilty of sin (cf. Romans 3:23), but remember that eternal life will be granted to sinners (Romans 6:23).

The Jews essentially believe that God has three classes of people, and three books. Here are comments from their Talmud:

R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Johanan: Three books are opened on New Year’s Day: one for the utterly wicked, one for the wholly good, and one for the average class of people. The wholly righteous are at once inscribed, and life is decreed for them; the entirely wicked are at once inscribed, and destruction destined for them; the average class are held in the balance from New Year’s Day till the Day of Atonement; if they prove themselves worthy they are inscribed for life, if not they are inscribed for destruction.

Said R. Abhin: Whence this teaching? From the passage [Psalms, lxi. 29]: “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and they shall not be written down with the righteous.”

We have learned in a Boraitha: The school of Shammai said: There are three divisions of mankind at the Resurrection: the wholly righteous, the utterly wicked, and the average class. The wholly righteous are at once inscribed, and life is decreed for them; the utterly wicked are at once inscribed, and destined for Gehenna, as we read [Dan. xii. 2]: “And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The third class, the men between the former two, descend to Gehenna, but they weep and come up

again, in accordance with the passage [Zech. xiii. 9]: “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; and he shall call on My name, and I will answer him.”

Concerning this last class of men Hannah says [I Sam. ii. 6]: “The Lord causeth to die and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up again.” The school of Hillel says: The Merciful One inclines (the scale of justice) to the side of mercy, and of this third class of men David says [Psalms, cxvi. 1]: “It is lovely to me that the Lord heareth my voice”; in fact, David applies to them the Psalm mentioned down to the words, “Thou hast delivered my soul from death” [ibid. 8].

Transgressors of Jewish birth and also of non-Jewish birth, who sin with their body descend to Gehenna, and are judged there for twelve months; after that time their bodies are destroyed and burnt, and the winds scatter their ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as we read [Mal. iii. 23]: “And ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet”; but as for Minim, informers and disbelievers, who deny the Torah, or Resurrection, or separate themselves from the congregation, or who inspire their fellowmen with dread of them, or who sin and cause others to sin, as did Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his followers, they all descend to Gehenna, and are judged there from generation to generation, as it is said [Isa. lxvi. 24]: “And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” Even when Gehenna will be destroyed, they will not be consumed, as it is written [Psalms, xlix. 15]: “And their forms wasteth away in the nether world,” which the sages comment upon to mean that their forms shall endure even when the grave is no more. Concerning them Hannah says [I Sam. ii. 10]: “The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.” R. Itz’hac b. Abhin says: “Their faces are black like the sides of a caldron”; while Rabha remarked: “Those who are now the handsomest of the people of Me’huzza will yet be called the children of Gehenna.” (Talmud - Mas. Rosh HaShana 16b, 17a. (Babylonian Talmud, Book 2: Tracts Erubin, Shekalim, Rosh Hashana, tr. by Michael L. Rodkinson, [1918], pp. 26-27).

Note: ‘R.’ stands for “rabbi” above.

Both the Bible (the COG position) and Jewish tradition state that the righteous have their names written in the Book of Life and that they will apparently be rewarded related to trumpets (Rosh Hoshana is what most Jews call the Feast of Trumpets). The Bible teaches that the resurrection of the saints will happen at the time of the seventh and last trumpet of Bible prophecy (1 Corinthians 15:5-53; Revelation 11:15-18).

The Bible (and the COG) agrees with the Jewish position that others (cf. Mark 10:30-31) will be also have their names in it later.

The Bible (and the COG) agrees with the Jewish position that the incorrigibly wicked will end up in Gehenna fire (cf. Matthew 10:28, YLT).

Jewish tradition also teaches that those that are not truly wicked (the intermediate) will not be saved or destroyed at that time, but that they will have a ten day period until the Day of Atonement (which they call Yom Kippur) for judgment.

Yet traditionally, Christians who understand a lot about this doctrine have pointed out a 100 year period of time as opposed to ten days (some, particularly in the 19th century, pointed to the millennium). This 100 year period happens after the second resurrection.

Isaiah 65:20-25 discusses a hundred year period will occur where people will have an opportunity to live God's way of life:

²⁰ There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. ²² They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. ²⁴ And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. (KJV)

During this 100 year period, people will know the truth. Humankind will prosper and be productive. The hundred year period gives those in the second resurrection who lived when Satan was present to have an opportunity like those who lived during the millennium. People's lifespans will be 100 years (Isaiah 65:20) to live under God's government and guidance. The purpose for that period is to give those who lived under Satan's rule the opportunity for salvation, without his deceptive influence.

Notice that Isaiah 65 is talking about physical people. While many will be well and properly converted by the end of the hundred years, unrepentant sinners will be accursed.

Thus, while most will accept the offer of salvation, some few sadly will wish to remain in their sins ("sin is the transgression of the law," 1 John 3:4, KJV).

Here is something from the Talmud related to Isaiah 65:

... at the end of days. And it is written: "There shall be no more an infant a few days old then...for the youngest shall die one hundred years old" (Isaiah 65:20). The Gemara answers that ... the verse there, in Isaiah chapter 65, is written with regard to gentiles, who will ultimately die after an extremely long life. The Gemara asks: And what do gentiles seek, i.e., why will they merit to live, in that era? The Gemara answers that the verse is referring to those gentiles about whom it is written: "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and aliens shall be your plowmen and vinedressers" (Isaiah 61:5). (Sanhedrin 91b. Sefaria, retrieved 03/06/19)

The Talmud admits that this period of time is related to the end of days.

Now, from a Christian perspective, the old Worldwide Church of God taught:

Vast Majority to Be Saved

1. Isaiah envisioned the final days of the judgment period when the resurrected billions will receive their call to participate in God's plan. How does he describe it? Isa. 65:20-25. ...

COMMENT: Imagine, if you can, the astonishment of those resurrected at the beginning of this period of judgment. Each person will be in his first moment of consciousness since death. At first, some may think they are in heaven, hell or purgatory. Most will simply be confused—bewildered. Nothing that many had been taught about an afterlife will turn out to be true. Faced with undeniable evidence that their old teachings and ways were false, they will be more willing to start over and be taught the truth. Untold millions who have not had any religious teaching whatsoever will start learning from scratch. Who will teach these thousands of millions? Millions of teachers who will have been born into God’s Family in the first resurrection and during the Millennium! Those resurrected to mortal life will then undergo a process of conversion similar to that of Spirit begotten Christians today. They will be taught God’s laws, and will learn they are guilty of sin and deserving of the death penalty. They will learn of God’s mercy, and that Christ paid the penalty for them, if they will accept His payment. The vast majority will repent. Upon repentance and faith in Christ as their personal Savior, they will be forgiven and God’s Spirit will be given to them. Then they, as Spirit begotten children of God, can begin growing spiritually—developing God’s holy, righteous and perfect character within them. Unlearning all the falsehoods learned in their first life and learning God’s true ways will take time. And building character will take time, because character can be developed only through time and experience.

3. How long will this period of judgment last? Isa. 65:20.

COMMENT: This verse strongly indicates that those resurrected then will live for 100 years, no matter how old they were when they died. Further, it indicates that the child (of God) will, at the end of this period, be changed—the fleshly cells of the body will die as the person puts on immortality. (This death of the physical cells of the body also occurs to Christians who are alive at Christ’s Second Coming. They, too, die—but do not sleep the sleep of death; they are in the “twinkling of an eye” changed to immortality.) The wicked sinner at the end of the 100 years will be under a curse—will die in the lake of fire.

During this time Christ and the resurrected saints will rule. The earth will be as peaceful and productive as during the Millennium. Children who died in the first 6,000 years will live again for 100 years, building character through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Older people who died without knowing God’s plan will also be resurrected to live for 100 more years. The ancient peoples Jesus mentioned in Matthew 11 and 12 would have repented if He had come to them in their day (Matt. 11:21). And they will repent and be given God’s Spirit when resurrected into a world that has been personally ruled by Jesus Christ for 1,000 years!

Your Bible shows that the vast majority of those who have ever lived will finally be born into God’s Family at the end of their coming period of judgment. God’s Master Plan of salvation for all mankind will then be complete.

Then the spirit-composed members of God’s great ruling Family can look forward to new heavens and a new earth—and to new and wonderful opportunities in ruling the universe under God our Father and Jesus Christ our elder brother! How wonderful and reassuring is the truth of our all-wise, loving and merciful Creator God! (Lesson 31 - Last Great Day - God’s Master Plan Completed! Ambassador College, 1984)

The idea of a judgment and opportunity then for reconciliation is not just a Christian/Church of God concept. Notice some additional Jewish ideas related to this:

In the verse in which Joel has God say: "I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of My people and My heritage Israel..." (4:2), ... at the resurrection of the dead for general judgment on the Last Day. (Eschatology. Jewish Virtual Library. © 1998 - 2018 American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise)

The year 70 constitutes a caesura in a sense that after that, apocalyptic restoration is awaited concretely. "Henceforth we are compelled no longer to hope for individual reconciliation for individual apostasy, but only the great reconciliation of the Last Day." (Schoeps HJ. Translated by David Green. *The Jewish-Christian Argument*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963, p. 132)

While we in CCOG believe that there were prophets and prophecies after 70 A.D. (e.g. Book of Revelation, Melito of Sardis, etc.), we agree that there will be the judgment and what could be called "the great reconciliation of the Last Day."

The 12th century Jewish sage Maimonides wrote to his pupil Hasdai ha-Levi:

In regard to your question concerning the (Gentile) nations, you should know that God demands the heart, that matters are to be judged according to the intent of the heart. There is, therefore, no doubt that everyone (from among the Gentiles) who brings his soul to perfection through virtues and wisdom in the knowledge of God has a share in eternal blessedness. (As quoted in Schoeps, p. 15)

Perhaps it should also be pointed out here, that it has been documented as far back as the second and fourteenth centuries, that some who professed Christ did understand that there was a one hundred year time period where those that had not been called would have an opportunity for salvation.

In the 2nd century, Irenaeus of Lyon wrote:

Ezekiel also says: "Behold, I will open your tombs, and will bring you forth out of your graves; when I will draw my people from the sepulchres, and I will put breath in you, and you shall live; and I will place you on your own land, and you shall know that I am the Lord." ...

Isaiah declares ... : "Behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people [a joy]; for the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Also there shall not be there any immature [one], nor an old man who does not fulfil his time: for the youth shall be of a hundred years; and the sinner shall die a hundred years old, yet shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them themselves; and shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them themselves, and shall drink wine. And they shall not build, and others inhabit; neither shall they prepare the vineyard, and others eat. For as the days of the tree of life shall be the days of the people in thee; for the works of their hands shall endure."

If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize [prophecies] of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions. (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 34, Verses 1,4, Chapter 35, verse 1. Excerpted from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885)

Irenaeus said that a physical resurrection and the 100 year period was real and should not be allegorized. Will you believe what the Bible teaches?

In other places, Irenaeus claimed to have learned some of his teachings from Church of God Pastor/Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna. Irenaeus and Polycarp are considered by the Greco-Roman-Protestants to be saints.

The idea of the one hundred year period did not die out.

When the Catholic inquisitor Bishop Bernard Guidonis was “disposing of heretics” in the 1300s, he noted that some believed the following would happen during the one hundred year period:

Again, they say that after Antichrist’s death these spiritual individuals will convert the entire world to the faith of Christ; and the whole world will be so good and benign that there will be no malice or sin in people of that period, except perhaps for venial sins in a few of them; and all things will be common as far as use is concerned; and there will be no one who offends anyone else or encourages another to sin. For there will be the greatest love among them, and there will be one flock and one pastor. According to some of them this period and condition will last for one hundred years. Then, as love fails, malice will creep back in and slowly increase until Christ is, as it were, compelled to come in universal judgment because of it. (BERNARD GUI: INQUISITOR’S MANUAL, Chapter 5. Translated by David Burr, History Department, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA).

While Bishop Guidonis may have had some of his information jumbled up, the fact is that there were who claimed that there was a special 100 year period that would end up having many converted, plus also sinners. That is consistent with what Isaiah 65:20 teaches.

Even the Protestant reformer Martin Luther admitted that some in the 16th century believed a version of the view that salvation was possible after death:

Apocatastasis ... Luther, writing on Aug. 18, 1522, to Hans von Rechenberg, who had asked him if there was any salvation for those out of Christ at death, states that a belief in the ultimate salvation of all men, and even of the devil and his angels, was held among the sect of Free Spirits in the Netherlands, one of whom was then in Wittenberg. They based it on Ps. lxxvii. 9, 10 and on I Tim. ii. 4. He then proceeds to refute it. Again Luther warns against this belief when writing to the Christians in Antwerp in 1525 (cf. de Wette’s ed. of Luther’s letters, ii. 453 and iii. 62). The doctrine was held among the Anabaptists ... another Anabaptist leader, Jacob Kautz (Cucius), in 1527 at Worms put as the fifth of seven articles he propounded for debate: “All that was lost in the first Adam is and will be found more richly restored in the Second Adam, Christ; yea, in Christ shall all men be quickened and blessed forever” (Zwingli, *Opera*, viii. 77; cf. S. M. Jackson, *Selections from Zwingli*, p. 148). (Schaff, Philip. *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. I: Aachen - Basilians, p. 211)

Some of those known as ‘Anabaptists’ were part of the Church of God, and those who were would have realized that while not all will be saved, all will be granted the opportunity for salvation.

