

REVELATION CHAPTERS 20-22

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This material was originally published as part of my paper dated November 1998, “A Verse-by-Verse Study of Six Important Eschatological Chapters of the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 24, 25; and Revelation 20-22: This Paper Deals Extensively with the Topic of God’s Ultimate Salvation Plans for the Nations.” That paper was produced using a Smith-Corona word processor that did not permit me to use italics, footnotes, different fonts or font sizes, etc. As I scan these chapters into a Word 2002 format to upload to the internet site I am incorporating some minor changes. In September, 2012 I am modifying this paper on Revelation chapters 20-22 to split it into six articles to put on several Christian article sites. I am incorporating some minor changes and adding to the content of this paper at this time.

Every verse of the book of Revelation, which is an extremely important book, is discussed in papers on my internet site, except for Rev. 11:1-14:5, which are discussed in a thorough verse-by-verse manner in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. For a condensed version, see my paper titled *Twenty-Four Articles on the Mid-Week Rapture* that is available on my internet site. Those twenty-four articles serve as a good introduction for my book and for the mid-week rapture viewpoint, that Christ will return and the rapture will take place right in the middle of the seven-year period that is sometimes called Daniel’s 70th week.

Revelation Chapter 20

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold of the dragon [Satan is called the dragon quite a few times in Rev. 12:3-13:11; and in Rev. 16:13; cf. Isa. 27:1.], the serpent of old [see Gen. 3:1-15], who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years [The thousand years of the millennium (the word millennium comes from Latin and means a thousand years) are also mentioned in 20:3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Many verses of the Bible speak of this kingdom, but these verses are the only ones that specifically mention the duration of a thousand years. There is much use of symbolic numbers in the book of Revelation, and this could be a symbolic use too, but it probably will last a thousand years.

There is an ancient, widespread view that as God created the world in six days, and then rested on the seventh day (cf. Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:8-11), and in that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8), so after six thousand years we will have a thousand year period of rest. The Bible’s chronology shows that there were about four thousand years from Adam to Christ, which means that, based on this view, it is time for the millennial kingdom.], **(3) and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer [See Isa. 24:21, 22. Isaiah chapters 24-27, which is sometimes called “Isaiah’s Little Apocalypse,” is discussed**

verse-by-verse in the paper on my internet site that deals with selected eschatological passages from the book of Isaiah. That paper and the companion papers for the books of Psalms and Jeremiah deal quite a bit with God's end-time salvation plans for the nations. I understand the nations to be distinct from God's true Israel, which includes all of the believers from Old Testament days and all true Christians, including those who will become Christians after the mid-week rapture, which will center in the end-time remnant of the nation Israel ("all Israel will be saved" [Rom. 11:26]). God will keep the covenant promises He made to Israel.

I believe we can safely assume that Satan's evil angels and demons will be restrained with him throughout the millennium. Deception is a primary work of Satan and his kingdom (cf. Rev. 12:9; 13:14; and 20:8, 10); this work started, as far as mankind is concerned, with Eve (cf. Gen. 3:1-6, 13; 2 Cor. 11:3; and 1 Tim. 2:14). In his work of deceiving, Satan uses Babylon the great harlot (which, when understood in the fullest sense, includes all false religion and all the things people live for in place of God) and every other lie designed to keep people from God and His (the) truth (cf., e.g., John 8:44); and in the last days he also uses Antichrist and the false prophet (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8-12; Rev. 13:14; and 19:20). All sin is deceitful; it promises good fruit, but it always ultimately yields bad fruit, including evil, chaos, destruction, and death (cf. Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 6:21-23 [As the margin of the NASB shows, the Greek noun translated "benefit" literally means "fruit"; I would translate it that way.]; Gal. 6:7, 8; and Heb. 3:13).

It is quite significant, but quite unexpected (based on most of the teaching of the New Testament), that "the nations" still exist on the earth after God's end-time judgment, which ends, in one significant sense, at the end of Daniel's 70th week. See the excerpt from George Ladd in the last paragraph of this bracket. See the section titled "A Brief Discussion on what the Rest of the New Testament (Apart from the Book of Revelation) Has To Say Regarding the Millennial Kingdom and God's Ultimate Salvation Plans for (the Elect of) the Nations" at the end of the discussion of Rev. 20:1-6 in this paper. However, based on a large number of Old Testament prophecies, the salvation of the remnant of the nations after God's end-time judgment of the world is to be expected. For many examples of such prophecies, see sections 1 and 2 in my paper titled, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* on internet site. (That paper was the Appendix in my original 1998 paper that I mentioned in the first paragraph of this paper.) Also see my papers on selected passages from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms on my internet site.

In most of those prophecies in the Old Testament that deal with God's salvation of the nations after His end-time judgment of the world, and here in Rev. 20:3, the nations are distinguished from God's true Israel. For one thing, true Israel reigns. Also, I believe the book of Revelation shows that all the members of true Israel will have been glorified by the time the millennial kingdom begins, unlike the nations. Apparently none of the people of the nations who enter the millennial kingdom will be glorified until after the millennium. And even in the eternal state, which follows the millennium, it seems that there will be a significant difference between the level of glory of true Israel and the elect of the nations, including the fact that true Israel will be reigning, even reigning over the nations. Revelation 22:5 shows that true Israel, God's bond-servants, will reign with God and His Son forever.

We'll discuss true Israel under 20:4, but here I'll say a little more about the nations. God,

who knows the hearts of all people and who doesn't make mistakes, is the One who determines what people will be left of the nations to enter the millennial kingdom. One thing that is clear is that none of these people will have worshiped Antichrist or taken his mark (Rev. 14:9-11). Some teach that the purpose of the sheep and goat judgment of Matt. 25:31-46 is to determine who will be left to enter the millennial kingdom and that the sheep constitute the remnant of the nations that will enter the millennial kingdom. I'll quote a paragraph under Matt. 25:31-46 from my paper on Matthew chapters 24, 25 that is available on my internet site. "It is important to see that this account (Matt. 25:31-46) isn't at all limited to a judgment of the nations to determine who will be permitted to enter the millennial kingdom, as some teach. The eternal destinies of those from the nations throughout this [what has turned out to be] lengthy Christian age are in view here. The eternal nature of this judgment is demonstrated by Matt. 25:41, 46." I'll comment further on Matt. 25:31-46, which is a very important prophetic passage, when we discuss the great-white-throne judgment under Rev. 20:11-15.

The peoples of the nations will still be in their natural bodies, and apparently they will still be having children throughout the millennium. It doesn't seem that these people will be converted before the end of Daniel's 70th week, but they will have been greatly humbled and enlightened through God's end-time judgments (cf., e.g., Rev. 15:3, 4) and the other things He does, including leaving them as a remnant at the end of the seven years. These people wouldn't be classified as those who had rejected the gospel, after being adequately confronted with it, and, as I mentioned, they aren't people who had taken the mark of the beast (cf. Rev. 14:9-11). Many/most of these people probably come from nations removed from the center of Antichrist's kingdom and activities.

Those who don't rebel, including their offspring, will ultimately enter God's glorified eternal state, pictured in Rev. 21:1-22:5. Significantly, these verses (21:1-22:5) also seem to clearly distinguish between the nations and true Israel. And, significantly, Rev. 21:27 informs us that the names of all those who have a place in God's eternal kingdom, very much including the elect of the nations, are recorded in the Lamb's book of life. This confirms that all who are saved are saved by the grace of God, through the atoning sacrifice of the "Lamb" of God, Christ Jesus.

When do the peoples of the nations become Christians? Or, do they become Christians? I don't claim to have all the answers regarding God's salvation plans for the nations (and it's not of crucial significance for us to understand such things at the present time; God will take care of the details at the proper time), but I don't picture the nations ever becoming Christians in the sense we do during this present age. When we become Christians, we become part of God's true Israel, the woman of Revelation chapter 12. Apparently none of those saved as part of the nations will ever become part of true Israel. I don't have a need to insist on this point. Isaiah 66:21 would fit the idea that some of them will become part of true Israel.

Some teach that all the saved of the nations will become Christians in same sense we become Christians, but the Scriptures, very much including the book of Revelation, seem to picture the nations being distinct from true Israel, even in the eternal state of Revelation chapters 21, 22. Anyway, it's clear that the nations (at least many/most of the people from the nations) who enter the millennial kingdom will be converted and submit in faith to God. (Any who aren't converted or who are converted but then later rebel against God will be removed by judgment. We know that there will be a major rebellion against God at the

end of the millennium.) And, as I mentioned, it is clear that they will be saved through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus (e.g., Rev. 21:27).

Also, it seems clear that this conversion will take place (at least for the most part) shortly after God's end-time judgments are completed (see Rev. 15:3, 4), in the early days of the establishing of the millennial kingdom. For more on the nations, and their salvation, see under Rev. 20:5, 6; and 20:11-22:3 in this paper; see on Dan. 7:12 (pages 74, 75 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*); on Dan. 7:26, 27 (page 86); on Zech. 9:10 (page 196); on Zech. 14:16-21 (pages 233-236); on Rev. 13:7b, 8 (pages 332-334); on Rev. 15:4 (pages 244-246); see Note 3 (especially the last paragraph) on pages 338-341; and see the entire paper titled *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* on my internet site.

I'll quote part of a paragraph from what George Ladd said under Rev. 20:3 (*A Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Eerdmans, 1972], pages 262, 263). "The mention of nations raises a difficult question. One would suppose from the preceding chapters of the Revelation that the entirety of mankind had been involved in the struggle between Christ and the Antichrist. ... [see Rev. 16:14, which is one of the verses Ladd cited in this paragraph] One might suppose that this satanic deception embraces all the nations of the earth, including both the kings and their subjects. Now, however, it seems clear that the 'kings of the earth' represent a select number who have supported Antichrist. There apparently remain nations outside the scope of this struggle who are now delivered from satanic deception."

I should mention that those who understand what is happening throughout the three and one-half year super-evil reign of Antichrist will understand that things won't be as they seem: Although Antichrist (in accordance with God's plan) will seem to be invincible, the Lord Jesus Christ will be in total control of the situation and will be using Antichrist and his followers before he judges and totally removes them.], **until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.** [Revelation 20:7-10 explain the release of Satan for a short time.] **(4) And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those** [I would skip the word "those," which isn't required by the Greek and gives the wrong meaning when it is included. The words that follow apply to "the souls of those who had been beheaded." The translations of the KJV, NKJV, and the NIV all agree with my viewpoint.] **who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life** [Coming to life here and in 20:5 speaks of the resurrection of the body of those who had died physically.] **and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** [A more literal translation of the Greek will help us here, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, and the souls of those who had been beheaded...." The verb "I saw" is only used once in the Greek. Note that the NASB has the second "saw" in italics.

For one thing, John sees thrones with people seated on them, who are reigning/judging. (These thrones undoubtedly refer to the thrones of Dan. 7:9. On the saints [true Israel] beginning to reign, cf. Dan. 7:18, 22, 27. Daniel 7:9-28 are discussed in some detail on pages 67-88 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) Those who John sees on the thrones are those members of true Israel who were glorified and caught up to God's throne and began to reign with Him in the middle of Daniel's 70th week (cf., e.g., Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21; 12:5; and 17:14). There was no need to mention their resurrection here since it was already

mentioned in Rev. 12:5; cf. Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11. They have already been reigning with Christ for three and one-half years by the time we get to the time setting of Rev. 20:4, at the end of Daniel's 70th week and the beginning of the millennium. In Rev. 17:14 the glorified saints are with Christ when Antichrist and the ten horns wage war against Him throughout that super-evil three and one-half year reign (e.g., Rev. 17:12-14).

Where are the thrones located? The general idea is clear enough, but it's hard to answer this question with precision. These thrones are (at least in some ways) in the heavenly, glorified dimension, but the glorified saints on the thrones are definitely involved with reigning (which includes judging) on the earth throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week, and then throughout the millennium. See, e.g., Rev. 20:9. (Our situation throughout the second half of Daniel's 70th week can be compared to some extent with the situation of God's angels now: they are located in the heavenly, glorified dimension, but they are very actively involved with things taking place on the earth.) I should mention that we won't necessarily literally have thrones; this could be, and probably just is, a symbolic way to speak of reigning. So too with our wearing crowns.

Along with the thrones and those seated on them, John also sees the souls of those members of true Israel who have been martyred for Christ during the second half of Daniel's 70th week, during the super-evil reign of Antichrist. In that John sees *souls*, they haven't been resurrected yet, nor have they begun to reign with Christ; but now it's time for them to be resurrected, glorified, and to begin to reign. They will join the members of true Israel who have already been reigning for three and one-half years. See under "thrones were set up" of Dan. 7:9 on pages 72, 73 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, including the section titled, "A More Detailed Look at Those Who Will Reign with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Time They Will Begin to Reign."

In that section, commenting on those members of true Israel who will become Christians (and thereby part of true Israel) after the rapture and who will still be alive on the earth at the end of Daniel's 70th week (in other words they won't be put to death, or just die, during that three and one-half year period), I said, "I assume that these believers will be transformed into the glory of the age to come at the end of Daniel's 70th week and will also reign throughout the millennium. (See under Isa. 66:8, cf. Rev. 15:2-4)." Isaiah 66:8 and Rev. 15:2-4 both rather strongly confirm that all the members of true Israel will be glorified by the beginning of the millennium. Isaiah 66:1-8 are discussed on pages 239-247 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*. Revelation 15:2-4 are discussed there on pages 244-246. There are many other verses that support this viewpoint (cf., e.g., Isa. 60:1-3, 19-21; and Rev. 19:7-9). Revelation 15:2-4 and Rev. 17:7-9 are discussed in my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21 on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).] **(5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power [The second death is explained by Rev. 20:14, 15; it is the lake of fire/hell.], but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.** [The "first resurrection" is contrasted with the resurrection at the end of the millennium, which is pictured in Rev. 20:12, 13. Many verses show that true Israel will be resurrected before "the rest of the dead" (Rev. 20:5). See, e.g., Matt. 24:30, 31; Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; and Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11, 12; 12:5; 17:14; and 19:14. The "first resurrection" is the resurrection of true Israel; it embraces all the members of true Israel, including those who are resurrected in the middle

of Daniel's 70th week and those who are resurrected at the end of this seven-year period. The members of God's true Israel who will be alive when Christ returns in the middle of Daniel's 70th week and at the end of Daniel's 70th week won't ever die, so they won't need to be resurrected, but they will be transformed/glorified.

Taken in the fullest sense, the first resurrection includes the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20, 23) and those select saints (also part of true Israel) who were resurrected shortly after He was (Matt. 27:52, 53). It is very clear that the first resurrection is not limited to the martyrs mentioned in Rev. 20:4. It is also very clear, based on many verses, that all true Israel will reign throughout the millennial kingdom (and forever), not just the martyrs of the last three and one-half years. As I have mentioned, we can apparently say that all the members of true Israel will have been glorified by the time the millennial kingdom begins, and we can apparently also say that none of the elect of the nations will be resurrected to enter the eternal state of glory until after the millennium.

On being "priests of God," cf., e.g., Rev. 1:6; 5:10. I assume this priesthood will continue, at least in some ways, into the eternal state of Revelation chapters 21, 22, but the need for this priesthood will be substantially diminished after the elect of the nations have been glorified. (See under Rev. 22:3-5.) Revelation 22:5 makes it clear that the *reign* of God's bond-servants (Rev. 22:3) will continue forever. God's bond-servants is the equivalent of His true Israel.

A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON WHAT THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (APART FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION) HAS TO SAY REGARDING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM AND GOD'S ULTIMATE SALVATION PLANS FOR (THE ELECT OF) THE NATIONS. This discussion is not germane to the heart of the message of the New Testament and is somewhat speculative. At the same time the topic is important and interesting, and Revelation chapters 20-22 deal quite a bit with this topic.

This discussion is somewhat brief; I'm not attempting to say everything that could be said on this important topic here. To prepare to write this present section, I read through the New Testament in rather quick fashion, apart from the book of Revelation, looking for relevant verses.

I agree with those who say there aren't any verses (apart from the Old Testament and the book of Revelation) that clearly speak of the millennial kingdom, where, for one thing, a multitude from the nations, who will be converted to God after His end-time judgment of the world, will have a place. Verses like Luke 13:29 (cf. Matt. 8:11); Acts 1:6; 3:19-21; Rom. 8:18-25; and 1 Cor. 15:20-28 fit the idea of a millennial kingdom, but none of them clearly speak of this kingdom. The most relevant passage listed here is 1 Cor. 15:20-28, where the apostle Paul speaks of a gap between the time Christ returns and the saints are resurrected, and the time Christ has abolished all enemies, the last enemy being death (cf. Rev. 20:11-15). (See under 1 Cor. 15:20-28 in my paper dealing with 1 Corinthians chapter 15.) However, in the light of other things Paul said in his epistles (see below), I don't believe he thought in terms of the nations being saved after Christ has returned to judge the world. Some other verses to consider regarding God's ultimate salvation of the elect of the nations are Matt. 11:20-24; 12:41, 42; Luke 9:51-56; 10:12-15; and 11:31, 32.

Some New Testament verses that (seem to) teach—verses that leave the strong

impression—that all the people who will escape destruction when Christ returns will have been converted/saved before His return: Matt. 24:37-41; Mark 16:15, 16 (These verses in Mark 16, and many similar verses, don't really speak clearly regarding those who haven't heard, and therefore haven't rejected, the gospel); Luke 3:7-17; 17:26-37; 21:34-36; Rom. 1:16-6:23; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 2:1-3, 12; 4:17-19; 5:5-7; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13; 5:2, 3, 9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2:10-12; James 1:27; 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17, 18; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:8-14; and 5:19.

Some New Testament verses that quote Old Testament prophecies that deal for the most part with (or, in a few cases, at least include) God's ultimate salvation of the (remnant of) the nations after His end-time judgment and use them with reference to Gentiles who are converted to Christ before He returns to judge the world. I'm not suggesting that it was inappropriate for New Testament writers to use these Old Testament prophecies as they used them in these verses. (Quotations were used in a variety of ways in the ancient world, many of them quite imprecise, including in the Greek New Testament; for one thing, they didn't use quotation marks; and sometimes they were merely alluding (referring in a casual or indirect way) to a passage. I'll quote part of what A. Berkeley Mickelsen said under the heading "Interpretation of the Old Testament Quotations and Allusions" (*Interpreting the Bible* [Eerdmans, 1963], page 255). "... Some quotations are from the Hebrew text; many more are from the Septuagint [the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek]; others differ from both either because the writer was using some other written text (such as a targum [in Aramaic] or another Greek version), or oral tradition, or was quoting from memory and was not trying to be exact, or was altering the original statement to make it adapt more easily to his particular train of thought.")

There would be a problem, however, if we were to think that the New Testament writers were always indicating the inspired, primary meaning of the passages they "quoted" or alluded to. In all the passages cited in the following paragraph, except the first one, the apostle Paul is the writer/speaker; in the first passage James is the speaker.

The verses are Acts 15:16-18 (from Amos 9:11, 12); Rom. 15:10-12 (from Deut. 32:43; Psalm 117:1 [The nations won't praise God as nations until after His end-time judgment.]; and Isa. 11:10; note that the Old Testament verses all use the word "nations," but the verses in Romans [NASB] use "Gentiles"; the Hebrew and Greek nouns can be translated either way); 1 Cor. 15:54 (from Isa. 25:8; this important verse from Isaiah is discussed in section 1 of my paper, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* and in my paper on selected eschatological passages from Isaiah); and Gal. 3:8 (with Gen. 12:3); cf. Acts 13:47 (with Isa. 42:6; 49:6). In Rom. 11:25-27 the apostle Paul seems to teach that all the Gentiles who will be saved through Christ will be saved before the remnant of the nation Israel is saved in the last days, which includes (from his point of view) the idea that they will all be saved before Christ returns.