Anyway, the idea that the Church of God long has taught that God would offer salvation to all is documented, not only in the pages of the Bible, but through some of the writings of some who opposed it. By using the Bible alone, there is no possible way that Martin Luther could refute it.

Now notice something from Lutheran Pastor David Ramirez:

Lutherans ... We do not believe that you get a "second chance" in the afterlife or on the Last Day.

People who die in unbelief go to hell. ... We are not to accuse God of sin by saying, or implying, that He wrongfully didn't give people a "fair chance" as if all men were not poor miserable sinners who deserve damnation. (Ramirez D. Engelder on "The Hades Gospel": Still Needed Today! September 2, 2017. <http://l-toms.blogspot.com/2017/09/engelder-on-hades-gospel-still-needed.html> retrieved 03/11/19)

It is NOT a second chance for those who never had a real chance. This is a mischaracterization of the doctrine that many who oppose it claim about it. Anyway, we in the CCOG are not accusing God of sinning when we explain that His word teaches that He is love, has a plan for all, and that His grace and mercy triumphs over judgment.

Consider something from an Eastern Orthodox bishop:

There is no terrorism in the Orthodox doctrine of God ... several of the Fathers have none the less believed that in the end all will be reconciled to God. It is heretical to say that all *must* be saved, for this is to deny free will; but **it is a legitimate hope that all *may* be saved. Until the Last Day come, we must not despair of anyone's salvation**, but must long and pray for the reconciliation of all without exception (Ware, 262).

So, the belief that the Last Day, which is considered the time of the White Throne Judgment, salvation may still be available is held by at least some of the Eastern Orthodox. The comment about "the Fathers" is referring to the fact that Eastern Orthodox saints and leaders taught it over a thousand years ago.

Scripture is clear that the white throne judgment happens after the resurrection of "the rest of the dead":

⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. ... ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. (Revelation 20:5, 11)

Thus, at least some of the Eastern Orthodox agree that there is a possibility of salvation after one has died in this age.

Orthodox Archpriest George Florovsky observed:

St. Gregory of Nyssa anticipated a kind of universal conversion of souls in the afterlife, when the Truth of God will be revealed and manifested with compelling evidence ...

God respects human freedom, as St. Irenaeus once said ... The Last Judgment remains a mystery. (Florovsky G. The last things and the last events. Originally written no later than 1979. Missionary

Leaflet # E95h Holy Protection Russian Orthodox Church. Los Angeles. Editor: Bishop Alexander (Mileant) http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/last_events_florovsky_e.htm#n3 viewed 06/07/09).

Orthodox priest Thomas Hopko stated:

There is no clear dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church on death and what happens when we die. ... Furthermore, there are questions about the soul after death and the intermediate state (i.e. the period between when we die and the world's end). (Life after death... Mysteries beyond the grave. Transcript of a talk given in Brisbane Australia during October, 1999)

Dr. Amir Azarvan wrote:

The orthodox have little assurance concerning the age to come. They do, however, have a profound hope in the "resurrection from the dead ... (Azarvan A. Re-Introducing Christianity: An Eastern Apologia for a Western Audience. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016, p. 185)

Orthodox eschatology (prophetic teaches) remains a mystery to the Orthodox as they tend to admit that they do not understand much of it—but at least various of them do realize that God's plan of salvation is not limited the way that most Protestants seem to believe that it is.

Now, if the Eastern Orthodox observed all the biblical holy days, including the Last Great Day, God's plan of salvation would not be such a mystery to them (for some details, check out the free online book: *Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?*).

4. Will God's Will Be Done?

Will God's will be done?

In Ephesians 1:11-12, Paul wrote:

¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Two points. The fact those that *first* trusted in Christ were predestined shows that there will be those that will come who were not first. Also notice that they were first called *according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will*.

Is not His will that all will have an opportunity to be saved? Will God's counsel stand?

Proverbs 19:21 shows that God's counsel will stand, despite traditions of men:

²¹ There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel--that will stand.

It matters not if humans have many plans, it is God's plan that will succeed.

²⁹ Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Because God realized this, He had a plan for humankind.

In Isaiah 46:10, God states:

¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

Notice that God had a plan from the very beginning and His counsel will stand. Also notice that God says that He will do all His pleasure--is not His pleasure to share His love to all?

In John 8:29, Jesus taught:

²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

Does it please the Father that most will be condemned or that most will be saved through Jesus?

Psalm 135:6 teaches:

⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.

Does it please the God of love to offer salvation to all, to save nearly everyone or only a few?

Jesus said He came “to give His life a ransom for many” (came to Matthew 20:28).

God’s plan is to provide for pleasures forever:

¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

Consider now that Ezekiel 18:32 teaches:

² For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore turn and live!

Notice that God clearly wants people to live. Would He then have devised a plan that results in the vast majority of humans facing the second death? He would not have and did not.

Hebrews 9:26-28 teaches:

²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Notice that it was the plan since the foundation of the world that Jesus would be slain for the many. Not only the few. God knew that humans would abuse the freedom of choice He gave them, therefore He had a plan. Plus, notice that people are appointed to die (“the wages of sin is death” per Romans 6:23), hence they will have guilt for sin, but that afterwards is the judgment and that Jesus is coming again for salvation.

John 17:1-2, Jesus taught:

¹ Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

Has the Father only intended to give Jesus a few or the many?

What does your church really teach?

In Acts 2:21, the Apostle Peter taught:

²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.

God’s will and His plan of salvation will come to pass.

5. The Only Ones Saved Now Are Those Who Accept the Call Now

God's plan was not to try to save all who lived *during this age*.

Jesus taught that the true church would be a "little flock" (Luke 12:32), hated by the world (Matthew 10:22), and persecuted (Matthew 10:23).

He also taught only a few would find the way to eternal life in this age (Matthew 7:14; 20:16).

The Apostle Jude indicates that the number of saints was relatively small (Jude 14), while the Apostle Paul called the small elect group a "remnant" (Romans 11:5, NKJV). It is a relatively small number:

⁵ ... there is a small number left of those whom God has chosen because of his grace. (Romans 11:5, GNB)

And the New Testament is clear that God has to do the choosing (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) and the calling (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 12:3; see also the free online book: *Is God Calling You?*).

Notice that only a few are chosen now as in Matthew 20:16, Jesus teaches:

⁶ "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Revelation 17:14 shows that Christians are to be called, chosen, and faithful:

¹⁴ ... He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

Luke 12:32 shows that the number of the faithful, until God's kingdom is given, will be small:

³² Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The above was NOT just a message to Jesus' then disciples as some commentators have taught, but to the church as scriptures point out that the church is the flock (e.g. John 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3).

Firstfruits to be Followed by the Full Harvest

The *Continuing* Church of God teaches that God is only calling a relatively few during this age with the Day of Pentecost (also called the Day of Firstfruits, Numbers 28:26) partially explaining this:

¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).

It was not God's purpose that His true Church grow into a great, powerful organization in this age that would "Christianize" the world by combing biblical writings with human philosophy and traditions.

During the church age, God's true Church was to remain a "little flock" (Luke 12:32) as a "witness" (Matthew 24:14) until the time of "the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:17-21) as God will later save most of humankind--both physical and spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28-29; 11:26-32).

The world does not realize how few real Christians that there are.

Yet, the biblical teaching of FIRSTfruits, presupposes a later LARGER harvest.

But why not call everyone now?

Because it is better not to be called now than to turn against that calling.

Notice something that Solomon was inspired to write:

¹ Walk prudently when you go to the house of God ...

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed — ⁵ Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

⁶ Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? (Ecclesiastes 5:1, 4-6)

When someone becomes a Christian, they are essentially taking a vow. If they are not truly able to endure (Matthew 10:22), they should not become one.

Consider also that the Apostle Peter taught that Christians are judged now:

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17a)

This is one reason that not all are called now—not all are willing to bear the effects of that judgment now. It is better not to be called now than to turn against that calling (cf. 2 Peter 2:21).

Peter also taught:

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For **it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.** (2 Peter 2:20-21)

Since God wants all saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and would not want humans to commit the unpardonable sin (cf. 1 John 5:16), this explains why only few are chosen in this age (Matthew 20:16) while nearly all others will be forgiven in the age to come (Matthew 12:32).

This differs greatly from much of what passes for mainstream Christianity as the Catholics and Protestants often teach that most who ever lived are such horrible people that God will torture them for all eternity.

God's Holy Days

God is not calling everyone now—but has a plan to give all an opportunity for salvation. For the time will come that, “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

This plan is actually laid out in the biblical holy days.

Briefly, starting with the sacrifice of Jesus at Passover for the forgiveness of our sins Christians are then to strive to live ‘unleavened’ lives (Days of Unleavened Bread).

The Feast of Pentecost, referred to as the Day of Firstfruits (Numbers 28:26) and Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) in the Old Testament, pictures firstfruits of the Spring harvest. This helps show the calling of the elect as the firstfruits in this age.

The relatively long time gap between the Day of Pentecost (third month of the biblical calendar) and Feast of Trumpets (seventh month of the biblical calendar) helps picture the church age that we are now in.

The Feast of Trumpets, itself, helps show that God will pour out His wrath upon the world, Jesus will return to establish God’s Kingdom, and the first resurrection is coming.

The Day of Atonement shows that Satan the devil and his role in our sins is real, but also that his deceit will not exist in the millennial Kingdom. It also helps show that Jesus’ sacrifice was not just for the called in this age, but for others who were to be later called.

The Feast of Tabernacles helps to picture the millennial kingdom of God on earth.

Last Great Day, also sometimes known as the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, points to the realization that God will offer salvation to all when parts of God’s plan are revealed and made available to all.

Together, the Feast of Tabernacles and the ‘Last Great Day,’ are also referred to as the Feast of Ingathering in the Old Testament (Exodus 23:17; 34:22), pictures the great Fall harvest, where others will be called (cf. John 7:37-38). For more information on the Holy Days and God’s plan of salvation, check out the free online booklet, *Should You Keep God’s Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?*

If the world’s churches would have continued to keep the biblical Holy Days like the original Christians did, they would have understood much more about God’s wonderful plan of salvation. They would have been better able to understand that God is not desperately trying to save everyone now!

Only Few Find the Way Now

Currently in this age, most in the world are cut off from God, other than those God reserved to Himself the right to work with selected individuals now. Those are called the elect. During this 6,000-year stage of His plan, they are called to carry out special assignments, including to be prepared to assist after the first resurrection. More on God’s calling is available in the free online booklet, *Is God Calling You?*

Only a few will find truly Christ now as Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:13-14:

¹³ Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Remember that this is the same Jesus who came to save more than a few. And He will, not in this age save the vast majority (as there will only be a few now), but in the age to come as few will remain faithful in this age.

Would a loving God make the way so difficult that few would ever be able to be saved?

No, of course not!

God made it difficult in this age so that the vast majority of people who ever lived could be saved. That is the plan.

In Luke 13:29-30, Jesus taught that many who will be first come from places (like Asia in the east, Russia in the north, Africa and Latin America in the south, plus all the islands) that will end up being first in the Kingdom of God:

²⁹ **They will come from the east** and the west, from **the north** and **the south**, and sit down **in the kingdom of God.** ³⁰ And **indeed there are last who will be first**, and there are first who will be last.

Throughout history, most who claimed Christianity came from what has been commonly called the west—the Western Hemisphere and Europe. Although there will be people from the west, notice that they are no more prominent than those from the other regions.

How does your church understand this?

We in the Philadelphia remnant of the Church of God, specifically in the *Continuing* Church of God, understand that God will offer salvation to everyone either in this age or the age to come and even those in nations without many Bibles will respond.

Notice also Zephaniah 2:11:

¹¹ Yahweh will be fearsome to them, for he will scatter all the gods of the earth, and they will bow down to him, each from his own place -- all the islands of the nations. (NJB)

¹¹ The Lord will be awesome to them, For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; People shall worship Him, Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations. (NKJV)

God has a plan for those who worshiped pagan gods.

Now, partially because of improper teachings from major faiths that claim Christianity, an Islamic website claimed:

Unlike Jews and Christians, Muslims believe that on Heaven (Paradise) is accessible to believers from all nations (Islam for Christians. The Last Day according to Judaism, Christianity and Islam (2/2), December 28, 2016).

But Christians faithful to scripture do teach that what Muslims may consider to be “paradise” is accessible to all nations. Notice what the New Testament shows:

⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)

Notice that this is telling about all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.

Not All Called Now

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Paul teaches that God planned to call the elect now from the beginning:

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 11:1-5, Paul shows that while God has not cast away his people forever, He only has called a remnant now:

¹ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

A remnant, at this present time, according to the election of grace is not a relatively large amount. Yet, Zechariah 10:6 shows:

⁶ “I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, Because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;

How can people be as though they were not cast aside if they will not have an opportunity for salvation? These also would include those who were cast off in Hosea 9:16-17.

Mark 4:33-34 shows that Jesus only explained what He meant to a few:

³³ And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

Why?

John 12:37-40 shows that many cannot believe, even though they saw Jesus' miracles, because they have been blinded:

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

³⁹ Therefore **they could not believe, because** Isaiah said again:

⁴⁰ **“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,** So that I should heal them.”

Therefore, the Bible is clear that people were blinded so that even when they saw the signs from Jesus they could not be converted in this age. This is because this was not the age for most to be saved as God's plan, which involves the age to come, will result in the highest possible percentage of people being saved.