Some concluding, summarizing remarks. Why would God permit the writers of the New Testament (apart from the book of Revelation and Matt. 25:31-46) to omit almost any mention of His ultimate salvation of the elect of the nations after His end-time judgment of the world, which was clearly taught in the Old Testament? Based on what I said above in this section, it seems rather clear that these writers didn't know of God's plan to ultimately save (the elect of) the nations after His end-time judgment of the world. (If some did know

it, they didn't share it, at least not in a clear way.) It is interesting, however, that the dominant viewpoint in the Christian writings (after the New Testament) for the first few centuries was premillennial; the majority believed in a literal millennial kingdom. This viewpoint undoubtedly derived from the book of Revelation (especially chapter 20), from the work of the Holy Spirit, and from what was passed down from the first century church, especially from the apostles.

I cannot dogmatically say why God didn't fully and clearly incorporate these teachings into the teachings/writings of the apostles and their co-workers in the New Testament before the book of Revelation, but it seems that God had a good and sufficient reason, which we'll discuss. It seems clear to me that we shouldn't blame this omission on the apostles; they faithfully passed on what had been given to them by God. For one thing, in the plan of God, revelation is progressive (the old testament prophets didn't understand, for example, that the Messiah would be deity, or that He would come twice, with two very different comings); and even after the book of Revelation was given, that book wasn't fully understood, and apparently this fit God's plans too. In our day there still are major differences in the interpretation of the book of Revelation, but it seems that God will open up the details of the book more and more in these last days; we're the ones who need to understand these details.

What the Bible teaches (or at least what I believe it teaches) regarding God's ultimate salvation of the elect of the nations is significant, interesting, and easy to accept; it makes God's plan of salvation more generous. (God makes it a priority to save every person He can save [cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-7]. He can't save rebels who won't repent. A good God can't allow rebels into heaven, and they wouldn't want to be in heaven on God's terms, not that they will want the alternative.) There is, however, a downside to sharing this Biblical teaching and this is significant; it can lend itself to great abuse.

The apostles (and the Christian church) were sent to call mankind to repentance and faith. If they included the message about people being saved after the Lord Jesus has returned and judged the world who had not become Christians before He returned or about the (possible) salvation of some people who die without having become Christians, some/many people would undoubtedly wrongly use that information to minimize the need to repent and submit to Christ now. When God deals with a person through the gospel, they are obligated to respond with repentance and faith. There's also the potential problem that some (perhaps many) Christians would allow this information to minimize our obligation to take the gospel to the world. It is significant that the apostle Paul, even at the fairly early time that he wrote Romans (about AD 55) assumed that the gospel had pretty well covered the world (Rom. 10:18; Col. 1:6, 23).

It seems clear to me that it must have been part of God's plan to subordinate making known His ultimate plans for the salvation of the elect of the nations throughout this present age. These plans certainly don't contradict His gospel plans for this age, but they do constitute an addition to the gospel message that is presented in most of the New Testament. Living at the end of this age, as we apparently are, it seems that God is allowing us more insight into His end-time plans.] **(7) And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison [cf. Rev. 20:3], (8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth [that is, worldwide; cf. Rev. 7:1], Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war [I believe this is the war prophesied about in Ezekiel chapters 38, 39. This is, at least, the primary and ultimate war**

prophesied about there. For one thing, these chapters in Ezekiel speak of “Gog of the land of Magog.” Ezekiel chapters 38, 39 are discussed on pages 144-146 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.]; **the number of them is like the sand of the seashore** [cf. Ezek. 38:9, 15, 16]. [It’s hard to understand how so many people could be so sinful (the sin problem runs very deep), but it’s clear that such people don’t really love God and His ways, and they aren’t people who would really want to be part of God’s eternal kingdom, not that they will want the alternative. God knows what is in the heart of all people, and it is obvious why He would release the devil for a short time to put such people to the test.

There will be great longevity in the millennial kingdom; it is possible that people won’t die if they don’t get into sin (Isa. 65:20, 21). The multitudes who rebel at the end of the millennial kingdom could be limited to some of the offspring of those who enter the millennial kingdom.] **(9) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth** [The NIV has, “They marched across the breadth of the earth.” It seems that “the broad plain of the earth” – it would probably be better to translate “the broad plain of the land” – refers to the broad plain around Jerusalem, but there is no broad plain around Jerusalem, at least not at the present time. Apparently this verse anticipates the transformation of Jerusalem and the land around Jerusalem that will take place about the time the millennial kingdom begins (see Zech. 14:10). That verse prophesies of a rather large amount of land around Jerusalem being changed into a “plain” and of Jerusalem being raised up (cf. Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1; and Ezek. 40:2).] **and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem], and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.** [On the fire, cf. Ezek. 38:22; 39:6.] **(10) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.** [Cf. Rev. 19:20; 20:14, 15; 21:8; and 14:9-11.] **(11) And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.** [God the Father is seated on the throne (cf. Rev. 4:2, 3; 5:1, 5-7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; and Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14), but it is quite possible that we should think of God the Son being on the throne with the Father here too (cf., e.g., Rev. 22:1., 3). (God the Father has the preeminent role in the Trinity. See my papers titled, *Who Do We Worship?*; *Who Do We Pray To?*; *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*; and *More on the Trinity*. They are available on my internet site.) It is clear that the Son is active in the end-time judgments (cf., e.g., Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:21-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; and Rev. 22:12). Earth and heaven fled away because, for one thing, it is now time for God’s new heaven and new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1).] **(12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne** [[I agree with the many commentators who equate “the dead” here with “the rest of the dead” of Rev. 20:5. We see the resurrection of “the dead” in 20:13.

This double bracket continues for more than ten pages before we continue with Rev. 20:12.

(We could also think of the final judgment of those who have died during the millennium, even though they apparently aren’t specifically mentioned in these verses. This would include those associated with the rebellion of Rev. 20:7-10, but this multitude hardly needs a final judgment (it is possible that they will go directly to the lake of fire with Satan [Rev. 20:9, 10]); it seems they have adequately demonstrated what is in their hearts and determined their final destinies by this end-of-the-millennium rebellion. Because of the

longevity during the millennium, most of those who die during the millennium (if not all of them) may be rebels (cf. Isa. 65:20).

Also there at the great-white-throne judgment, but not specifically mentioned in these verses, will be those people from the nations who will be converted and stay faithful to God throughout their lives in the millennium. It may safely be assumed that they are part of God's elect and will have a place in the new earth, apparently as part of the nations, the nations being distinct from true Israel.)

Many Christians who agree that there will be a distinct group called the nations in Revelation chapters 21, 22 understand the nations to be limited to those from the nations who are converted and stay faithful throughout their lives in the millennium. This is certainly possible, but I believe (without being dogmatic) that the names of many of the people resurrected to stand before God at the great white throne judgment will be found in the "book of life" of Rev. 20:12 and 15. See under Rev. 20:12-21:8; 21:24-22:5 in this paper. See under Matt. 25:31-46 in my paper on Matthew chapters 24, 25 (that paper is on my internet site). See Isaiah chapters 24-27 (especially see Isa. 25:6-8 and 26:18, 19) in my paper titled *Verse-by-Verse Studies of Selected Eschatological Prophecies from the Book of Isaiah* (that lengthy paper is included on my internet site). See my paper *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* on my internet site. I'll include two excerpts from that 35 page paper (excerpts dealing with Ezek. 16:44-63 and Psalm 87) as we continue in this section. I recommend that you read that entire paper. Most of the content of that paper is directly relevant to the question whether any of the names of the people who live and die from Adam to the time the millennial kingdom begins who would not be classified as believers will be found in the book of life. Large numbers of those people were not confronted, or at least not confronted in a significant way, with the gospel (or with a clear call to salvation in the days before the gospel was proclaimed). Some other verses to consider on this topic are: Jer. 48:47; 49:6, 38, 39 (These verses are discussed on pages 45, 46 of my paper on Jeremiah, which is on my internet site.)

If you are interested in this topic at all, you will want to read section 5 of my paper titled, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* on my internet site. Section 5 is titled, "Various Views Regarding the Possibility of Salvation of (Some from) the Nations (dealing mostly with the unevangelized)." I'll list the three sections of section 5:

A. John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* [Eerdmans, 1992].

B. Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, edited by John Sanders [InterVarsity Press, 1995].

C. Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Salvation Outside the Church?: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* [Paulist Press, 1992].

The extensive excerpts included in the original paper were substantially reduced in the internet version of this paper because I had received permission to quote extensively for the original paper, but not for the internet version. I'll send you a copy of the original

version of this section of the paper, which has more than twice the content, if you are interested. (Karl Kemp; P. O. Box 1816; St. Charles, MO, 63302)

As I mentioned, I believe that some of those from the nations called “the dead” here in Rev. 20:12 will prove to be among God’s elect, that some of their names will be found in the “book of life,” which is mentioned in Rev. 20:12 and 15 (cf. Rev. 21:27; 13:8; 17:8). This viewpoint is controversial. I have been teaching this viewpoint for twenty-five or thirty years, but never in a dogmatic way. I am more convinced than ever that this viewpoint will be proven true, but I still am not being dogmatic. For one thing, since we are considering things that won’t come to pass until the end of the millennium, there is no big need for Christians to agree on this topic. Why even mention this idea? We need to do the best we can do in interpreting God’s Word. Furthermore, if this view is true, it has a lot to say about God. We must make the truth a top priority – I’m not afraid of the truth, even if it is unpopular in some circles.

The book of life here (Rev. 20:11-15) seems to play a much larger role than just confirming the damnation of all of “the dead.” As I pointed out, these verses (20:11-15) seem to be limited to a discussion of the final judgment of “the dead”; they apparently don’t specifically mention the judgment of the nations who live during the millennium (whether elect or non-elect, whether still alive or dead). From my point of view, it would be somewhat surprising to spend so much time on these details of the judgment of “the dead” if the outcome was to be entirely negative, with none of these people’s names being found in the book of life, and all of them being cast into the lake of fire. For one thing, this doesn’t fit well with the strong emphasis in Rev. 21:1-22:3 on God’s ultimate salvation of the nations. For another thing, it seems significant that Rev. 20:15 says, “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” That wording doesn’t make it sound like none of the names of those people will be found written in the book of life. Verse 15 didn’t say, for example, “Since none of their names were found written in the book of life, they were all thrown into the lake of fire.”