Also notice Job 17:4a and Luke 13:24:

⁴ For You have hidden their heart from understanding ...

²⁴ Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Some, including some who wanted to know, have been prevented from understanding!

There is No Partiality with God

Is God partial?

No, there is no partiality with God as Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, and Acts 10:34 show:

¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

⁹ ... there is no partiality with Him.

³⁴ In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

Hence, ***there must be a plan for the rest!***

A plan for those NOT called and chosen in this age as God is NOT partial, nor does He love them any less.

Consider that this impartial One is “one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:6).

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

Jesus taught that fathers are to give their children good gifts (Matthew 7:9-11).

Will not God the Father of all human beings at least offer the gift of salvation to all of His children?

While referencing those called now who have the “grace of God” (2 Corinthians 9:14), the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Is it only those called now who can have that gift?

No.

¹⁵ But *should* not the free gift be even as the offense *was*? For if by the transgression of the one man many died, how much more did the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which *is* by the One Man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many?

¹⁶ And *should* not the free gift *be* like that which came by *the* one who had sinned? For on the one hand, judgment *was* by one unto condemnation; but on the other hand, the free gift *is by one* to *the* justification of many offenses.

¹⁷ For if by the offense of the one man death reigned by the one, how much more shall those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life by the One, Jesus Christ.)

¹⁸ So then, even as by the one transgression condemnation *came* unto all men, in the same way also, by the one act of righteousness *shall* justification of life *come* unto all men. (Romans 5:15-18, AFV)

Notice also the last verse above as shown in the Berean Literal Bible:

¹⁸ So then, just as through one trespass, *it is* unto condemnation to all men, so also through one act of righteousness *it is* unto justification of life to all men. (Romans 5:18, BLB)

Justification of life cannot come to all humans unless they are given an opportunity.

But how?

Consider that Isaiah 9:2 is clear that those that walked in darkness will see the light:

² The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

Notice that Isaiah 42:16-18 teaches that and shows this includes those who had followed idols:

¹⁶ I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them. ¹⁷ They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who

trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, 'You are our gods.' ¹⁸ "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see.

Jeremiah 6:10 further shows that many simply cannot hear God's message:

¹⁰ To whom shall I speak and give warning, That they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, And they cannot give heed.

Thus, not only can some NOT SEE, some apparently CANNOT GIVE HEED.

Is God Fair?

Luke 8:9-10 shows that God only wanted few to understand now:

⁹ Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" ¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that

'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'

Is that fair? Is God fair?

Well, the God I worship is fair and does have a plan for those who are not called in this age.

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Why has God permitted 6,000 years of human woe and suffering?

War, famine, pestilence! Poverty, inequality, hunger, want! Sickness, disease, suffering, death!

Crime, graft, dishonesty, corruption! Insanity, degeneration, decay! Unhappiness, fear, wretchedness and woe!

How, so many are asking, can a supreme, all-powerful God of LOVE permit such human woe?

Why is He permitting civilization itself to crumble?

Is God FAIR?

Listen! Some are saying, "God isn't fair!" - or, "Is there a God, after all?"

But what do you suppose people would say if God took away their right to think and do as they please? For God could never stop this awful carnage without FORCING people to act according to His will - denying them a free will of their own!

It is man's ways, so contrary to God's ways, that have brought on this unhappy state. And they have brought on all the world's sorrows and anguish in spite of the pleadings of God. He says, "Your ways are not my ways" (Isaiah 55:8).

God's ways, had they been followed, would have led inevitably to peace, happiness, prosperity and joy. God always has revealed to humanity His ways. Always He has pleaded with the human family.

Suppose God had taken the only alternative. Suppose He had FORCED human beings, against their wills, to have lived according to His laws?

Can't you almost hear the defiant, rebellious, stiff-necked human race indignantly screaming at the Almighty, "You can't cram your religion down my throat!"

For it is a matter of religion. Can't we see that, had God followed that course, more than ever mankind would have shouted, "GOD ISN'T FAIR!"

For 6,000 years men and women have lived in defiance of God's laws. Had God denied them this right to be wrong, they would have accused God of injustice, demanding freedom to follow their own ways.

God's plan has for its purpose the creating of perfect CHARACTER in beings that are separate entities from God, yet members of the very Family of God. Character cannot be created automatically by fiat - it must be developed through experience! (Is God Fair? Good News, June-July 1985)

Notice that God says that some disagree, but that His ways are fair:

²⁵ "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, **is it not My way which is fair**, and your ways which are not fair? ²⁶ When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. ²⁸ Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not **My ways which are fair**, and your ways which are not fair?

³⁰ "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live! (in Ezekiel 18:25-32)

¹³ When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

¹⁷ Let the children of your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' But it is their way which is not fair! ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. ¹⁹ But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. ²⁰ Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways. (Ezekiel 33:13-20)

Notice that being righteous by human standards will not save anyone, yet even the repentant wicked can be saved! Since God is fair AND since He is not a respecter of persons AND since He is only calling some now AND has allowed others to be blinded now, it should be obvious that He has a plan to call others later.

God is just:

²¹ ... And there is no other God besides Me,
A just God and a Savior;
There is none besides Me.

²² "Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:21-22)

God is a just Savior. He is fair. He has a plan that will work best for all the ends of the earth.

Ultimately, even people who were obviously opposed to Him will come:

²⁴ Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.
To Him men shall come,
And all shall be ashamed
Who are incensed against Him. (Isaiah 45:24)

So, even people who have been quite angry with God will come to Him.

In Matthew 13:10-17, like passages in Mark and Luke, Jesus explains that parables were spoken so that only some will understand now, and that this is to prevent some from understanding and being spiritually healed now:

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;
¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

¹⁶ “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; ¹⁷ for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Notice that Jesus said many wanted to know, but were not allowed to know. This was foretold by Isaiah and this incident is discussed in three of the gospels. God wanted this repeated enough so that those who were willing to accept the call would be able to clearly understand that Jesus spoke in parables so that the vast majority would not understand. Peoples’ hearts have grown dull and few are willing to fully follow God and take the steps to learn truths that conflict with what they prefer to believe.

Because God is a God of love, the reason not all have had all explained clearly appears to be because many, if they truly understood, would be unfaithful in this age, and become incorrigible. This looks, biblically, why only a relative few are being called now.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 Paul explains part of why some are not being called now:

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

God does not want those who are called to think that this makes them superior to those who will be called later (cf. Mark 10:31).

Since God is intentionally not calling certain ones now, do you believe He intentionally has doomed them to eternal torment?

Consider that even those God calls in this age lived as enemies to Him:

¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:10-11)

Does God only arbitrarily reconcile with certain enemies now?

The Bible, in Ezekiel 14:23, is clear that God does things for a reason:

²³ And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it,” says the Lord God.

God has a reason for everything and that should be comforting to all.

God has a plan of reconciliation for the world and not only those called in this age:

¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

The true Christian ministry teaches the word of reconciliation and that God is reconciling the world to Himself. What is happening to humanity now will help nearly all see the need for reconciliation with God in the age-to-come.

Jesus declared that humans on their own cannot enter the kingdom of God:

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:5-7)

²³ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (In Matthew 19:23-26)

At this stage, disciples like Peter did not fully understand how God would save most. Yet, they also clearly felt that God had to have some type of plan (which Peter knew no later than shortly after the resurrection of Jesus, Acts 3:19-21).

In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter teaches:

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light".

Ephesians 1:4-6 Paul teaches:

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

While some are predestined to be called in this age, the rest of humanity has NOT been predestined to remain lost.

Since God's plan is according to the "good pleasure" of His will, obviously this has been done in a way that is best for all.

6. God Does Not Hold People Accountable for What They Have Not Been Able to See

In 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul states:

³ ... no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, no one can be saved unless God gives an opportunity through the Holy Spirit.

Is God intending to condemn those that had no chance?

In John 6:44, Jesus clearly taught:

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

Similarly in John 6:65, Jesus taught:

⁶⁵ "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

God the Father must call for any to come to Jesus.

But God has not called all now.

Certainly, a loving God understands that and does not condemn those that do not know or are not able to see.

In 1 Timothy 1:13, notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul said he attained mercy because he persecuted Christians ignorantly. The same will be true for billions and billions of others.

Luke 12:48, Jesus taught:

⁴⁸ ... For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required ...

In John 15:22, Jesus taught about some of His opponents:

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. (John 15:22)

Thus, if they did not understand the message, according to Jesus they would have an excuse for their sin.

In John 9:41, carefully consider what Jesus said:

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin..."

Notice that Jesus specifically teaches that those that are blinded to the truth have not in some way permanently sinned.

Furthermore, the Apostle Peter taught the same thing in Acts 3:17-19:

¹⁷ "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ...

Thus, even those who were part of killing Jesus did it in ignorance and can be saved!

And notice the following about salvation:

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." ³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:36-39)

¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:13-15)

Thus, people MUST know of and accept Jesus, as well as repent, to be saved. They also need to hear that message preached.

Yet, notice the following:

Even some two thousand years after the Great Commission, more people in the world have **not** heard the gospel than **have** heard it. The secret things do belong to God, but Christians and non-Christians alike cannot help wondering about the justice as well as the compassion of a God who assigns to eternal torment people who, for reasons beyond their control, never heard about fellowship with him through Jesus Christ. (Warren V. *What the Bible Says about Salvation* 1982, pp. 104-105, as cited in Estabrook J and Thompson B. *Will Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel Be Lost? Apologetics Press :: Reason & Revelation*, June 2001 - 21[6]:41-46).

So, what about those that have not heard nor rejected the true gospel?

Consider the following:

We do believe that every person will have an opportunity to repent, and that God will not exclude anyone because he happened to be born at the wrong place and at the wrong time. (McDowell J, Stewart D. *Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask About the Christian Faith*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1986, p. 138)

That belief is correct.

God is not going to save people who do not know Christ or who reject the true Christ, but neither will He condemn those that did not properly hear and understand about Jesus either. And this is the case with billions upon billions of human beings.

So, since according to Jesus the blind have an excuse and most who ever lived have not ever even heard the true gospel, then there must be a time coming when salvation will be offered and those who could not see would no longer be blind.

Isaiah 29:9-10, God teaches that He has closed the eyes of many:

⁹ Pause and wonder!
Blind yourselves and be blind!
They are drunk, but not with wine;
They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink.
¹⁰ For the Lord has poured out on you
The spirit of deep sleep,
And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.

And because of that they cannot understand, even when they try, as the verses that immediately follow show:

¹¹ The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please."

And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."

¹² Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please."

And he says, "I am not literate." (Isaiah 29:11-12)

Perhaps I should add here that because of the above, Isaiah 29:14 and 24 teach that:

¹⁴ I **will again** do a marvelous work Among this people ...

²⁴ **These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, And those who complained will learn doctrine.**

Notice that God will again do a marvellous work. If you are Protestant or Catholic, please ask yourself when and how the prophecy about "those who erred in spirit will come to understanding" is going to be fulfilled unless God has a plan to offer salvation after the resurrection?

Remember that the Apostle Paul was even prevented from preaching the gospel in certain areas as Acts 16:6-7 shows:

⁶ Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

¹⁰ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Those people in Asia (Minor) were denied an opportunity then.

But, they and others will get this opportunity later!

God is not a "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34, KJV) and He did not do this because He loved the Macedonians more than those in Asia Minor.

Isaiah 44:17-18 reveals that God has prohibited idolaters to have proper understanding, but in verse 22 He indicates they will be forgiven:

¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" ¹⁸ They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand...²² I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.

Thus, is God going to permanently condemn those who worship idols for what He has not let them understand?

Protestant theology tends to say yes.

Those in the *Continuing* Church of God say no. Unless the idolater has committed the unpardonable sin (which is unlikely) they will be judged as other uncalled people are.

Acts 17:29-30 teaches:

²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked ... now commands all men everywhere to repent.

So even though God does want repentance from all (cf. Luke 13:3), notice that He overlooks idolatry and things done in ignorance.

Isaiah 45:20 teaches:

²⁰ They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save.

Notice that the Bible is clearly teaching that idolaters do not have knowledge. They are blind.

Hence, the billions throughout history in Asia and Africa (and elsewhere) are not condemned to suffer forever for following practices they really do not understand.

Isaiah 28:10-13 shows that the Bible is only understood by looking here a little and there a little and that the way the God speaks to most people was intended for them to NOT understand:

¹⁰ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." ¹¹ For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, ¹² To whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear. ¹³ But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

How does your church explain the above? Many dismiss what it is saying.

But can you understand that people were not supposed to easily be able to understand the plan of God now?

Psalm 33:13-15 shows that God fashions (probably through a combination of genetics and environmental factors) **everyone**:

¹³ The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. ¹⁴ From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; ¹⁵ He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.

So are people totally responsible for what God fashioned?

Would a God of love condemn them to eternal torment?

Proverbs 16:9, similarly to Psalm 33, teaches:

⁹ A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Is not God wise enough to direct sufficient steps such that nearly all (for He allows free will) who ever lived will be saved?

Notice also:

²⁴ A man's steps are of the Lord; How then can a man understand his own way? (Proverbs 20:24)

So, there are things people do not understand, but since the steps are from God, certainly God is fair.

Consider that 1 John 5:19 teaches:

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

God has allowed the world to be held captive by Satan.

This is consistent with what 2 Timothy 2:24-26 teaches:

²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Jesus came to deliver the captives and to help the spiritually blind:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Satan has held the world captive through deceit. Notice also what Revelation 12:9 teaches:

⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world;

Notice that the whole world has been allowed to be deceived. They have not intentionally chosen the wrong.