Most commentators on the book of Revelation that I’ve looked at (and I’ve looked at many of them) take the viewpoint that all “the dead” of Rev. 20:12 are destined for hell. F. F. Bruce is one exception (*New Layman’s Bible Commentary*, [Zondervan, 1979]. He was born in 1910; he died recently.) There is a problem, however, in that Bruce goes too far and seems to picture just about everyone eventually being saved, if not everyone. Under 21:8 he says, “[John’s] universalism is eschatological, but not retrospectively effective.” The Webster’s *New World Dictionary* defines universalism as “the theological doctrine that all souls will eventually find salvation in the grace of God.” By saying that “[John’s] universalism is eschatological,” Bruce means that the universalism won’t be manifested until late. By the words “but not retrospectively effective,” he apparently just means that looking back to (contemplating) the lives/state of many of those ultimately saved, you wouldn’t see much evidence (if any) of their ultimate salvation.

F. F. Bruce is a well-respected, evangelical scholar from England; I have profited from several of his books/writings, including this article on the book of Revelation. However, if I understand him, he goes way too far here. Universalism is rather widely accepted in our day in Christianity, but it isn’t widely accepted among evangelicals, and rightly so. I don’t believe we can begin to square the doctrine of universalism with the teaching of the Bible,

very much including the teaching of the book of Revelation.

Evangelicals going to extreme viewpoints like universalism, and the fact that many Christians who hold “wider hope” viewpoints for the ultimate salvation of some of those who have died without becoming believers (old covenant or new covenant believers) are not solid on the Scriptural basics of the gospel make me all the more reserved and cautious in teaching (but not dogmatically) that some of “the dead” of Rev. 20:12, 13 are elect of God and will ultimately obtain salvation through Christ Jesus as part of the nations. (Some of these Christian scholars deny basic Christian, Biblical doctrines like the virgin birth, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, like the existence of God’s angels, the devil, and demon spirits, and like the reality of miracles, even the miracles spoken of in the Bible. I’m not the judge of these people, but I can’t consider this acceptable, Biblical Christianity.) I don’t believe, however, that I can refrain from presenting what I believe the Scriptures teach because some have gone to extremes, even heretical extremes. I’m doing everything I can do, however, to warn the readers to make sure they don’t just accept everything being taught under the name Christian. There’s a slippery slope we must be aware of; false doctrine can lead to destruction. We must make learning the truth top priority, and living in accordance with the truth.

Assuming it is true, that some of the names of people judged at the great-white-throne judgment are found in the book of life, why will their names be found there? The basic answer to that question is that God (who knows what He is doing and doesn’t make mistakes) put their names in the book of life, the Lamb’s book of life (e.g., Rev. 13:8; 21:27). As Rev. 20:12, 13 show, their works are a factor, but the dominant factor is God’s choosing, and again, He knows what He is doing and doesn’t make mistakes. I’ll guarantee you that no rebels (people who are still rebellious) will enter heaven. Furthermore, I would like to think that there won’t be any people in hell who would want to be in heaven on God’s terms, people who would really love God and be totally and humbly submitted to Him, His Son, and His truth, righteousness, and holiness forever.

And, assuming it is true, as I have suggested, that all the members of true Israel will have been judged, glorified, and will have begun to reign by the time the millennial kingdom begins, there won’t be any members of true Israel judged at the great-white-throne judgment.

Excerpt from Section 2 of my paper *More Regarding God’s Salvation Plans for the Nations* that deals with Ezek. 16:44-63, especially verses 53-63:

[This chapter of Ezekiel seems to teach that we are to expect the ultimate salvation of some of the people from ancient Sodom. Assuming this interpretation is correct, we tend to expect some from most other nations/cities to have a place in God’s new earth.] “**Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb concerning you, saying, “Like mother, like daughter.” (45) You** [God is speaking to Jerusalem, the capital city of the nation of Judah (cf. Ezek. 16:2, 3).] **are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.** [The “husband” (also “their husbands”) is God (cf., e.g., 16:8, 15, 32). The statement regarding

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

ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger [On older and younger, see under 16:46]; **and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.** [The nations never will become part of God's true Israel, but they will be saved by the God of true Israel and through the blood of His Son (Rev. 21:27).] **(62) Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD** [Yahweh], **(63) in order that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,' the Lord GOD declares.**" [For one thing, God's plans are designed to humble His people (including the elect of the nations) and make them know that we are all totally dependent on God's grace in Christ Jesus and that we must be obedient to Him. There is zero room for pride and rebellion against God and His Son. Cf., e.g., Rom. 11:32-36.]

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

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

Keil goes on to give his viewpoint how this will work: He says that all who have died without hearing the gospel will have an opportunity to accept, or to reject, the gospel, and he mentions 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6 to back up this viewpoint. I don't believe the viewpoint that all will have an opportunity to accept the gospel after death, if they didn't hear it in this life, is satisfactory, and I don't believe these verses from 1 Peter teach this viewpoint. (See section 5 of my paper, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations*, where the different viewpoints regarding the possibility of salvation for (some of) those from the nations who died not having a covenant relationship with God are discussed. Also 1 Peter 3:18-4:6 are discussed in some detail at the end of that paper. Those verses are also important for the topic of holiness and victory over sin.) Keil makes it clear that he doesn't want his view "to be confounded with the heretical doctrine of the restoration, i.e. the ultimate salvation of all the ungodly, and even of the devil himself."]

Excerpt from Section 2 of my paper *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* that deals with Psalm 87:3-7:

[This psalm is quite important for this study.] **Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.** [This speaks of Jerusalem (Zion), including spiritual Jerusalem (Jerusalem above, heavenly Jerusalem) and new Jerusalem (cf., e.g., Gal. 4:26, 27; Heb. 12:22; Isa. 2:2-4; and Rev. 21:1-22:5).] **(4) “I shall mention Rahab [Egypt] and Babylon among those who know Me; Behold Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: ‘This one was born there.’ ”** [During this present age, we can speak of Christians being born of Jerusalem above (cf. Gal. 4:26), but the birth into the fulness of eternal life won't be available until the end of this age. (On this completed birth for true Israel at the time of Christ's return, see on Rev. 12:5 on pages 314-316 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) This birth of Psalm 87, however, goes beyond the birth into the fulness of eternal life for true Israel and speaks of (or at least includes) this birth for (the elect of) the nations that will take place after the great-white-throne judgment, as the nations are given a place on God's new earth, with access to New Jerusalem, as pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22. The nations begin to come to Jerusalem, and more importantly to God, at the beginning of the millennium, but they will not experience the birth into the eternal life of God's eternal kingdom until after the millennium.] **(5) But** [I would translate “And” with the KJV, or “Indeed” with the NIV, or the equivalent.] **of Zion [Jerusalem] it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her”** [speaking of those mentioned in verse 4, not that the listing in verse 4 was meant to be complete]; **And the Most High Himself will establish her [Zion]. (6) The Lord shall count when He registers the peoples [Hebrew “amim”], “This one was born there.”** [The final registering of the peoples won't take place until after the great-white-throne judgment. Compare the Lamb's book of life, especially Rev. 21:27.] **(7) Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, “All my springs of joy [The words “of joy” were added in italics by the NASB. I would skip these added words, as do the NIV, KJV, and NKJV] are in you.”** ’ [“You” here refers to Zion/Jerusalem, but it must be understood that all the life and blessings of Jerusalem, including new Jerusalem, come from God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. Revelation 7:17; 21:6 mention the “spring(s) of the water of life”; compare the “river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb” in Rev. 22:1, 2.]

I'll give another example where some Christians have gone beyond what the Bible teaches about the status (saved, or not saved) of many who are not Christians. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches about salvation. I'll start by quoting section 16 from the Roman Catholic Vatican II document titled, *Lumen Gentium*, which means “Light of the Nations,” This “dogmatic constitution on the church” was “solemnly promulgated by his holiness Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964.” I took this from www.vatican.va/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/...

“Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of

their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.

But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Saviour wills that all men be saved.

Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life: But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator. Or some there are who, living and dying in this world without God, are exposed to final despair. Wherefore to promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of all of these, and mindful of the command of the Lord, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature', the Church fosters the missions with care and attention."

You will get more than one interpretation from Roman Catholics regarding what this means for the status of Jews or Moslems and the other non-Christians this section 16 discusses, but this is clearly saying much more than Jews and Moslems and other non-Christians are invited to become Christians. All people have been invited to become Christians. I was quite surprised when I first read this document and even more surprised by some of the comments that Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., who "has taught theology for many years at Gregorian University in Rome," made on this topic, including some of his comments and excerpts dealing with Pope John Paul II.

I'll include several excerpts from Sullivan (*Salvation Outside the Church?: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* [Paulist Press, 1992]) that will help us understand this important topic. A few of these excerpts will enable us to understand something of how Pope John Paul II understood the topic discussed in Lumen Gentium 16. It is clear, for one thing, that he believed that people (even large numbers of people) can be/are saved through Christ who die without becoming Christians. I appreciate generosity, but I believe he is far too generous and that he misses the biblical balance with some of his statements on this topic. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible, especially the New Testament, teaches regarding the all-important topic of salvation.

Regarding those "who in shadows and images seek the unknown God," Sullivan says, "presumably the council is here referring to those who belong to other non-Christian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, although no religions are mentioned by name" (page 154).

I'll quote the "third eucharistic prayer," which was part of the fruit of the liturgical renewal

mandated by the council, and reflects the doctrine of Vatican II, and what Sullivan said about this prayer. “ ‘Welcome into your kingdom our departed brothers and sisters, and all who have left this world in your friendship.’ Here the ‘departed brothers and sisters’ are those who have been members of the Christians family of faith, and ‘all who have departed this world in your friendship’ would include those who, without Christian faith and baptism, have died in the friendship of God” (pages 159, 160).

I’ll quote part of Sullivan’s last paragraph in this chapter (chapter 9) titled “The Second Vatican Council.” “It can hardly be denied that this council has marked a decisive change in Catholic thinking about the salvation of those ‘outside.’ Its opening to the ecumenical movement has introduced an altogether new understanding of the ecclesial status of the other Christian communities, and of their role in the salvation of those who belong to them in good faith. Perhaps even more striking is the optimism which characterizes the approach of Vatican II to the question of salvation for the great majority of the people of the world who have neither Christian faith nor baptism” (page 160).

I’ll include a few excerpts from chapter 11, “Papal Teaching After Vatican II,” that deal with Pope John Paul II. “It is significant that in this first encyclical [“Redemptor Hominis,” issued by him March 4, 1979], John Paul already stressed the aspect of his thought about the non-Christians that would become the key element of his teaching in their regard. This is: respect for the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in non-Christians and in their religions—a presence and activity which is seen above all in their practice of virtue, their spirituality and their prayer...” (page 190).

On pages 192, 193 Sullivan says, “[In October] 1986, at the invitation of Pope John Paul, there took place at Assisi an event that was surely unique in the history of the world: a Day of Prayer for Peace in which representatives of the major Christian confessions and the major non-Christian religions of the world took part.”

I learned from other sources that the participants at the prayer meeting included the leaders of non-Christian religions, including Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists (including the Dalai Lama), Japanese Shintoists, fire worshipping Zoroastrians, Baha’i, and animists (including Voodoo worshippers and a medicine man of the Crow Indians of North America). I’ll include four brief excerpts from an Associated Press report: “Assisi, Italy—Chants, temple bells and pagan spells echoed around the Roman Catholic shrines of Assisi yesterday as Pope John Paul II and his 200 guests from the world’s 12 main religions prayed for world peace....” “The medicine man of the Crow Indians (spirit worshippers), Chief John Pretty-on-Top, offered to cast out evil spirits. Many came forward, among them a young Franciscan monk.” “In a chapel down the road, the head of the Zoroastrian church in Bombay prayed before a fire that symbolized his God.” “African animists, their togas the envy of any designer, invoked the spirits of trees and plants to come to the aid of peace.”

Here’s part of what the pope said regarding this event (December 22, 1986, some two months after the day of prayer for peace). “At Assisi, in an extraordinary way, there was the discovery of the unique value that prayer has for peace.... ... Every authentic prayer is under the influence of the Spirit, ‘who intercedes insistently for us...because we do not even know how to pray as we ought,’ but he prays in us ‘with unutterable groanings’ and

‘the One who searches hearts knows what are the desires of the Spirit’ (cf. Rom. 8:26, 27). We can indeed maintain that every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person” (still quoting from Sullivan; pages 192, 193).

I don’t believe the apostle Paul, who wrote Rom. 8:26-27, would even apply this special ministry of the Spirit to the apostles of Jesus who lived in the days before the promised life-giving Spirit was given to true Christians, after the all-important atoning death of the Lamb of God, starting at Pentecost. And he certainly wouldn’t have spoken of the Spirit exercising this ministry in the hearts of non-Christians. Note that Rom. 8:27 goes on to specify that the Spirit is interceding for the saints, from within their hearts, where He dwells. Also note that in Rom. 8:23 Paul speaks of (true) Christians as those who have received “the first fruits of the Spirit.” In Rom. 8:1-17 Paul shows that it is only (true) Christians who have received the Spirit, and there are quite a few other passages that teach this same truth. In John 7:37-39, for example, Jesus spoke of the fact that those who believe in Him (which includes a commitment from the heart to live for Him) will receive the Holy Spirit after He is glorified. It’s good to be as generous as we can with all people, but it won’t work for good to go beyond what the Scriptures teach.

I’ll quote from Sullivan again, “John Paul insists that while salvation is offered to all, it is always salvation in Christ.

‘The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the Gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace, which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of His sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation.’ (Sullivan quoted John Paul from “Redemptoris missio, n. 8, p. 15.”)

Here we find an extremely important statement concerning the way in which non-Christians are saved: for ‘those who are brought up in other religious traditions,’ the grace which comes from Christ ‘enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual’ condition. Since their spiritual condition can be expected normally to reflect the religious traditions in which they have been brought up, it would logically follow that the grace they receive will also be accommodated to those religious traditions. ...” (pages 194, 195).

I’ll include a final brief excerpt from Sullivan's Conclusion from page 203. He is discussing the factors that “have contributed to forming the positive attitude concerning the salvation of those outside the church, which is so striking a characteristic of the Second Vatican Council.” “In the first place I would mention a development that exemplifies what Vatican II called ‘remembering that in Catholic teaching there exists an order or

“hierarchy” of truths’ (UR 11). This involves recognizing the primary importance of the truth that God wills the salvation of every human being. To attribute to the universal salvific will of God the first place in a hierarchy of truths means giving a subordinate place to the necessity of such means of salvation as baptism and membership in the church. Such secondary truths, then, have to be understood and formulated in such a way as to confirm, rather than conflict with, the primary truth.”

I would like to make a few brief comments based on the experiences I had while teaching (mostly teaching the Bible) among Roman Catholics during the early days of the Roman Catholic charismatic renewal, mostly in the late 60s and early 70s. I was quite impressed with much that I saw. I met large numbers of Catholics, including many of the leaders (including many nuns and quite a few priests), who were hungry to understand and to live basic Bible-centered Christianity, including the new birth, righteousness and the victory over sin, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most of them fully accepted me, even though I wasn’t Roman Catholic.

One major problem that surfaced on occasion was the fact that some of the leaders (and others) had picked up quite a bit of liberal (modernistic) theology, which means for the most part that they had been taught and accepted the idea that the Bible is full of errors and we must discard much that it teaches. Moses didn’t really write the Mosaic Law; Daniel didn’t really write the book of Daniel and the “prophecies” in the book of Daniel aren’t really prophecies from God; the devil and demons don’t actually exist and the primary thing that matters is that you love everybody; etc., etc. I could go on for a long time, but you have a dangerous combination when leaders who don’t believe in demons (but may have studied psychology) are getting involved with supernatural things like healing and especially inner healing. Although problems didn’t surface very often when I was teaching among Roman Catholic charismatics, we must recognize the dangers associated with traditions that don’t line up with the Bible.

Now we’ll continue with Rev. 20:12.], **and books were opened** [As the following words show, these books contain the deeds/works of those people who are to be judged.]; **and another book was opened** [a REALLY important book], **which is the book of life** [Those whose names are found in the book of life will inherit the eternal life of God’s new heaven and new earth. They are, by definition, part of the elect (chosen) of God. They were chosen before the foundation of the world through God’s foreknowledge, and their names were written in the book of life at that time (cf., e.g., Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 21:27; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4; and 2 Thess. 2:13). In the last three passages listed, the apostle Paul was dealing with the names of members of true Israel, but the first three verses listed seem to clearly include the elect of the nations. The fact that it’s the Lamb’s book of life in Rev. 13:8; 17:8; and 21:27 makes it clear that all those saved are saved by God’s grace through the atoning death of His Son. (None of us can earn/merit salvation.) On the book of life, also see Ex. 32:32, 33; Psalms 69:28; 87:4-6; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; and Rev. 3:5.

We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We have a definite role in our salvation from the beginning to the end. God set it up that way. We are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ, but God doesn’t just give us saving faith to begin with, and He doesn’t make us continue in faith to the end. See my papers titled, *A Paper on Faith* and *Once Saved, Always Saved?* And see the lengthy discussion of Rom.

8:28-30 in my paper on Rom. 8:16-39. All three papers are available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). In Rev. 3:5 the Lord Jesus powerfully warned most of the Christians at Sardis that He would erase their names from the book of life if they didn't repent. See under Rev. 3:5 in my paper on Revelation chapters 1-10 on my internet site.]; **and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds [works].** [Many verses show that all people will be judged according to their works (cf. Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; John 5:28, 29; Rom. 14:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; Gal. 6:7-9; Eph. 5:6, 7; 1 Pet. 1:17; and Rev. 22:12). On these books, cf. Dan. 7:10. There is no contradiction between saying Christians are saved by grace through faith and saying that we will be judged according to our works. The works are produced by God's grace/Spirit as Christians cooperate with God's grace/Spirit, in accordance with His Word, through faith. No Christian can earn salvation through works, but the works demonstrate that the faith was genuine. Works demonstrate what is in the heart; faith is of the heart.

God's plan of salvation seems to be somewhat different for the elect of the nations. First let's discuss the elect of the nations who live on the earth, and die, before the millennial kingdom begins, assuming that there are such persons. Apparently we wouldn't classify these persons as believers at the time they lived on the earth, whether they lived in Old Testament days or New Testament days. I don't claim to have all the answers on this topic, but God is the Judge, and He will take care of the details. He knows what is in the hearts of all people, and He knows what is right and good—He won't make any mistakes—there won't be any rebels in heaven, guaranteed.

With regard to the elect of the nations who will live on the earth during the millennial kingdom, their works will clearly reflect their faith in God. However, as I mentioned, they probably wouldn't be classified as new-covenant believers/Christians (members of true Israel), at least not if, as I have suggested, true Israel will have been completed by the time the millennium begins.] **(13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it** [Separate mention of the sea is included in that the bodies of these people were denied a proper burial, which was considered important in the ancient world (and it still is by many in our day). The souls of these people who died at sea are in Hades. For one thing, this mention of the sea helps emphasize that *all* the dead will be there for the great-white-throne judgment.], **and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds [works].** [As mentioned, these are "the rest of the dead" of Rev. 20:5.] **(14) And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.** [After all people have been resurrected, and the last enemy death has been abolished in accordance with 1 Cor. 15:26, there will be no more need for death (cf. Rev. 21:4) or Hades. These few words would fit the idea of annihilation (which is being taught by many Christians in our day, including some evangelicals) in that we could think of death and Hades being annihilated in the lake of fire, but many other verses show that the lost aren't annihilated in the lake of fire (cf., e.g., Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5; Matt. 13:42; 25:41, 46; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; and 20:10). One primary feature of the lake of fire is that it involves eternal, complete separation from God, the only source of life, love, and everything else that's good.] **This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

Symbolic Language. The book of Revelation contains much symbolic language, including symbolic numbers; chapters 21 and 22 are loaded with symbolic language. Symbolic (figurative) language doesn't mean that we aren't dealing with reality; we are dealing with reality, but symbolic language can help describe the indescribable, like the glories of heaven. I'm confident, however, that the symbolic language used in this passage falls far short of communicating the glorious reality. Symbolic language, including symbolic numbers, can communicate much extra information. We need the wisdom of God to rightly divide and understand God's Word, including symbolic language. We don't want to overuse the concept of symbolic language, as some do, and take things in a symbolic (non-literal) sense when a literal meaning was intended by God, nor do we want to underuse this concept, as some do. We need the balanced truth that God intended!