2 Corinthians 4:3 teaches:

³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost (KJV).

While Calvinists and others misunderstand this verse, consider that just because someone is lost does NOT mean that they cannot be found!

2 Corinthians 4:4 teaches about those:

⁴ whose minds **the god of this age has blinded**, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

So, right now the gospel is hid—during this age—and some now are lost as they have been blinded from the truth (to learn more about the gospel, check out our free book, available online at www.ccog.org, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*). Paul also calls our time “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4), which implies a better age to come.

Would a just God who allowed Satan to blind the world so that it could not see the truth of the Gospel not have a plan to later call those who are now lost?

The Bible clearly teaches that two ages will be coming where Satan will NOT be around (Revelation 20:1-3, 10), hence people will have an opportunity for salvation without being under the sway of Satan.

Revelation 13:14-17 teaches that Satan is not the only deceiver, that certain religious leaders deceive as well:

¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Hence, God will even allow miracles to be performed by one who will deceive the world and force *all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.*

Does not God love these people?

Does His plan exclude them?

Notice that the Bible, in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, shows that there will be many religious leaders who appear to look like true ones:

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Do you not think that there is a reason that God allows Satan and his ministers to deceive now?

Could it be because an all-knowing God will have “all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28)?

And that despite mistakes those not called now make, that God will make it work out later?

Related to that consider Ecclesiastes 9:1a:

¹ For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God.

God has a plan for ALL.

Zephaniah 3:8-15 teaches:

⁸ “Therefore wait for Me,” says the LORD, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.

⁹ “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord. ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering. ¹¹ In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain. ¹² I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. ¹³ The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, And no one shall make them afraid.”

¹⁴ Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more.

Notice that although affliction is coming, it will not last. Lies and haughtiness will no longer exist. There will be no more deceit. God will take away the sins of those He will call “In that day.”

In John 9:40-41, Jesus taught:

⁴⁰ Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.

It may be that one of the reasons that Jesus appeared so hard on the Pharisees was because there may have been several among them who were close to blaspheming against the Spirit (and perhaps some who had done it) and He was trying to warn them.

In Matthew 11:25-26, Jesus teaches:

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Luke 10:21 similarly teaches:

²¹ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

So, Jesus clearly taught that the truth was hidden from various ones, but that the Father found that to be good.

In 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, Paul teaches that Jesus would not have been put to death if the truth was known in this age:

⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Notice that Paul states that God has hidden wisdom in a mystery that He ordained before the ages. And if God had made it clear, Jesus would not have been executed/crucified. If God had not hidden any information, Jesus would not have died for our sins. Does your church understand that?

1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul teaches that the natural man cannot know:

¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Since the natural man cannot know without God's calling, is it not obvious that God intentionally designed humans so that most would not understand in this present age?

Job 28:20-21 teaches that some things are hidden:

²⁰ "From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air.

Isaiah 64:7-9 states:

⁷ For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities. ⁸ But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. ⁹ Do not be furious, O LORD, Nor remember iniquity forever; Indeed, please look-- we all are Your people!

The plea from Isaiah for God to not remember iniquity forever would be pointless if God did not have a plan to forgive in the age to come.

Ezekiel 22:26, God teaches:

²⁶ Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Notice that the above shows that even the religious leaders would violate the law, not teach properly the difference between the holy and unholy, and that their eyes have been hidden related to the Sabbaths. Sabbaths is a reference to the weekly Sabbath as well as the annual Sabbaths that are also known as Holy Days.

Ezekiel 20:36,42-44 shows that after God pleads with them, people will finally see what they were like:

³⁶ Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord God...

⁴² Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. ⁴³ And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. ⁴⁴ Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel," says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 20:49 states that the people Ezekiel was directly speaking to then about this and other matters did not understand what he was teaching:

⁴⁹ Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! They say of me, 'Does he not speak parables?'"

And most still do not understand the message related to salvation today. Nor do most understand the parables of Jesus.

Isaiah 25:7 teaches that there is a veil over the world now:

⁷ And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations.

Notice that even though people have been blinded to those things which were hidden, God is going to remove the veil that is spread over all the nations. The removal of this veil will allow them to see. Can you now see this or do you wish to have the veil remain over you?

In John 6:45, Jesus clearly taught that all would hear God:

⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'

Isaiah 54:13 states:

¹³ All your children shall be taught by the Lord, And great shall be the peace of your children.

This has not yet happened--it is for the future. All shall be taught by God! That includes those who have long been dead.

Jesus also stated:

⁵¹ ... My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world (John 6:51)

Satan is NOT winning in a battle against God. Part of why Jesus came was to destroy the devil's works:

⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, ... ⁸ ... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:5a,8b)

That is coming!

Isaiah 48:5-9 has these words of God:

5 Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.'

6 "You have heard; See all this. And will you not declare it? I have made you hear new things from this time, Even hidden things, and you did not know them. 7 They are created now and not from the beginning; And before this day you have not heard them, Lest you should say, 'Of course I knew them.'

8 Surely you did not hear, Surely you did not know; **Surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously**, And were called a transgressor from the womb. 9 "For My name's sake I will defer My anger, And **for My praise I will restrain it from you, So that I do not cut you off.**

Notice that in the above, God is saying that He had many things hidden from those who worship idols or other false gods so that in the future He would not have to cut them off.

That is why God has not made it clear to everyone now. God knew that if He did, many would be unfaithful so that is why God's plan included allowing most who have thus far lived to not understand the full truth of God. God wants to save the most possible.

In Isaiah 52:10 God also teaches that they shall see:

¹⁰ The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.

Since this is referring to the eyes of all the nations, the same nations that are now blinded, certainly God is teaching that all WILL have an opportunity for salvation--which only comes through Jesus (Acts 4:10-12; Hebrews 10:4-10).

Isaiah 52:13-15 shows that those who did not hear about Jesus will consider:

¹³ Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

A time is coming that those that did not truly hear will have an opportunity!

The Apostle Paul in Romans 15:21 cited the above:

²¹ ... "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."

God has a plan for those who did NOT really hear in this age.

See what the Psalms declare:

⁹ All men shall fear, And shall declare the work of God; For they shall wisely consider His doing. (Psalm 64:9)

⁷ And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. (Psalm 67:7)

²⁰ Our God is the God of salvation; And to God the Lord belong escapes from death. (Psalm 68:20)

Does it not make sense that "the God of salvation" actually has a plan of salvation that includes it being offered to all and accepted by most?

All will realize that Jesus is Lord:

¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written:

"As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God." (Romans 14:10-11)

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

At the time of judgment, all, but the incorrigible, will accept Jesus as Lord.

Notice Psalm 107:43

⁴³ Whoever is wise will observe these things, And they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.

God's plan is wise and is based upon His lovingkindness. Thus, all will have an opportunity for salvation at the time that is best. God's plan of salvation is laid out in His Holy Days. Yet, because of 'traditions of men,' mistranslations, etc., most do not keep them nor understand God's plan of salvation. For more details see our free online book: *Should You Observe God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?*).

Most do not understand and obey God, but that is essential for Christians:

³² And we are His witnesses of these things, as is also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him. (Romans 5:32, AFV)

⁹ ... He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (Hebrews 5:9)

Furthermore, and also contrary to the claims of those who feel that God will save everyone no matter what they believe, the Bible makes it clear that there is only one name that can save as Acts 4:10-12 plainly teaches:

¹⁰ let it be known to you all ... that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, ...¹¹ This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' ¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Since God has hidden parts of His plan, since the name of Jesus is not known by many today nor has it been known for thousands of years by many, since God plans to offer salvation to the ends of the earth, and since no one can be saved without Jesus, it should be obvious to any who will believe their Bibles that God must have planned to offer salvation to everyone at a later time.

Furthermore, please study, pray, and meditate about what Ephesians 2:11-12 says:

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Notice that those Gentiles HAD NO HOPE! Up until Christ came, almost no Gentile that ever lived had any HOPE! And since most Gentiles have STILL never heard the truth about Christ (the only name by which men can be saved--Acts 4:12), will your God condemn those who never had hope? People who are still blinded by Satan so that they, in this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), cannot see?

But some say, doesn't the Bible teach NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION?

Well, let's look at the scriptures cited related to that.

This view comes, initially, from Isaiah 48:8a. Since some versions have not translated it from the Hebrew literally, people can get confused. Here are some translations that get it right:

⁸ Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: (KJV)

⁸ Thus saith the LORD: In an acceptable time have I answered thee, And in a day of salvation have I helped thee; (Jewish Publication Society Tanakh 1917)

⁸ Thus said Jehovah: 'In a time of good pleasure I answered thee, And in a day of salvation I helped thee, (Young's Literal Translation)

Notice that the above does not say the only day of salvation, but only "a day of salvation."

Now, the New Testament was written in Greek, and Greek has different grammar rules, some who read it have concluded that the word of God says something it does not quite say.

Some have been confused by 2 Corinthians 6:2 which seems to say that now is the only day of salvation.

This verse improperly has been translated. Notice one example of that:

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

It is mistranslated because the word "the" in the New King James version is actually absent in the Greek, as a review of the original language makes clear. Not one of the three times "the" is included in the NKJV is it in the Greek.

Let's look at two actually more literal translations:

² For He says, "In *the* acceptable time I listened to you, and in *the* day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is *the* time of favor; behold, now is *the* day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2, Berean Literal Bible)

² for He saith, 'In an acceptable time I did hear thee, and in a day of salvation I did help thee, lo, now is a well-accepted time; lo, now, a day of salvation,' – (2 Corinthians 6:2, Young's Literal Translation)

The use of italics in the Berean Literal Bible shows that the word "the" was not in the original, but inserted several times.

When you consider that the definite article "the" is used in koine Greek much more than English, this further drives home the point (since "the" is absent from the New Testament text) that the Bible is NOT teaching that this is the only day of salvation.

That being said, for those who have truly been called and accepted the call, yes, it is the/their day of salvation.

For others, their opportunity comes later. At a time where they will be more able to accept it.

7. The Bible Clearly Teaches that Those Gentiles Who Have Been Subject to Condemnation Will Have an Opportunity for Salvation

Micah 7:18-19 teaches:

¹⁸ Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.

Is your God going to pardon iniquity for a few or nearly all of the guilty?

Ezekiel 11:16-20 and 36:24-38 both record that God is going to convert many sinners so that they will walk in His statutes:

¹⁶ Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone." ' ¹⁷ "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." ' ¹⁸ "And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. ¹⁹ Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God..."

²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² Not for your sake do I do this," says the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" ³³ Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. ³⁴ The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. ³⁵ So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' ³⁶ "Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it." ³⁷ Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. ³⁸ Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the LORD." ' "

Notice that the above has never been fulfilled by Israelites going back to the Middle East as God has YET to give them a new heart. Surely God has a plan to offer salvation to those who many now feel are lost.

Notice Daniel 12:2-3:

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

The above passage shows that death is like sleep. It also refers to a resurrection to everlasting life for some and for some resurrection to shame and to everlasting contempt. Notice that those who are wise will shine and still, after they shall awake, turn MANY to righteousness. Since they cannot turn those who are raised to everlasting contempt to life, who are they turning to life?

Obviously, those who were dead and not dead in Christ are those that are among the many that will be turned to righteousness. Therefore, the Bible clearly shows that there is a future offer of salvation past this current life and **many** will be turned to righteousness--many are then converted.

Sodom and Gomorrah

Throughout history, although various ones have acted like sexual sins promoted via pornography and/or the LGBTQ crowd are essentially unforgivable, that is not consistent with scripture (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Furthermore, Jesus taught in Matthew 10:15 that those in Sodom and Gomorrah will do better than those who intentionally reject the message:

¹⁴ And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

If the fate of Sodom is already eternal condemnation, how could it be better for them than for others?

Notice what Jesus stated in Matthew 11:20-26:

²⁰ Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that **You have hidden these things from the wise** and prudent and have revealed them to babes. ²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

Notice the Jesus clearly teaches that some, like Sodom, will still have a chance and that this knowledge is hidden to many of the wise of this world.

Ezekiel 16:55 teaches that it was known that Sodom would return:

⁵⁵ When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate (KJV).

What does your church teach is the fate of Sodom? Does it teach that they will have an opportunity for salvation? If not, how do they explain Ezekiel 16:55?

Matthew 12:38-42 teaches:

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.

Notice that contrary to the views of what passes as mainstream "Christianity", there will be a difference in judgment in the end.

Now God destroyed Sodom for its wicked works (Genesis 18:20;19:24)--wicked works, that according to Paul's writings make it impossible for them to inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21). If what most Protestants believe is correct, then all in Sodom will be destroyed and will be no better off than those in Capernaum--but that is a clear contradiction of what Jesus taught.

In Luke 10:8-15, Jesus taught:

⁸ Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹ And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹² But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. ¹³ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be thrust down to Hades.

Notice that Jesus is holding those to a higher standard who saw miracles and should have understood His message, than those who were idolaters, pagans, and sexually immoral (including those that lived in Sodom). Jesus makes this concept clear in many other passages (cf. Luke 12:48).

Does your church teach you that it will be more tolerable for certain non-Christians at the judgment than for others? If not, does it really understand the Bible?

Mark 6:10-11, notice what Jesus taught:

¹⁰ Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. ¹¹ And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins. Yet, Jesus says that *it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than* those who had some understanding but would not accept it.

Psalm 90:3 teaches:

³ You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men."

God is teaching that He turned humans over to destruction--He allowed sinners to die--yet notice that He teaches that He is going to have them return. Does your church teach anything like this?

God is Really Merciful

Twenty-six times in its twenty-six verses, Psalm 136 states:

For His mercy endures forever.

Why would God have that recorded so much if He did not have a plan involving His mercy for more than this age? The expression "His mercy endures forever" is found 41 times in the NKJV and the version "his mercy endureth for ever" is found 33 times in the Douay-Rheims Bible.

God wants ALL to realize that He really is merciful.

Most who profess Christianity do not understand the true extent of God's mercy.

Notice that Psalm 107:1-3 teaches:

¹ Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. ² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, ³ And gathered out of the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.

Thus, God is going to have mercy to those turned over to the enemy (the devil) because God's mercy endures forever. When scripture refers to those gathered from all over in this manner, it often is referring to those who have died.

Jesus also alluded to this verse in Matthew 8:10-11:

¹⁰ When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! 11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was teaching that Gentiles will be part of the kingdom. And, I and others believe this means more than just a few. In the 4th century, Ambrose of Milan stated “**this is the privilege not only of a few**” and referred to this verse.

Psalms 145:14 teaches:

¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down.

It should be clear that God is intending to raise up more than a few who fall.

Psalms 25:8 reveals:

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

Is He only intending to teach a few sinners or all sinners?

Remember, the Bible teaches that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34 KJV).

Forgiveness is Prophesied

God has a plan to forgive those who have died, who after they are resurrected, will know Him:

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*” (Hebrews 8:7-12)

In the future, all shall know the LORD. This includes people going back to at least the Exodus, as well as all who are long dead. And notice that God is saying that He will forgive ***their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.***

Does your church understand this?

Isaiah 46:12-13 teaches:

¹² “Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who are far from righteousness: ¹³ I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory.

Note, according to the marginal reference in the *Nelson Study Bible*, page 640, the word linger is perhaps better translated as “delayed.” And that is how the NIV, BSB, GNT, and GWT translate it. The NJB (a Roman Catholic Bible) translates it as “not delay.”

Hence, God is teaching that those who were “far from righteousness” will have a time when God will not delay salvation, but will bring it.

This is not just a reference for Gentiles who will come to accept Christ in this age as many seem to think, this is a reference to an age to come.

One of the psalms, Psalm 66:3-4, teaches:

³ Say to God, “How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You. ⁴ **All the earth shall worship You** And sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name.

Notice that this is a prophecy.

All the earth has not yet worshipped God. All the enemies who would have been alive when that verse was written thousands of years ago have long since died.

Yet, this passage shows that they will submit to God. The Bible says this is an awesome work through God’s great power.

Does the God you worship have the power to offer salvation to all so that even His enemies will submit to Him?

Isaiah 29:13-14, teaches:

¹³ Therefore the LORD said:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, ¹⁴ Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people,

A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.”

Thus, those who have been deceived by human traditions of false worship can be saved. And many have been so deceived!

Also notice the following from Jeremiah 30:9-10:

⁹ But they shall serve the LORD their God, And David their king, Whom I will raise up for them. ¹⁰ 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar ...

Jesus told His flock to not fear, and God is telling 'Israel' not to fear. And notice for 'Israel,' God will save them from afar—meaning later.

Isaiah 55:1-5 teaches:

¹ "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. ³ Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you--The sure mercies of David. ⁴ Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. ⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."

The above is not simply a reference to Gentiles becoming Christians as most Protestant commentators think. The above has never happened.

Notice that it is David that is the witness to the people—not the New Testament, like some have suggested.

This is the same David that is prophesied to rule over the nations of Israel in the future (Ezekiel 37:24; Jeremiah 30:9). Thus, this is a prophecy for a later time.

The simple truth is that even after Jesus came, the statement "nations who do not know you shall run to you" has simply not been fulfilled. I know of not one nation, let alone multiple nations, that have run to become true Christians.

What has happened is that after Greco-Roman "Christianity" became the religion of the empire, many were forced to become "Christians" and those that have followed them have almost never followed the Christianity of the Bible.

If some of that confuses you, recall that in Isaiah 55:8-11 God teaches that even though we think different than God that His word will not return void:

⁸ "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, ¹¹ So shall **My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**

Just like rain does water the earth, God's word will eventually reach all who were on the earth.

Part of what God's word, not impaired by human traditions, is telling us is that God's plan to call all will be accomplished and prosper! Truly God is telling us that since He can take care of a seed so people can eat, His plan of salvation for humankind will work.

Furthermore, notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. (1 Corinthians 9:9-10)

Doesn't God care more about saving people than providing something to eat? Paul is using a sower analogy here, which is what Isaiah 55:10-11 also does.

What About the Sabbath in the Future?

Now, consider what Isaiah 56:1-2 teaches:

¹ Thus says the LORD:

"Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."

If the salvation to come is simply the first coming of Jesus, then should not all Christians keep the Sabbath as both salvation and the Sabbath are part of the same quote?

Does your church teach that one is "blessed" who does not defile the Sabbath?

Let's also read the verses that follow it, like Isaiah 56:6-8 as it makes it clear that foreigners-Gentiles-also are to keep the Sabbath:

⁶ "Also the sons of the foreigner
Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him,
And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants —
Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,
And holds fast My covenant —
⁷ Even them I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
Will be accepted on My altar;
For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."
⁸ The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says,
"Yet I will gather to him
Others besides those who are gathered to him."

So, Israelites and non-Israelites will be gathered to God and will keep the Sabbath.

Also, notice the following from Isaiah 66:23:

²³ And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.

Notice that *all flesh*, not just Jews, will worship God on the Sabbath. This has not yet happened.

There are so many prophecies that people read over and do not consider their ramifications.

God's Plan is Comforting

Notice something from the Book of Numbers:

¹⁶ O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, (Numbers 16:22)

God is the God of ALL FLESH. Since God does not show partiality, all flesh will have an opportunity.

Isaiah 57:16-18 shows that God will not always be angry and that He will heal the souls He has made:

¹⁶ For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made. ¹⁷ For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners.

Thus, even those who sinned that God punished (struck) and hid from, God will lead them back! Mourners will be comforted then.

Does your minister/priest proclaim this?

Isaiah 62:1-5 shows:

¹ For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns.

² The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name. ³ You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.

⁴ You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married. ⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.

Notice that salvation is being discussed and that includes Gentiles and lands that were desolate and that God will delight in them.

Again, this is not simply a reference to Gentiles who accept Christ in this age, as they were not referred to in the Hebrew scriptures as “Forsaken.”

Versions of the Hebrew term “azuwbah” translated as “Forsaken” are used many times in the Old Testament to refer to Israelites (NOT Gentiles)--God is apparently using that term because most seem to feel that the Gentiles prior to Jesus’ first coming were forsaken--which, however, they were not.

Most also seem to feel that most people dwelling in lands that basically do not accept any version of Christ today are in that forsaken category.

But again, notice that God states that they are not forsaken. Which means, according to Isaiah 62, that God has a plan of salvation for them!

Unclean Meat Eaters Will Later be Called

Also notice that in Isaiah 65:1-5, God declares that even those who eat unclean meat and did not seek God will later be called:

¹⁷I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ To a nation that was not called by My name. ² I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts; ³ A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; Who sacrifice in gardens, And burn incense on altars of brick; ⁴ Who sit among the graves, And spend the night in the tombs; Who eat swine’s flesh, And the broth of abominable things is in their vessels; ⁵ Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day.

Notice that these people were not originally called. They even provoked God to anger by eating swine (a biblically unclean animal per Deuteronomy 14:8), but notice that they will find God even though they did not seek Him!

Isaiah 66:17-19 teaches:

¹⁷ “Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, To go to the gardens After an idol in the midst, Eating swine’s flesh and the abomination and the mouse, Shall be consumed together,” says the LORD.

¹⁸ “For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. ¹⁹ I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.

Even though He will punish those who eat unclean meat, notice that they will be gathered and declared God’s *glory among the Gentiles*. God’s glory among the Gentiles is when He calls them all and offers them salvation.

Those who believe in the elitist approach that God is only going to save “good” Roman Catholics and/or Protestants and unintentionally condemn the vast majority of eaters of unclean meats to fry in torment forever are in clear error.

Romans 8:19-21, Paul states:

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.
²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Notice that the creation was not subjected to futility willingly. And that the creation is waiting in hope to *be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*. The entirety of creation is awaiting apokatastasis.

Not-My-People Will Be God’s People

Here is what a Protestant author wrote on Hosea 2:23:

God had said that he would name these children as a sign to his people, but there would come a day of restoration:

“And I will have pity on Not-Pitied, and I will say to Not-My-People, ‘You are my people;’ and he shall say, ‘Thou art my God.’” {Hos 2:23 RSV}

So that even in this time when God was announcing judgment, his grace also was being shown. (Stedman Ray. O.T. Prophetical Books).

That author is correct on that point. God specifically has foretold a time of restoration through the prophets. And those that were not His people, will become His people.

In Romans, 11:13-15, Paul states:

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,
¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵
For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Notice that Paul is teaching that those being cast away can have acceptance after they are given life from the dead (see also vs. 26-27). Paul is clearly teaching what is consistent with the CCOG view of apokatastasis.

8. Some Few Will Willfully Reject God's Generous Offer But Their End Will Be Swift

God will get the truth to all.

Jesus taught a parable which shows that the time will come when those on the outside will hear the message:

²¹ Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' ²² And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' ²³ Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:21-23)

God will get the message to those that were not that interested in it.

God will actually plead with humankind. Isaiah 3:13 shows:

¹³ The LORD stands up to plead, And stands to judge the people.

Ezekiel 20:33-38 states:

³³ "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. ³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there **I will plead My case with you face to face.** ³⁶ Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord GOD. ³⁷ I will make you pass under the rod, and **I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;** ³⁸ **I will purge the rebels from among you,** and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

For those preferring a Roman Catholic translation, the Douay Rheims renders Ezekiel 20:35-38 as:

³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of people, and **there will I plead with you face to face.** ³⁶ As I pleaded against your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt; even so will I judge you, saith the Lord God. ³⁷ And I will make you subject to my sceptre, and will bring you into the bands of the covenant. ³⁸ And I will pick out from among you the transgressors, and the wicked, and will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: **and you shall know that I am the Lord.**

The Bible clearly teaches that God will plead His case. Notice He will plead His case to those He will judge (Revelation 20:11-12). Thus, God is referring to pleading to people who would have died prior to the pleading. And they shall then know He is God.

Jeremiah 25:31-33 teaches:

³¹ A noise will come to the ends of the earth--For the LORD has a controversy with the nations; **He will plead His case with all flesh.** He will give those who are wicked to the sword,' says the LORD."

³² Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, disaster shall go forth From nation to nation, And a great whirlwind shall be raised up From the farthest parts of the earth. ³³ "And at that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground."

Thus, while God will plead His case with all flesh and most will listen, those that are wicked will be eliminated and become refuse on the ground (see also Malachy 4:3).

Related to Jeremiah 25, the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

A common idea is that God is about to close probation-that the time of salvation will scan be over-that no people can be saved thereafter. Then, according to this conception, a God of Wrath will glut his rage and revengeful passion by pouring out vials of torture upon defenseless, helpless heads. A doomed humanity will suffer the most excruciating pains imaginable. This is a PAGAN conception of a god capable of all the base passions of degraded men. This concept is *not true!* ...

Notice Jeremiah 23:31 : "A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Eternal hath a CONTROVERSY with the nations, *he will PLEAD with all flesh*; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Eternal."

Did you notice that God will *plead* with lost sinners? Probation will not be closed! God will send Jesus Christ to PLEAD with all flesh to bring them to salvation. In His controversy with the nations, God *pleads* with humanity because He *loves* the human family. "God is love" (I John 4:16). (Armstrong HW. Plain Truth, July-August 1955, p. 1)

God will plead for true repentance!

Although "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), meaning physical death, eternal death is not the penalty for most sins.

Most sins, but not all, will be forgiven as there is only one sin that truly leads to death, per 1 John 5:16-17:

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

Hebrews 10:26-27 teaches:

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries...

Notice that there are some who will be devoured by fiery indignation because they intentionally are rejecting the sacrifice of Christ. This punishment is the *Gehenna* fire that Jesus referred to (Matthew 10:28). Thus, while all will be offered salvation, some will not accept it.

Deuteronomy 7:10-11, Moses explains that God will destroy those that will not keep His commandments:

¹⁰ and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

Do you observe His commandments, statutes, and judgments?

God gives His Holy Spirit to those that obey Him (Romans 5:32).

Does God pardon iniquity?

Yes.

Does God retain His anger forever?

No.

Does He delight in mercy?

Yes.

Will He later give His truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham?

That is what the Bible teaches.

Is this what your church teaches?

Jesus taught:

²⁸ And you should not be afraid of those killing the body but not being able to kill the soul. Indeed rather you should fear the *One* being able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. (In Matthew 10:28, Berean Literal Bible)

There would be no need for Jesus to say the above, unless there would be some who refuse salvation.

But again, this is a very small amount. And notice that they are destroyed. We in the CCOG do not teach that human souls will be tortured throughout eternity. Notice that Jesus taught that in Gehenna souls are destroyed.

While the punishment is permanent, and in that sense everlasting, it is short--the actual punishment is NOT continual torment throughout eternity.

This punishment comes after the third resurrection (Revelation 20:13-14). By the time of that resurrection, all will have had a chance for salvation.