Let's look at an important example of symbolic language from the book of Revelation. Revelation 5:6 speaks of "a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth." The "Lamb" is a symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain, bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties. John sees Him after He has been raised from the dead. It is interesting that in the preceding verse Christ is pictured as "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah." Well, is He a Lion, or a Lamb? He's both, and many other good things too. Christ is a lion (which is another word used in a symbolic/figurative sense) in His power, authority, and dominion.

The number seven is sometimes used as a symbol for perfection/completeness. A week has seven days, Israel also had a seven-year cycle, and the book of Revelation has seven churches, seven stars, seven Spirits, seven seals, seven angels with seven trumpets, seven peals of thunder, the dragon and the beast with seven heads, seven angels with seven bowls of wrath, and a few other uses of the number seven.

For Christ to have "seven horns" is to communicate the all-important fact that He has perfect/complete authority, dominion, and power. For Christ to have "seven eyes" (cf. Zech. 3:9; 4:10) is to communicate the fact that He has perfect/complete knowledge of what is happening everywhere. We are further shown here that He has this knowledge through the "seven Spirits of God," which is a symbolic way to speak of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is perfect/complete in all of His work and manifestations. On the seven-fold Spirit, also see Rev. 1:4; 3:1; and 4:5. One last comment: We're not supposed to try to think of a picture of Christ, or a Lamb, literally having seven horns and seven eyes—these numbers are being used in a symbolic way here, but they certainly do communicate important information, don't they?

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. [These last words need not necessarily be understood to teach that there won't be any large bodies of water (or the equivalent of water) on the new earth. (Cf., e.g., Ezek. 47:1-15; Zech. 14:8; and Rev. 22:1, 2) A more literal translation of these last words would be, "And the sea is no longer." These words could be understood in the sense that the first sea (which was awesome and fearful; cf., e.g., Isa. 27:1; Rev. 20:13) passed away with the first heaven and first earth. Verse 4 lists some other first things that will pass away. On the passing away of the first heaven and the

first earth, see Psalm 102:25, 26; Isa. 34:4; 51:6; Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10-13; and Rev. 20:11.] **(2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready [prepared] as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people [peoples], and God Himself shall be among them, (4) and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”** [On new Jerusalem, cf. Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:10; 12:22, 23; 13:14; and Rev. 3:12. The time setting here for new Jerusalem to come down to the new earth will be the beginning of the eternal state (which starts right after the millennium and the great-white-throne judgment) that is pictured in Rev. 21:1-22:5.

In that we read of new Jerusalem, that it “is made ready [prepared] as a bride adorned for her husband” in 21:2, and, significantly, that in 21:9 the angel says “I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” and shows John “the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” in 21:10, the bride is being equated (in one very real sense) with the city. This is our city, the city of the people of God’s true Israel. This idea that the bride of Christ is a big part of what new Jerusalem is all about is reinforced by the fact that twelve gates of the city have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them and the twelve foundation stones of the wall of the city have the name of the twelve apostles of the Christian church on them. It is easy to see that the “bride” is true Israel: In Rev. 19:7-9, we read of the marriage of the Lamb to His bride, which is true Israel.

As we have discussed, there are two women in the book of Revelation: one is Babylon the harlot, who is also pictured as a city, and the other woman is the glorious woman of Revelation chapter 12, true Israel, who can also be pictured as a city, Jerusalem and new Jerusalem. This marriage doesn’t take place until true Israel has been completed about the time of the beginning of the millennium, after all the members of true Israel have been saved and glorified. On the completion of true Israel, see under Rev. 20:4. On the wedding of Christ to His bride, also see Matt. 22:2-14; 25:1-13; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33; and Rev. 22:17. All these passages deal with the marriage of Christ to new-covenant believers, and Rev. 19:7-9 could be understood this way, but I believe that the members of true Israel from Old Testament days will be included as part of the bride of Christ. They clearly are part of God’s true Israel, which is represented by the woman of Revelation chapter 12.

The city and its inhabitants (true Israel) are united in this glorious picture presented in Rev. 21:1-22:5. And, of course, the primary inhabitant of new Jerusalem is the triune God (cf., e.g., Rev. 21:22, 23; 22:1-5). It is significant that Rev. 21:3 speaks of “the tabernacle of God.” True Israel is the *tabernacle* in which God (in one sense) dwells, even as God dwells in new Jerusalem. See, for example, Rev. 3:12; 13:6 (In 13:6 the just-raptured saints are apparently referred to as God’s “tabernacle”; Antichrist will blaspheme this tabernacle, even as he will blaspheme God; for one thing, he will have to try to explain away the disappearance of the saints in the rapture; see page 332 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* on Rev. 13:6); Eph. 2:19-22; and 1 Peter 2:5. Revelation 7:15 speaks of God spreading His tabernacle over the just-raptured saints.

True Israel will have been united with Christ and reigning with Him on the earth throughout the millennial kingdom. But it is also true that true Israel will have been

dwelling with God in the eternal, glorified, heavenly dimension throughout the millennium (see under Rev. 20:4). We may be able to say that true Israel will have been dwelling in new Jerusalem throughout the millennium, but it is possible that new Jerusalem won't exist in its full and final form until the time of the new heaven and new earth. True Israel won't just be "made ready [prepared] as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2) at the beginning of the eternal state pictured in Rev. 21:1-22:5. Her members will have been enjoying this glorious relationship with God throughout the millennium.

I recommend the reader read Note 3 on pages 338-341 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, which discusses Rev. 21:3, 4, 9, and 10. *A primary feature of Rev. 21:1-22:3 is to show the entrance of the elect of the nations into the eternal life of God's eternal kingdom (cf. 21:3, 4 and 21:24-22:3).* When 21:3 says "the tabernacle of God is among men," it means, for one thing, that God Himself, the source of eternal life and everything else that is good, has come to dwell among the elect of the nations. The words "men," "they," and "them" (twice) of 21:3 apparently all refer to the peoples of the nations.

I mentioned on page 340 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* that the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, 3rd edition, corrected, favored the plural reading "peoples" in 21:3, but with much reservation. They assigned the lowest rating (D) to this reading; however, in the latest edition of this *Greek New Testament* (the fourth revised edition of 1993) the editors assign a B rating to the plural reading, which means, from their point of view, that "the text is almost certain." This reading (peoples) helps substantiate the idea that the peoples of the nations are in view here, to whom God and new Jerusalem (with true Israel) come down at the beginning of the eternal state. Frequently in the Old Testament the plural peoples is used of the nations, with the singular being used of Israel. For some examples, see section 1 in my paper titled, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations*.

I should also mention that the margin of the NASB mentions that "some ancient manuscripts add 'and be their God' " at the end of 21:3. The NIV, KJV, and NKJV all have the words "and be their God" at the end of 21:3. These added words further confirm that the peoples refer to the elect of the nations, who will enter the eternal life of God at the time the eternal state of Revelation chapters 21, 22 begins.

Perhaps we should also include the idea in 21:3 that true Israel, which is represented by, or at least included in, "the tabernacle of God," will function as priests to the nations. It is clear that true Israel will function as priests throughout the millennium (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6). This priesthood will probably continue, in some ways, in the eternal state. It is clear that true Israel will continue to reign in the eternal state (e.g., Rev. 22:5).

Assuming that the nations are the peoples spoken of in 21:3 (which I do assume), they certainly are still in view in 21:4, which makes perfect sense. All the members of true Israel will have received these things from God mentioned in 21:4 (tears wiped from their eyes, etc.) by the beginning of the millennium. See Rev. 7:15-17, which refer to those just raptured in the middle of Daniel's 70th week.

Isaiah 25:6-8 are a very important cross-reference for Rev. 21:4. They mention, for two things, that death will be swallowed up and that God will wipe tears away from all faces. On these verses from Isaiah, see under 1 Cor. 15:54 in my paper on 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and see in section 1 of my paper *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations*; and especially see on these verses in my paper titled "Verse-by-Verse Studies of Selected Eschatological Prophecies from the Book of Isaiah: Most of These Prophecies Deal with God's Salvation Plans for the Nations After His End-Time Judgment of the

World.”] **(5)** [I believe we should have a new paragraph starting here and extending through 21:8. (The NASB doesn’t start a new paragraph until 21:9.) There’s some continuity between 21:3, 4 and 21:5-8, but there’s substantial discontinuity too. For one thing, God begins to speak here in 21:5. He speaks a word concerning us Christians of this age, to those who must continue to fight the good fight and stay faithful to the end; His words are designed to exhort, encourage, strengthen, and to warn Christians. They also serve as a powerful confirmation of the genuineness and significance of the book of Revelation. The United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* has a paragraph starting here and extending through 21:8, as do the RSV, NRSV, the NEB, the NAB, and the *Jerusalem Bible*. The NIV has a new paragraph starting at 21:5, but also at 21:6.] **And He who sits on the throne** [God the Father] **said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”** [All the things that aren’t removed by judgment will be made new as part of God’s new creation.] **And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”** [On “Write,” cf. Rev. 1:11, 19 (both spoken by the Son of God); 14:13; and 19:9. I assume “these words” of 21:5 refer to the words starting with Rev. 21:1; however, the words spoken by God the Father in 21:5-8 have the effect of bearing witness to the supreme importance and the truthfulness of all the words of the book of Revelation (cf. 22:6). This book is extremely important. (Much of what I believe regarding the last days and the age to come is based on the book of Revelation. This book, the last book of the Bible, claims much for itself, and it delivers. I am very impressed with this book.) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, appears to John, as described in Revelation chapter 1, powerfully confirming this entire revelation. And, as if that weren’t sufficient, He speaks again in the last chapter, further substantiating this revelation.] **(6) And He said to me, “It is done.** [A more literal translation would be, “They are done/They have come to pass.” Looking at these words from the point of view of the scene of Rev. 21:1-22:5, all His work of saving, judging, glorifying, and of making all things new will now be done.] **I am the Alpha and the Omega** [These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.], **the beginning and the end.** [Here, as in Rev. 1:8, God the Father is spoken of as the Alpha and the Omega. It is also true, and very significant, that Christ refers to Himself as “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” in Rev. 22:13. Also see 1:17; 2:8. On God the Father, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity and God the Son, see my papers, *Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?; The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son; and More on the Trinity*. They are all available on my internet site. I believe in the Person of the Holy Spirit, of course, but these papers mostly deal with God the Father and God the Son.