The late evangelist Raymond McNair wrote:

When the time for the third resurrection arrives, everyone will have had his chance. (McNair R. The Third Resurrection: Part V. Good News, May 1974)

The wicked who will not repent will be totally destroyed:

¹ Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. ² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. ...

⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. ¹⁰ For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. ...

²⁰ But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the Lord, Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. ...

²⁸ For the Lord loves justice, And does not forsake His saints They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. ...

³⁸ But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; **The future of the wicked shall be cut off.** (Psalm 37:1-2,9-10,20,28,38)

² As smoke is driven away, So drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish at the presence of God. (Psalm 68:2)

¹ "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the Lord of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. ³ You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this," Says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 4:1-3)

The Bible calls this the 'second death':

¹¹... He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. (Revelation 2:11)

⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:14)

⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

Thus, it is a type of death, but permanent.

It is not eternal torturing like many claim. Jesus came so we would not have to PERISH, but have eternal life:

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

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)

Jesus did not come so that people would not experience physical death.

And since the Apostle Paul was inspired to write that it is appointed to people to die (Romans 3:23), the PERISHING in John 3:16 has to do with what happens *after* the resurrections.

James 5:11 states:

¹¹ Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Permanent torment is not merciful nor very compassionate--but putting the wicked permanently out of their misery is. God is very compassionate and merciful.

Nahum 1:12 teaches:

¹² Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more;

Thus, this prophetic book is teachings that there is not a permanent torturing affliction.

Revelation 21:4 teaches:

⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Thus, there will not be an ever burning torment and torture of sinners throughout eternity. All things will become new.

Malachi 4:1-3 teaches:

¹ “For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts,”That will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. ³ You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this,” Says the LORD of hosts.

Notice that the wicked (those who will not repent) will be burned up and will be ashes (see also Luke 13:1-3). This is not an everlasting torment, but a destruction of those that refuse God.

Recall that Jesus taught that the souls of people can be destroyed in gehenna. Here is a different translation of Matthew 10:28:

²⁸ And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy in gehenna (Young’s Literal Translation).

Thus, the wicked (including their soul) can, and will, be destroyed.

Psalms 68:2 teaches:

² As smoke is driven away, So drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

Notice that the wicked are to perish.

Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:28, Jesus teaches about what is commonly referred to as “the unpardonable sin”:

³¹ “Therefore I say to you, **every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men**, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or **in the age to come**.

²⁸ “Assuredly, I say to you, **all sins will be forgiven the sons of men**, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; ²⁹ but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”

Notice two very important points:

1. Jesus taught with one exception *every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven in this age or in the age to come*. Thus, contrary to those who claim that God has passed *final* judgment upon everyone who died *before* the great white throne judgement mentioned in the Bible (Revelation 20:11-12), God has not already condemned all non-believers. This is also consistent with 1 John 5:16-17, to cite another example.
2. There is one sin, and one sin only, that *will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come*. Therefore, although almost everyone will be forgiven/pardoned and have the opportunity

for salvation, there will be some small amount--those who blaspheme against the Spirit--who have been condemned.

And who are those that have blasphemed against the Spirit?

Those who clearly knew the plan of God, but would not humble themselves enough to accept and live it. These are the incorrigibly wicked. This is part of why very few really understand now. God is only calling few now so that more will not blaspheme the Holy Spirit and not ultimately be saved.

Yet notice, that the Psalms and Proverbs do show that God will save those He considers to be the humble:

⁴ He will beautify the humble with salvation (Psalm 149:4).

All of those who will humble themselves and accept God's offer will be saved.

But this will not happen until after the seeds of the gospel are laid in this age and more fully come to fruition in harvest in the age to come.

Notice Mark 4:26-29:

²⁶ And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸ For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

A massive harvest is coming!

9. All Israel Will Be Saved

Romans 11:23 makes it clear that some who did not originally believe will be saved:

²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Notice that the above says that “God is able to graft them in again.” God is making it clear that a future time of salvation is coming.

Isaiah 29:22-23 shows that those of the house of Jacob who have erred will learn:

²² Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:

“Jacob shall not now be ashamed, Nor shall his face now grow pale; ²³ But when he sees his children, The work of My hands, in his midst, They will hallow My name, And hallow the Holy One of Jacob, And fear the God of Israel.

This has not yet happened and is for the future!

Romans 11:26-27, Paul quotes the Hebrew Bible and states:

²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: *“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; ²⁷ For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”*

Notice that Paul is teaching that all Israel will be saved. And that the Deliverer (Jesus) will take away their sins. Yet most Jews have never professed Christ. Certainly God has a plan that involves all the Jews and the rest of Israel.

Who is all Israel? It is all who will become spiritual Israel--but this does include most who were Jewish.

Romans 9:6-8,22-24 teaches us:

⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷ nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed...

²² What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Thus, it is not physical Israel, but spiritual Israel who will be saved.

Recall that “there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

Acts 10:34-35,45 also teaches something about this:

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him..." And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Since all Israel is to be saved and God shows no partiality, does not this mean that Gentiles should be part of spiritual Israel?

As Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20 points out, the gospel is to be preached ALL nations. And Revelation 7:9-10 teaches that people will be saved from "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues."

Romans 2:28-29, Paul notes:

²⁸ For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;
²⁹ but **he is a Jew who is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Thus, most of the promises in the New Testament (and many in the Old) are NOT referring to physical Jews, but for those that God will call to be Christians.

Furthermore, do God's promises only refer to the relatively few Gentiles that are being called in this Church age? Or does it include those who have died and believe that their hope is cut off?

Notice what Ezekiel 37:1-3 teaches:

¹ The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.

² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.

³ And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

Ezekiel did not use faulty human reasoning. He wisely deferred to God. Ezekiel, unlike many today, did not conclude that ancient bones could not be brought to life.

Continuing in Ezekiel 37:

⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD." ' "

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' "

¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. **They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'**

¹² "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, **I will open your graves** and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ **I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live,** and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' "

Notice that these are people who are dead, who falsely believed that because they were lost they have no hope, and who falsely believed they were be cut off. Notice that they will be resurrected, have hope, and shall know that the LORD is God! Because these people claim that their hope is cut off, these are clearly not converted, Spirit-filled, believers--hence this has to do with is sometimes referred to as the *second* resurrection.

There is HOPE for those considered LOST!

Consider also that flesh will be added to bones. Thus, this resurrection is a type of reincarnation. Not the type that Hindus teach about often coming back as animals, but humans will come back as humans and will have an opportunity to live and for salvation.

The Apostle Paul taught that all should be tried to be reached in ways that they would understand (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Hence, my use of the term reincarnation. Now this reincarnation is not based upon the spin of a wheel as certain Buddhists and Hindus seemingly believe. Yet, Hindus and others correctly realize that humans make mistakes and that there is some type of divine plan to deal with that. And a type of 'reincarnation' is clearly part of God's plan--although the more biblical term is resurrection--a future time.

Notice:

⁵ "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the

earth. ⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

⁷ “Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ⁸ “but, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.” (Jeremiah 23:5-8)

¹¹ “On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” Says the Lord who does this thing. (Amos 9:11-12)

The above time is for the future and has not happened yet. Ruins will be restored.

Ezekiel 37:24-28 also teaches:

²⁴ “David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. ²⁵ Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. ²⁶ Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷ My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁸ The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” ‘ ‘

Surely God has a plan that involves resurrecting everyone, teaching them His statutes, and that God will make an everlasting covenant.

Surely this has not yet happened, surely it is for the future. It will be for the time of restoration of all, involving David.

Does your church teach this?

Ezekiel 39:21-29, God declares:

²¹ “I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. ²² So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward. ²³ The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴ According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.” ‘

²⁵ “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name--²⁶ after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.²⁷ When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations,²⁸ then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer.²⁹ And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord GOD.”

According to Luke 13:34-35, Jerusalem, which did not understand in Jesus’ time, will get an opportunity:

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, **you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’**”

Why would those condemned later cry out ‘**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**’ if they have no future opportunity?

Well, they would not. Thus, they must have a future opportunity.

Zechariah 10:9-12, God states:

⁹ “I will sow them among the peoples, And they shall remember Me in far countries; They shall live, together with their children, And they shall return.¹⁰ I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, And gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, Until no more room is found for them.¹¹ He shall pass through the sea with affliction, And strike the waves of the sea: All the depths of the River shall dry up. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.¹² “So I will strengthen them in the LORD, And they shall walk up and down in His name,” Says the LORD.

Notice that God is including those that are dead. He teaches, like He does in Ezekiel 37, that the dead shall live and shall return. But notice this includes more than simply Israelites.

Genesis 18:17-18 reveals the following:

¹⁷ And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

Notice that all the families of the earth are to be blessed. This must also include Gentile tribes and nations that have long since died out. And since many of them had not ever even heard the name of Jesus, there blessing must be in the future.

Even Moses clearly understood that God was not allowing Israel to see in his day:

¹ These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.
² Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land-- ³ the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. ⁴ Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day (Deuteronomy 29:1-4).

Hence, the plan was known for a long time--those who were not able to see would be able to be saved. Isaiah 45:25 shows:

²⁵ In the LORD all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified, and shall glory.

Does your church teach that *all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified*?

Most churches teach that the descendants of Israel are Jews and that only a relatively few of them ultimately will be saved.

But is that what the Bible, not traditions of men, teaches?

11. The Prophets Spoke About This

Isaiah wrote:

²⁶ ... All flesh shall know That I, the Lord, am your Savior, (Isaiah 49:26)

How can all flesh know that Jesus is Savior of all without offering salvation to all?

Recall that Peter taught:

²⁰ ... Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21).

This book has quotes from many prophets including Abraham, Job, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jesus Himself.

John 4:42, states this about the Samaritans:

⁴² Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

This shows that even the Samaritans knew enough from the Hebrew scriptures to understand that the Christ was to be Savior of the world, not just a select few.

Isaiah knew a time for salvation for all was coming. Notice:

³ Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. ⁴ And in that day you will say: “Praise the Lord, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth. ⁶ Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!” (Isaiah 12:3-6)

Although Jesus seemed to discuss the concept in vs. 3 on the Last Great Day in John 7:37, there is no scriptural evidence that verses 4-6 fulfilled then, thus biblically it appears that Isaiah is writing about a future time of salvation!

In John 7:37-38, Jesus taught:

³⁷ On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Jesus is teaching that the time **will come** when all can come and drink. This day is coming. It is considered as the eighth day that immediately follows the seven day Feast of Tabernacles.

The Jews call the eighth day the day of rain:

The sage Rabbi Abahu said: The day of rain is greater than the resurrection of the dead, because the resurrection of the dead benefits only the righteous, but rain benefits both the righteous and the unrighteous. (Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 7a)
<http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/articles/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=1451> 6/6/03)

In Isaiah 58:12, it is shown that the waste places of this world will be restored so that others can dwell during that time:

¹² Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

Isaiah is teaching that those called now will help prepare, through restoration, a better world for others.

Daniel 2:44, Daniel states:

⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

The kingdom of God will last forever.

Psalms 67:1-2 teaches:

¹ God be merciful to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us. Selah ² That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

The reason that God is calling some now is so His ways will be known on earth and His salvation will be known among all nations. But since many nations have long died out, this prophecy is not only referring to passages in the New Testament such as Matthew 24:14 (And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come), but must include nations that were gone before Jesus came.

Notice what the Book of Jeremiah 31:33-34 teaches:

³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel **after those days**, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Notice that "after those days" God is going to put His law in their minds and write it in their heart. This has simply not happened with physical Israel and is referring to a later time.

The prophets did understand that God had plan to offer salvation to most at a later time than this age.

11. Protestants Generally Oppose Apocatastasis, Roman Catholics Claim Eternal Torment, But Some Orthodox and the Church of God Teach Differently

Despite Bibles being available throughout the world, most who claim Christianity have not understood the plan.

But it is a great plan.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught:

... God's purpose in giving His Church His annual holy days was to keep His children constantly in true understanding of God's great plan. To accomplish this, God took the yearly material harvest seasons in ancient Israel as the picture of the spiritual harvest of souls. In the Holy Land there are two annual harvests. First, is the spring grain harvest. Second, comes the fall harvest. God intended His holy days to picture to *His* Church repeatedly year by year the fact that only those He Himself calls during this age can become His begotten children now! And we are merely the first fruits of the great spiritual harvest! ...

This eighth day, technically a separate feast, is called "the last day, that great day of the feast" (John 7:37).

What does this final holy day represent?

Notice what Jesus preached about on that day: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink . . . out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive . . .)" (John 7:37-39).

This was Jesus' sermon giving the meaning of the last great day!

Now turn to Revelation 20. After the Millennium, what happens? A resurrection! The dead stand before God. This couldn't include true Christians today, as they will appear before the judgment seat when Christ returns. It couldn't refer to those converted during the Millennium. They have already inherited the Kingdom during the Millennium, after living out a normal life-span. Those in this resurrection must be those who died in ignorance in past ages! They are not brought to life until after the Millennium (Revelation 20:5).

This is that judgment day mentioned in Matthew 10: 15. It is a time when Gentiles who died in ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation. Ezekiel 16:53-55 makes this very plain. Even those in Israel who died in their sins will be given their *first* opportunity to understand the truth of God and His way (Ezekiel 37). The prophet wrote that God would pour out His Spirit on those resurrected (verse 14). This is precisely the salvation that Jesus mentioned in His sermon on that great day of the feast in the autumn of AD 30.

This eighth day, which immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, pictures the completion of the plan of redemption. It is just prior to the new heaven and the new earth.

All parents and children, young and old will be resurrected. Notice that the “book of life” typifying salvation is opened (Revelation 20:12). Revelation presents the final view of the “judgment day” as the present material heaven and earth are perishing and the faithful are receiving their eternal reward at the throne of Christ. The wicked those who disobey are seen perishing in the lake of fire! What a marvelous plan! All will have an equal opportunity (Armstrong HW. Pagan Holidays-- or God’s Holy Days—Which?, booklet, 1976).

A major reason that I became part of the old WCG and now the *Continuing* Church of God is that in addition to proving all things from the Bible, I truly believe that since “God is love” (1 John 4:16) that He has a plan of salvation that will ultimately result in everyone being called and nearly everyone who ever lived being saved.

Here is a “Protestant” named Christoph Kreitz denouncing the view that the old Worldwide Church of God (WCG) held:

There is no second chance to believe in Christ, not even for those who died before Christ came to earth – they had other means to receive forgiveness of sin. The bible clearly says in **Hebrews 9:27** that after death everybody will face judgment. And those who are condemned will not be annihilated but punished forever. (Kreitz C. What the Cults Believe. Sunday School Notes. Tabernacle Baptist Church, Ithaca, NY, Summer 1999)

There are several problems with that denunciation.

First, we in the CCOG do not teach a “second chance” only that ALL WILL GET ONE REAL CHANCE (so did the old WCG, and neither of us taught a second chance). Various others who have written about this, like Anglican priest Dr. Luckock, also make it clear that the idea that all will have an opportunity, means one real chance, not a “second chance” (Luckock, pp. 197-208).

Secondly, the Bible does not give any hint on how scattered peoples not knowing the Israelites could be forgiven and be offered salvation prior to Jesus and the resurrection.

Thirdly, although Professor Kreitz has cited Hebrews 9:27, he did not mention the related verses in context. Let’s again look at what it actually says:

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him **He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.** (Hebrews 9:27-28)

Notice that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus will appear a second time for salvation.

And fourthly, yes the Bible does teach total annihilation for those who will not repent (as is shown earlier in this book). Hebrews 9:27 does not teach eternal punishing.

Will most be saved?

Yes.

Will most be lost? Certain Protestant and Catholic writers have erroneously said yes.

Where did that idea come from?

Well, it was promoted by the famous second century apostate Marcion:

The first great heretic broke drastically with the faith of the early church ... **Marcion expected the majority of mankind to be lost.** (Brown HOJ. Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), 1988, pp. 65)

So, perhaps Marcion may have originated the idea among the Greco-Romans that that most of humankind would be lost.

Marcion was condemned by Christian leaders at that time such as Polycarp of Smyrna, Melito of Sardis, and Theophilus of Antioch (yet, he was tolerated for decades by the Church of Rome). Interestingly, Irenaeus of Lyon wrote that Marcion was a successor to Simon Magus (Irenaeus. Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 27, Verses 1-4) who was warned in the Book of Acts 8:9-23.

Yet since then, others followed Marcion's teachings.

The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics embraced what has been considered to be an anti-apokatastasis position in the Council of Constantinople in 543 A.D., and made it basically official in 553 A.D. when they condemned 'Origenism' (some, however dispute that: Apocatastasis: The Heresy that Never Was. Eclectic Orthodoxy. Updated 09 January 2019). Various ones associated with those churches embraced parts of it before.

As far as Protestants go, one wrote:

Romans ... nine ... This whole chapter shows that the human race is already lost ... No one has any right to complain to God if some are saved, when none have any right to be saved (Stedman R. The Message of Romans).

Another Protestant wrote:

... most will be lost and not find salvation from sin (Price B. Romans Bible Commentary - Living By Faith Published by Brad Price, 2005, p. 96).

Some other Protestant writers have written:

We live on a planet populated by approximately six billion people. **Six billion!** And most of those, it probably would be safe to say, never have been afforded the opportunity of hearing the gospel message about the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. Therefore, obviously, they cannot respond in obedience to that saving message—even though they might be willing to do so if presented with the prospect...Those who never have heard—and thus never have obeyed—the truth of the gospel message **will** be lost! (Estabrook J and Thompson B. Will Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel Be Lost? Apologetics Press: Reason & Revelation, June 2001 - 21[6]:41-46)

... the majority of those on earth will travel the wide road to destruction ...The average person in the world is lost in sin and does not know it ...

Why Will Most Be Lost? ... Jesus said that if you die in your sins, you will be separated from Him forever, John 8:21 (Danklefsen B. If the Lord Returned Right Now Would you Be With Him for Eternity? *Eternal Life* series 1, 1977)

As often happens with improper exegesis (explanation of scriptures) verses cited often do not say what the explainer implies.

In John 8:21, Jesus says:

²¹ I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.

It does not say “separated from Him forever” nor did Jesus say, “LOST IN YOUR SINS FOREVER!”

Jesus also stated:

⁴¹ If you were blind, you would have no sin. (John 9:41).

Hence, those that have been blinded will not be suffering eternally for their sins.

Because there is a resurrection, dying in ones’ sins does not mean that there is no possible future hope (e.g. Ezekiel 37:11-14).

Infants and Limbo

The 16th century Protestant Reformer John Calvin taught the following about babies:

And so INFANTS THEMSELVES, as they bring their DAMNATION with them from their mothers’ womb, are bound, not by the sin of another, but by their own. For they have not produced the fruits of iniquity, they have the seed of it inclosed within them; nay their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin; so that it cannot but be odious and abominable to God. (Calvin J. Institut. Lib. II. c. ii, as cited in Palfrey EJ, et al. The Christian Examiner and Theological Review, Volume 4. 1827, p. 432)

Therefore, this seems to be the basis of John Calvin condemning babies who die to everlasting torment with no chance of reprieve. This is not something a loving God would do.

Jesus did not condemn infants and little children like the Calvinist have. Instead He taught:

³ ... Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)

But John Calvin said, no. Infants are full of the seed of sin and bring condemnation against themselves as soon as they are born. Jesus’ words are contrary to Calvinist ideology.

Speaking of infants, the Church of Rome used to teach that babies who died without being baptized would spend eternity in a place called Limbo.

But on April 20, 2007, a paper titled “The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized,” was published as it was Pope Benedict XVI authorized its publication earlier that year. Here is a statement from it:

It must be clearly acknowledged that the church does not have sure knowledge about the salvation of unbaptized infants who die ...

The paper essentially states that Limbo is not a Catholic dogma and should not be taught that it is. The *Telegraph* of the UK ran the following headline about this on April 23, 2007: *The Pope ends state of limbo after 800 years.*

God does have a plan for deceased infants—and it is not Limbo—those who died as infants will have an opportunity for salvation (cf. Isaiah 65:20).

Augustine of Hippo

Many who profess Christ do not really believe the WHOLE Bible.

Oddly, Augustine of Hippo condemned those who relied on the Bible for teaching what the Bible teaches related to mercy. Here is something from his famous book *City of God*:

There are others, again, with whose opinions I have become acquainted in conversation, who, though they seem to reverence the holy Scriptures, are yet of reprehensible life, and who accordingly, in their own interest, attribute to God a still greater compassion towards men. For they acknowledge that it is truly predicted in the divine word that the wicked and unbelieving are worthy of punishment, but they assert that, when the judgment comes, mercy will prevail. (Augustine. *City of God*. Book XXI, Chapter 18)

But the Bible does teach that mercy can prevail.

Notice a verse, again, quoted earlier in this paper, James 2:13 which teaches (in multiple translations):

¹³ ... Mercy triumphs over judgment. (NKJV, NIV, ESV, BSB, BLB, NASB, CSB, GNT, HCSB, ISV, NET, NHEB, NAS, KJ2000, WNT, WEB, RSV, RSV-Catholic, NABRE, OSB, AFV)

Augustine also did not like the fact that some quoted Psalm 77:9, Psalm 31:19, and Romans 11:32:

And the passage of the psalm which is cited by those who admit that wicked men and infidels shall be punished for a long time, though in the end delivered from all sufferings, is claimed also by the persons we are now speaking of as making much more for them. The verse runs: “Shall God forget to be gracious? Shall He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” {Psalm 77:9} ... for they ask to what purpose is it said, “How great is Your goodness which You have hidden for them that fear You” {Psalm 31:19} if it be not to teach us that the great and hidden sweetness of God’s mercy is concealed in order that men may fear? To the same purpose they think the apostle said, “For God has concluded all men in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all,” {Romans 11:32} (Augustine. *City of God*. Book XXI, Chapter 18)

God's mercy was beyond what Augustine understood.

Should you rely on what the Bible says or people like Augustine who would not accept it?

Sadly, many rely on Augustine and various ones have raved about how they liked his book *City of God*.

Now, does Paul teach that most of the human race is eternally condemned (as various Protestant and other writers have indicated), and only some will ultimately be saved, in his epistle to the Romans?

Of course not!

Notice what Paul wrote in Romans starting with chapter 9:

¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

²² What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

²⁵ As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved."

²⁶ "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

²⁷ Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.

²⁸ For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." (Romans 9:18-28).

Notice that God hardens and God selects. Also notice that IN THIS AGE A REMNANT, AND ONLY A REMNANT, IS TO BE SAVED!

How much is a remnant?

Not much.

The Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 10:22, which used the Hebrew word transliterated as *she'ar* In English. It means remnant or residue, like the remnant of a cloth when you make clothes.

In ancient times, cloth was very expensive and almost none was wasted. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude via that analogy (as well as what the Bible literally states) that only a small number were to be saved in this age.

But God has a plan to save more than that.

(Note: The “short work” that Paul speaks of in Romans 9:28 and the completion of Matthew 24:14 may be due to news coverage of what the most faithful flock is teaching. This, of course, does not mean that the most faithful should sit around and wait and not do their part--cf. John 9:4; Matthew 9:37-38.)

Notice what Paul continued with in 10th and 11th chapters of Romans.

10:¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1).

²⁰ But Isaiah is very bold and says:

“I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”

²¹ But to Israel he says:

“All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.”

11:¹ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! (Romans 10:20-11:1.)

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

“God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.” (Romans 11:7-8).

²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26)

Overlooking scriptures is a frequent problem with Protestant scholars. Additionally, many take verses/chapters out-of-context and fail to understand what they really mean. Many simply do not understand about mercy or salvation (even Martin Luther’s followers condemned those that held this position, please see the free online booklet *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God differ from most Protestants*).

Notice that Paul wrote that God blinded Israel and made it so they could not see for a while. And as addressed earlier, God will call them later. And all Israel shall be saved!

And God WILL have mercy on them! Is this not clear enough?

Not Knowing Jesus?

Roman Catholics, on the other hand, teach that salvation can be possible outside of knowing Christ (in violation of Acts 4:12 & John 17:3), but at least they believe that God can *somehow* save others.

Notice the official position of the Catholic Church on this as shown in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience — those too may achieve eternal salvation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 847. *Imprimi Potest* + Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Image Books by Doubleday, NY 2003, p. 244).

A Catholic priest commented on the above:

That covers the man on the island. But Gandhi did know about Christ, didn't he? Maybe not, Ogilvie said. If he was driven away from the church by nasty Christians, he may never truly have understood Jesus. The official Catholic catechism offers an even larger possible exception: God can do what God wants (The answer of where someone spends eternity depends on the denomination you ask. Dallas Morning News - Jan 20, 2007).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also teaches:

Everyone is called to enter the kingdom (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 553, p. 153).

While the Bible basically agrees with the above, it also makes it clear (see chapter 5) that not all are called in this life.

But strangely the *Catechism* overlooks portions of the Bible and teaches that there is no chance after the first death:

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1021, p. 153).

This creates a major dilemma for the Church of Rome, because, for example, how are those who die as babies called now?

Unlike the Roman Church, the *Continuing* Church of God teaches that babies will be resurrected, live a physical life, and will be offered salvation (cf. Isaiah 65:20). Salvation in the kingdom of God *will be* offered to all, but *has not been* offered to all in this age.

The Catholic Encyclopedia seems to understand that the Bible teaches destruction for those who are condemned and that some believe that most can be saved:

The state ... is called "destruction" (*apoleia*, Phil., iii, 19, and elsewhere), "perdition" (*olethros*, 1 Timothy 6:9), "eternal destruction" (*olethros aionios*, 2 Thessalonians 1:9), "corruption" (*phthora*, Galatians 6:8), "death" (Romans 6:21), "second death" (Revelation 2:11 and elsewhere) ...

Conditionalists hold only a hypothetical immortality of the soul, and assert that after undergoing a certain amount of punishment, the souls of the wicked will be annihilated ... The Universalists teach that in the end all ... human souls, will attain beatitude (*apokatastasis ton panton, restitutio omnium*, according to Origen). This was a tenet of the Origenists and the Misericordes of whom St. Augustine speaks (*De Civ. Dei*, XXI, xviii, n. 1, in P.L., XLI, 732). There were individual adherents of this opinion in every century ...