The book of Revelation, and especially the last two chapters, emphasizes the deity of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. See, e.g., Rev. 1:4, 5 (where Christ is listed as a member of the Trinity with God the Father and God the Spirit, as He often is in the New Testament); Rev. 1:12-20 (including the appearance of Christ; note, for example, the appearance of His hair [1:14] compared with the hair of God mentioned in Dan. 7:9; the appearance of His face in 1:16; and the fact that He speaks of Himself as “the first and the last” in 1:17); Rev. 5:12-14 (Christ is worshiped with the Father, which would be blasphemous if He weren’t deity with the Father); Rev. 19:10 (when John is told to worship God here, it seems that Jesus is clearly included in who is meant by God; this isn’t surprising in that He is called God in John 1:1 [In John 1:1, and typically throughout the Bible, the Person of God the Son is distinguished from the Person of God the Father; see the four articles I mentioned in the last paragraph]; John 20:28; and other places; also see under Rev. 22:6 and 9 in this

paper); Rev. 19:13 (He is called “the Word [Logos] of God,” which denotes deity, based on John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:1, 2); Rev. 21:22, 23 (the things said here regarding Christ would be blasphemous if He weren’t deity with the Father); Rev. 22:6 (the words “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets” apparently refer exclusively to God the Son here; see under 22:6); and Rev. 22:13 (where He says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”).] **I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.** [On this freely given water of life (by the Spirit of God), cf., e.g., Isa. 55:1; John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 22:1, 2; and 22:17. In this context, God the Father is speaking, for the most part at least, of the water of the fullness of eternal life reserved for the future, as it is pictured, for example, in Rev. 7:17. Those who thirst for the things of God receive sufficient grace for this age, and in the age to come the fullness of the glory of eternal life. Those saved from the nations pictured in 21:3, 4 and 21:24-22:3 will also partake of the water of the life of God without cost, but they apparently aren’t spoken of in 21:5-8. For one thing, Rev. 21:7 seems to just speak of Christians. The book of Revelation was written for Christians.] **(7) He who overcomes** [All Christians, by the definition of the book of Revelation, are required to be overcomers (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; cf. 1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5).] **shall inherit these things** [On inheriting these things, cf., e.g., Matt. 5:5; 19:29; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Rom. 4:13; 8:14-25; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal. 3:29; 4:7; 5:21; Eph. 1:14, 18; 5:5; Titus 3:7; Heb. 1:14; 6:12, 17; 9:15; 11:9, 10; and James 2:5.], **and I will be His God and He will be My son.** [See Psalm 2:7-9, which speak of the sonship and the inheritance of the members of true Israel. (On these verses see chapter 18 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) Born-again Christians already are children of God, but the fullness is yet to come (cf., e.g., Luke 20:34-36; John 1:12, 13; Gal. 4:5-7; 1 John 3:1, 2; 5:1, 4, 11-13; and Rev. 12:5 [See pages 314-317 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* on this super-important verse]). We can undoubtedly say that the elect of the nations can be considered sons/children of God after they are glorified, but true Israel will be sons in a higher sense, including their reigning.] **(8) But for the cowardly and unbelieving** [The translation “unfaithful” would probably be better.] **and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.** [Cf. Rev. 20:14; 21:27; and 22:15.] **(9) And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”** [This could be the same angel that showed John a very different woman/city in Rev. 17:1-19:6. There John was shown the judgment and removal of Babylon, the great harlot, by “one of the angels who had the seven bowls” (17:1). There is a strong contrast in the book of Revelation between these two women/cities. We are exhorted to flee Babylon (e.g., Rev. 18:4) and to set our hearts completely on God and His city, and to live accordingly. We have already discussed the bride, the wife of the Lamb, under 21:2-4.] **(10) And he carried me away in the Spirit** [cf. Rev. 17:3] **to a great and high mountain** [These words undoubtedly build on Ezek. 40:2.], **and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God** [This is the same coming down out of heaven pictured in 21:2, but here the city and its inhabitants are described in some detail. The city does not only come down from God, but as we have discussed, He dwells in this city (cf., e.g., Rev. 21:22; 22:1-5).], **(11) having the glory of God.** [All the glory in this age and in the eternal age to come, and everything else that is good, comes from God.] **Her brilliance was like a very costly stone of**

crystal-clear jasper. [Cf. Rev. 4:3. These verses make an attempt to describe the glorious, eternal existence that true Israel will enjoy as the bond-servants of God, dwelling in His presence, and reigning with Him, forever. There is much symbolic language, but, as I mentioned, I'm confident that this description falls far short of the ultimate reality. We're dealing with reality here, heavenly, eternal reality that is permeated with glory. God and His kingdom are more real than this present physical world. He was here first, and He and His kingdom, unlike this present world, will abide forever.] **(12) It had a great and high wall** [In the ancient world, cities had walls (for protection); this could be enough to explain the existence of a wall in this depiction of new Jerusalem given to John (not that new Jerusalem will need a wall for protection). New Jerusalem may not literally have a wall—that's up to God—but I'll guarantee you that the inhabitants of this city will know security like no wall around a city could ever provide, no matter how great and high it was. Cf., e.g., Zech. 2:4, 5. I should mention that the gates of this city never will be closed anyway (Rev. 21:25), so it wouldn't really matter how great and high the wall is.], **with twelve gates** [cf. Ezek. 48:31-34], **and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.** [The fact that the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are written on the gates (as in Ezek. 48:32-34) shows that all the elect of the nation Israel have a place in this city. We can certainly say that all the members of God's true Israel will enter (cf. Rev. 22:14), and will have a place in, this city.] **(13) There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west** [as in Ezek. 48:32-34]. **(14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** [Cf. Eph. 2:20. These words demonstrate that the apostles, and I believe we can say all true Christians of all generations (who have come to Christ through the foundation-laying ministries of the apostles, including through their writings in the New Testament) will have a place in this city. As we have discussed, the members of true Israel (which embraces all believers from Old Testament days and New Testament days) are a big part of what this city, the bride of Christ, is all about.] **(15) And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.** [On measuring the city, cf. Ezek. 40:3 and the following chapters in Ezekiel. In Rev. 11:2 John was instructed to measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it, and he was instructed not to measure the court which is outside the temple because it has been given to the nations/Gentiles, and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. In that case John apparently didn't have to literally do any measuring because in being instructed to measure these things, he was given the needed information. In other words, he was given the measure of the situation/conditions that will exist in Jerusalem and at the temple at that time (the first half of Daniel's 70th week).

For another important illustration of measuring Jerusalem and receiving important information regarding the situation/conditions of the city and its people, see Zech. 2:1-5. (Zechariah chapters 1-8 are discussed in a paper on my internet site.) Like with Rev. 11:1, 2, apparently no literal measuring of dimensions took place in the measuring mentioned in Zech. 2:1-5. The measuring here in Revelation chapter 21 will give us much important information regarding new Jerusalem, including its glory and its inhabitants. This measuring apparently has very little (if anything) to do with literal numbers, dimensions, shapes, etc. I don't have a need to be dogmatic on that point, but it is very clear to me that

this passage is packed with symbolic language.] **(16) And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as its width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.** [As the NASB says in the margin, the Greek literally has “twelve thousand stadia.” As far as I’m concerned, the NASB made a mistake by converting to miles here. (The NIV, KJV, and NKJV all keep the number twelve thousand.) The problem is that the NASB failed to keep the number *twelve thousand*, which apparently is a symbolic number. The number twelve can symbolize completeness, even as there are twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, and twelve months. Note that the number twelve was used repeatedly in 21:12-14. When the number twelve is multiplied by a thousand, as it is here, it strengthens the concept of completeness. I believe the dominant idea here is that this city is sized to include/contain all the members of God’s true Israel, true Israel in her glorious completeness. I believe it is very unlikely that the city will literally measure fifteen hundred miles. And, as I mentioned, I am quite convinced that the reality of our eternal home will far exceed the symbolic description pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22.

Under the next verse we’ll speak further of symbolic numbers; in that verse the symbolic number is probably more obvious, and I’ll mention two other very important examples of symbolic numbers related to the number twelve in the book of Revelation. The next verse and those two examples help incline me to see a symbolic number here in 21:16 too. I also remind the reader of our discussion of the symbolic use of language in the book of Revelation at the beginning of this chapter, including the obviously symbolic use of the number seven in Rev. 5:6. A fifteen hundred mile city isn’t at all impossible, even one that is also fifteen hundred miles high. If we think of a literal shape, we probably should think of a cube (most commentators do, but some think of the shape of a pyramid); this was the shape of the holy of holies in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:20). There is some parallel between God’s dwelling in the ancient holy of holies and His dwelling in new Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:22). One last comment, if we take the fifteen hundred miles literally, and if the gates of the city are equally spaced, the distance between the gates is five hundred miles.]