Among Catholics, Hirscher and Schell have recently expressed the opinion that those who do not die in the state of grace can still be converted after death if they are not too wicked and impenitent ... Many believe that reason cannot give any conclusive proof for the eternity of the pains..., but that it can merely show that this doctrine does not involve any contradiction. Since the Church has made no decision on this point, each one is entirely free to embrace this opinion ... In itself, it is no rejection of Catholic dogma to suppose that God might at times, by way of exception, liberate a soul from hell. (Hontheim J. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume VII. Published 1910. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, June 1, 1910. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

Yet, the Roman Catholic Church has clearly condemned those that do not believe in endless torment. Notice what the Second Council of Nicea declared in 787 A.D.:

If anyone denies ... the condign retribution to everyone, endless torment and endless bliss, etc. ... let him be anathema (Second Council of Nicæa, Pronouncements 18 & 19. 787 A.D. *The Divine Sacra Sent by the Emperors Constantine and Irene to the Most Holy and Most Blessed Hadrian, Pope of Old Rome. (Found in Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 32).*

Furthermore, many Catholic leaders have believed that “the majority of Christians are” condemned (Culligan E. *The Last World War and the End of Time*. The book was blessed by Pope Paul VI, 1966. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), p. 130) and:

“In 1846 there were over one billion 500 million inhabitants of the earth, but only an infinitesimal fraction of them had really fallen in love with Mary’s Son” (ibid, p. 164).

Also notice what a Jesuit teacher named Cornelius a Lapide proclaimed in the 17th century:

... even out of ten thousand, scarcely one is saved (cited in Farrar FW. *MERCY AND JUDGMENT. LAST WORDS ON CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY WITH REFERENCE TO DR. PUSEY’S “WHAT IS OF FAITH?* 2nd edition, 1882. R. CLAY. SONS, AND TAYWR, BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., p. 150).

While something like scarcely one in ten thousand or an ‘infinitesimal fraction’ will be saved in this age, these Catholic writers are referring to those as the top amounts who will ever be saved—they have not believed that any can be saved after this age.

The Eastern Orthodox, however, teach:

Basil, an Orthodox saint, in the 4th century wrote, “The mass of men (i.e. of christians) say that there is to be an end of punishment to those who are punished.” (quoting *S. Luke xii. 47-8*) — *Cone. xiv. De fut. judic.*) (Allin T. *Universalism Asserted: As the Hope of the Gospel on the Authority of Reason, the Fathers, and Holy Scripture*. E. Stock, 1891, p. 149).

... treatises were prefixed by Basil to the *Moralia*. He states that, when he enquired into the true causes of the troubles which weighed heavily on the Church, he could only refer them to breaches of the commandments of God. Hence the divine punishment, and the need of observing the Divine Law <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208.vi.ii.iv.html>

Most Orthodox theologians reject the idea of 'original guilt', put forth by Augustine and still accepted (albeit in mitigated form) by the Roman Catholic Church ... Humans (Orthodox usually teach) ... are only guilty in so far as by their own free choice they imitate Adam ... Orthodox have never held (as Augustine and many others in the west have done) that unbaptized babies, because tainted with original guilt, are consigned by a just God to the everlasting flames" (Ware T. The Orthodox Church. Penguin Books, London, 1997, pp.222-224).

"What exactly is the condition of souls in the period between death and the Resurrection of the Body at the Last Day? Here Orthodox teaching is not entirely clear...The majority would be inclined to say that the faithful departed do not suffer at all. Another school holds that perhaps they suffer, but if so, their suffering is of a purificatory but not an expiratory character. Yet a third group would prefer to leave the whole question entirely open: let us avoid detailed formulation about the life after death" (Ware, p.255).

A partial judgment is instituted immediately after our physical death, which places us in an intermediate condition of partial blessedness (for the righteous), or partial suffering (for the unrighteous).

Disavowing a belief in the Western "Purgatory," our Church believes that a change is possible during this intermediate state and stage. (Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh. The Dogmatic Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Greek Orthodox Diocese of America, August 21, 1998)

One of the differences between the CCOG and the Orthodox position, is that while many of the Orthodox generally do not consign souls to terroristic torment (they tend to cite Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose of Milan) and some opportunity may be available, they normally only strongly *suspect* that God will offer salvation to all, while in the CCOG we *confidentially* teach that God clearly will offer salvation to all and that this is clearly supported by numerous scriptures.

Origenism and Purgatory

Is the answer the doctrine of purgatory?

Some have claimed that purgatory originally came from 2 Maccabees 12:43-46, yet that is not what that citation teaches (basically the writer teaches that those who died in battle will be resurrected and he opined one could pray for their "guilt's undoing").

Some have claimed that the doctrine of purgatory was further taught in the pseudepigraphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* as well as *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity*, (Catholic Answers. The Roots of Purgatory. NIHIL OBSTAT: Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004. IMPRIMATUR: In accord with 1983 CIC 827 permission to publish this work is hereby granted. +Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004), yet those are not biblical texts.

Certain 5th century statements from Augustine of Hippo as well as some from followers of Origen helped lead to an abandonment of teachings from Origen of Alexandria.

Consider that when Origenism was denounced in the 6th century, “the doctrine of *apokatastasis* was definitely abandoned” by the Church of Rome (Batiffel P. Apocatastasis. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Published 1907)—though some Catholics think otherwise.

This denouncement was not satisfying to various ones. Many wondered what happened to people who were not saints, but who also were not incorrigibly wicked.

Without some version of apokatastasis, this presented a problem for various ones.

Then, seemingly as a replacement, Rome adopted its doctrine of purgatory around late 6th/early 7th century as statements Pope Gregory I confirm.

Though some writers hinted of it earlier, Anglican priest Dr. Luckock wrote:

Purgatorial fire ... The first real authority for the Roman view is Gregory the Great at the close of the 6th century. (Luckock, p. 78)

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

Gregory the Great speaks of those who after this life "will expiate their faults by purgatorial flames," and he adds "that the pain be more intolerable than any one can suffer in this life" (Ps. 3 poenit., n. 1) (Hanna, Purgatory. The Catholic Encyclopedia).

This is quite different than what Origen taught, as Origen taught that somehow people would be purified on earth (which is consistent with the 100 year period referred to in Isaiah 65:20, though Origen seemed to refer to Zechariah 5).

Here is more related to Gregory:

Gregory the Great speaks of those who after this life "will expiate their faults by purgatorial flames," and he adds "that the pain be more intolerable than any one can suffer in this life" (Ps. 3 poenit., n. 1) (Hanna, Purgatory. The Catholic Encyclopedia).

Gregory the Great ... says ... "He destroys the salt of the Roman fire, who imagines that all who go to Purgatory will be saved." (Luckock, pp. 78,79)

Purgatory, itself, became even more defined in the 11th century. The Eastern Orthodox claim that the adoption of the purgatory doctrine by the Church of Rome was one of the factors that later led to the “great schism” (Mastrantonis G, et al. The Basic Sources of the Teachings of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Greek Orthodox Diocese of America. Accessed 02/20/19).

Of course, not all in the Church of Rome fully abandoned apokatastasis nor did all fully embrace purgatory as Thomas Aquinas essentially admitted in the 13th century (The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas, Second and Revised Edition, 1920).

Interestingly, at least one prominent Catholic mystic (late 1300s/early 1400s), had a partially correct understanding as she saw no place called purgatory, but that God had a different plan:

Julian of Norwich saw neither ... purgatory, saw no Jews in eternal torment and taught salvation for all of mankind (Fanning S. *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*. Routledge, New York. 2001, reprinted 2006, p. 219).

And while she was not made a Catholic saint, the Catholics of Rome commemorate a feast day to her on May 13th of each year, hence she was considered to be at least a true Catholic. She is also formally commemorated with a feast on May 8th in the Anglican Church, Episcopal Church, and Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Anyway, Julian is not quoted because she was a mystic, but only was quoted to show that she, like various Greco-Roman-Protestants over the centuries have, understood some aspects of the truth about God's plan.

Notice also something from the article *Purgatory* in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

There are several passages in the New Testament that point to a process of purification after death. Thus, Jesus Christ declares (Matthew 12:32): "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." ...

St. Augustine also argues "that some sinners are not forgiven either in this world or in the next would not be truly said unless there were other [sinners] who, though not forgiven in this world, are forgiven in the world to come" (*City of God* XXI.24). The same interpretation is given by Gregory the Great (*Dial.*, IV, xxxix); St. Bede (commentary on this text); St. Bernard (*Sermo lxvi* in *Cantic.*, n. 11) and other eminent theological writers.

A further argument is supplied by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15:

"For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble: Every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

While this passage presents considerable difficulty, it is regarded by many of the Fathers and theologians as evidence for the existence of an intermediate state in which the dross of lighter transgressions will be burnt away, and the soul thus purified will be saved. (Hanna E. *Purgatory*, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911)

Though nothing in the above proves the existence of purgatory, the scriptures cited are consistent with the view that God can save people after death who have not committed the unpardonable sin. Thus, they, while calling it "an intermediate state," are supportive of the view of a 100 year period.

Perhaps I should mention that I also did come across a 19th century Protestant writing that, while not understanding the whole plan perfectly, did make the following correct observations about apocatastasis:

The Bible, from the opening to the close, testifies of the apostasy of the first man, and the apocatastasis of the second man, the Lord from heaven. ...

In order to understand the Scriptures, the reader with a steady eye to Jesus must search them from the beginning to the very end in the new heavens and the new earth, or “the apocatastasis, which God hath spoken by the mouth of *all* of his holy prophets.” (Harvard S. The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Kingdom Not of this World; Not in this World; But to Come in the Heavenly Country, of the Resurrection from the Dead and of the Restitution of All Things. Published by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1870, pp. 13-14)

The part bolded above is good advice. Those who search the scriptures from beginning to end should realize that a God of love truly does have an awesome and loving plan.

But the place called *Purgatory* is not part of it.

12. Conclusion: God's Loving Plan

There are hundreds of verses in the Bible that support the *Continuing* Church of God teachings regarding what theologians call apocatastasis. The CCOG view is certainly biblical.

Unlike Calvinistically-minded ones, we in the *Continuing* Church of God believe:

²⁰ Our God is the God of salvation (Psalms 68:20).

Just like the Jews did not understand the verses in Hebrew Bible that taught that the Messiah would be cut off as they were focused on verses showing how the Messiah would be king, many today who claim to believe the Christian faith simply do not understand that the Bible itself has taught that salvation would be offered to all after the second resurrection from the prophet Moses through Jesus Christ.

Salvation will be offered to all who ever lived, a few in this age, and everyone else in the age to come. Does your church understand and teach this? The God of love is merciful.

Jesus came to save more than a few (John 3:16-17).

²⁷ Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?
(Jeremiah 32:27).

Ultimately offering salvation to everyone is not too difficult for God (cf. Ezekiel 37:11-14; Jeremiah 32:17,27).

Maybe God is calling you now.

If so, remember that Peter taught:

¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21).

If God is calling you, or you are unsure, please check out our free online booklet: *Is God Calling You?* It, and our other free booklets, is available at www.ccog.org

Now if you have read this book through to here, you have read quotes from many prophets including Abraham, Job, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jesus Himself.

Many of those prophecies have not been fulfilled and only make logical sense if God has a plan to offer salvation in an age to come.

“Do not despise prophecies” (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

Nothing is too hard for God (Jeremiah 32:27).

The Apostle Paul warned:

40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

41 *“Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.”* (Acts 13:40-41).

Well, “do you believe the prophets?” (Acts 26:27).

Do you really believe the Bible or do you only have a limited understanding of *sola Scriptura* such as held by Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and many others?

Which is more appropriate traditions of men or the Bible?

God does not hold people accountable for what they have not been able to see (cf. John 9:41). The Bible clearly teaches that those who have been subject to condemnation will have an opportunity for salvation (cf. Isaiah 44:17-22; Matthew 10:15).

While not all will be saved, since God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient certainly He is powerful enough and wise enough to have a merciful plan of salvation that really works and that will result in nearly all who ever lived to be saved.

This is spoken throughout the Bible by God’s prophets.

God’s plan of salvation should be a comfort to all.

If you are still unsure that God will offer salvation to all, please strive to be fair-minded like the Bereans, who when they heard a new teaching, “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). The Bereans did not stick to inaccurate traditions their religious leaders were taught—so the Bible says they were “more noble” (KJV) than others.

Remember that God is a God of love. The love of His plan is shown throughout the entirety of His word.

God’s word is truth (John 17:17).

Therefore, you can be confident that all who ever lived will be granted a real opportunity for salvation, as **“all flesh shall see the salvation of God”** (Luke 3:6).

Continuing Church of God

The USA office of the ***Continuing Church of God*** is located at: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA. We have supporters all around the world, and in all inhabited continents (all continents, except Antarctica).

Continuing Church of God Website Information

CCOG.ORG The main website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

CCOG.ASIA Asian-focused website, with multiple Asian languages.

CCOG.IN India-focused website, with some Indian languages.

CCOG.EU European-focused website, with multiple European languages.

CCOG.NZ Website targeted towards New Zealand.

CCOGAFRICA.ORG Website targeted towards Africa.

CCOGCANADA.CA Website targeted towards Canada.

CDLIDD.ES This is a totally Spanish language website.

PNIND.PH Philippines-focused website, with some Tagalog.

Radio & YouTube Video Channels

BIBLENEWSPROPHECY.NET Bible News Prophecy online radio.

Bible News Prophecy channel. Sermonettes on YouTube & Vimeo.

CCOGAfrica channel. YouTube video messages from Africa.

CCOG Animations Animated messages on YouTube.

CDLIDDsermones channel. YouTube messages in Spanish.

ContinuingCOG channel. YouTube video sermons.

News and History Websites

CHURCHHISTORYBOOK.COM Church history website.

COGWRITER.COM News, history, and prophecy website