(17) And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. [As the margin of the NASB shows, the Greek reads one hundred forty-four cubits. The NIV, KJV, and NKJV all translate it that way. One hundred forty-four is twelve times twelve and can symbolize completeness, as I believe it does here, the completeness of God’s people (true Israel) living within this wall, which is the boundary of the city. Taking these numbers in a symbolic sense in 21:16, 17 is the most common viewpoint in the commentaries.

It is significant that the number *one hundred and forty-four thousand* was used twice in a symbolic sense earlier in the book of Revelation (Rev. 7:4; 14:1); at least that’s the way I understand these numbers, and this is the most common viewpoint. On the one hundred and forty-four thousand of Rev. 7:3-8 and 14:1, see page 177 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*, including Note 13 (on pages 187, 188) and see under Rev. 7:3-8 in the verse-by-verse study of Revelation chapter 7 on this Christian article site. (For one thing, I quoted from Henry Alford in that paper, a Christian scholar who lived in the 1800s and was an expert on early Christian writings. He commented that he wasn’t aware of any Christians [of any generation] who had taken the number literally. In our day many Christians take the number literally.)

The symbolic use of the number *one hundred and forty-four thousand* for these two

distinct groups of people strongly influences me toward the use of symbolic numbers here in Rev. 21:16, 17 too. As I mentioned in Note 13, “Taken together, the 144,000 of Rev. 7:4-8 and the 144,000 of Rev. 14:1-5 constitute true Israel, the woman of Revelation chapter 12.” Here in Revelation chapter 21, the city bounded by the wall (the wall which has the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on its gates and the names of the twelve Christian apostles on its foundation stones) contains all the members of true Israel.

If we took the seventy-two yards (two hundred and sixteen feet) literally, we would most naturally expect this dimension to be the height of the wall, which, to say the least, isn’t very high compared to the height of the city. (It’s reported that one of the several walls around Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon was three hundred feet high.) Some say that the seventy-two yards is the thickness, with the height being fifteen hundred miles. (The NIV translates “144 cubits thick,” but in the margin says, “or high.”) I consider it very unlikely that we are to think of a wall fifteen hundred miles high and seventy-two feet thick. For one thing, that would be a *very thin* wall, considering its great height.] **(18) And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.** [In 21:21 we are informed that “the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.” It seems obvious that we aren’t to think of pure gold as we know it in our world; our gold isn’t like clear/transparent glass. For one thing, I don’t expect the glorified elements/materials of new Jerusalem and the eternal state to be the same as those that exist in our present world/age. We might call this glorified gold. Also, as I have mentioned, I believe this passage is full of symbolic language, trying to describe the glory that is indescribable for us living in this world/age.] **(19) The foundation stones [cf. 21:14] of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone.** [Cf. Isa. 54:11, 12.] **The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysopease; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. (21) And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. (22) And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.** [This is a very significant verse. When you’re permitted to dwell in the presence of God, you don’t need to come to worship Him in a temple. The words are especially applicable for true Israel (cf. Rev. 22:3-5), but they apparently have some application for the nations too (cf. Rev. 21:3, 4; 21:24-22:3). As discussed above, it would be blasphemous to include Christ, the Lamb, with God the Father here if He weren’t deity with the Father. He is!] **(23) And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it** [For one thing, the sun and moon pass away with the passing away of the first heaven and the first earth.], **for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.** [Cf. Isa. 60:19, 20; Rev. 22:5. This verse also confirms the deity of Christ Jesus.] **(24) And the nations** [As discussed at some length in this paper, “the nations” seem to be distinct from true Israel. We’ll discuss the nations further as we continue.] **shall walk by its light** [Cf. Isa. 60:1, 3. Isaiah 60:3 mentions nations and kings; they go together. The glory of God that illumines new Jerusalem (spoken of in Rev. 21:23) is so intense that the light of new Jerusalem illumines the entire new earth, where the nations apparently dwell. They have access to new Jerusalem, but they aren’t part of the city (as is true Israel), and they apparently don’t live there. It seems clear that the “light” here, which goes with the life of God (cf., e.g., John 1:4; 8:12), yields things like truth, righteousness, holiness, health, divine order, and every

blessing.

The emphasis in Rev. 21:24-22:3 seems to be on the nations initially coming to God and His eternal life at the time the eternal state begins, with the spotlight on those who were just resurrected at the end of the millennium to be judged (Rev. 20:11-15) whose names were found in the book of life. We can probably say that Rev. 21:24-22:3 expands on Rev. 21:3, 4. The scene pictured in Rev. 21:24-27, which isn't quite what I would have expected, is apparently based on verses like Isa. 60:3, which (in some ways) fits the situation at the beginning of the millennium better than it fits the eternal state. It is also true, however, that the elect of the nations who aren't raised from the dead until the end of the millennium [assuming that there are such people, which I do assume] won't be there at the beginning of the millennium. And, as I mentioned, it seems that the elect of the nations who are resurrected at the end of the millennium are the ones from the nations in the spotlight in Rev. 20:11-22:3.)

It isn't surprising that some commentators think that Rev. 21:24, and other verses from Revelation chapters 21, 22, are referring to the millennium instead of the eternal state. That viewpoint, however, seems to raise more problems than it solves, and (in agreement with the majority) I believe it is wrong. It isn't explained, nor does it need to be explained in such a symbolic presentation, how the nations ended up on the new earth to which new Jerusalem comes down. (This comment applies to Rev. 21:3, 4 and 21:24-22:3.) I'll say more regarding the interpretation as we continue., **and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.** [Cf., e.g., Isa. 60:4-17; 66:12; and Rev. 21:26.] **(25) And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed** [On the gates never being closed, cf. Isa. 60:11. The darkness, which is the absence of light (which is a symbol for God's truth, righteousness, and holiness), undoubtedly includes the ideas of sin and all the things (including curses) that come with sin. Darkness is one of "the first things" that has passed away (cf. Rev. 21:1, 4, 5).]; **(26) and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it** [The primary thing the nations will bring into new Jerusalem is themselves, as they submit to, and worship, the triune God (their Creator, their Savior, and the One who makes all things new) from the heart, with a heart full of thanksgiving for His super-abundant grace. They aren't going to bring into the eternal state their riches from this age, or anything derived from fallen man, man in the flesh. Cf., e.g., Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Tim. 6:7.]; **(27) and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying** [cf. Rev. 21:8; 22:15], **shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.** [All the people who will have a place in God's eternal kingdom, whether a member of true Israel, or a member of the nations, was, at one time, spiritually dead and a sinner, in desperate need of the Savior, but all those who enter will have been saved from sin through the Lamb of God. None of these people (the elect) are in the category of those who never repent, and none of them are in the category that Jesus spoke of in John 8:37-47, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

On the "Lamb's book of life," see Rev. 20:12, 15 (see under Rev. 20:12). There won't be any sin in God's eternal kingdom. For one thing, it would detract from the glory of that kingdom. All sin will be rooted out, and taken away, from all of God's elect (whether a member of true Israel, or of the nations) before they can fully enter this eternal kingdom.]

Some Comments Regarding Those Who Constitute the Nations in Rev. 21:24-22:3. We have already discussed this important topic quite a bit. Here I'll include a few quotations. One prominent view is that the nations consist entirely of those converted and living for God during the millennium, and who don't rebel against Him. As I have mentioned, I believe all such people will end up as part of the nations in God's new earth. Their judgment isn't specifically mentioned in Rev. 20:11-15, but then it didn't really need to be mentioned, being rather obvious. Anyway, it is clear that all such people meet the requirement to enter God's new earth in that (as Rev. 21:27 confirms) their names are found written in the Lamb's book of life. The opinion/judgment of the triune God is the only one that really matters.

It is the judgment of "the rest of the dead" (Rev. 20:5) that is dealt with in Rev. 20:11-15. And, as we discussed, apparently quite a few of them will have their names found in the book of life. Taken together with those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, this multitude probably constitutes the peoples/nations of Rev. 21:3, 4; 21:24-22:3. I believe, however, as I mentioned, that it is the elect from "the rest of the dead" who receive the primary attention in Rev. 21:3, 4; 21:24-22:3 (as in 20:11-15). For these people, the transition to the glory of God's eternal kingdom will be super-dramatic. They go from a life on earth, where they apparently wouldn't be considered believers, to death and a lengthy existence in Sheol/Hades, to a resurrection and judgment at the end of the millennium, and straight into the glory of God's eternal kingdom. For them especially the words of Rev. 21:3, 4; 21:24-22:3 are so appropriate. Can you imagine the awesome thankfulness such people will have toward God and His awesome grace manifested through Christ Jesus (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). One last comment here, the numbers of people from the nations mentioned in the preceding paragraph could easily (and undoubtedly will) far outnumber those mentioned in this paragraph.

I'll quote from Leon Morris, a well-respected evangelical scholar (*Revelation*, Revised Edition, [Inter-varsity Press, 1987]), under Rev. 21:24. "John does not envisage the salvation of a tiny handful and the destruction of the vast majority of mankind. He sees God as bringing 'the Gentiles' into his holy city. God's purposes for mankind will not be frustrated." Dr. Morris doesn't explain here how he thinks this will come to pass.

I'll quote from Robert L. Thomas (*Revelation 8-22*, [Moody Press, 1995]), under Rev. 21:24. Thomas lists several views regarding the identity of the nations. First I'll quote one view he lists and briefly discusses on page 477, "The idea has come that these are the nations outside the city and on the new earth, whose names are in the Book of Life and who while on earth had striven against sin [We don't need to overstate their striving against sin; even true Christians are all-too-often slack in this regard], but had not come to a knowledge of the Savior before the abolition of the old creation. In the new creation they do become willing subjects of God and the Lamb. This proposal leaves unanswered the question of how they were in the Book of Life at the final reckoning (20:11-15) without a personal relationship with Christ, however. [God is the One who determines what names are in the Book of Life. The names have been in the book since the foundation of the world, based on His plans and foreknowledge. For one thing, as 1 Pet. 1:20 shows, the atoning death of the Lamb of God had been predetermined.] It also leaves the mystery of

how they could have striven against sin without an alliance with the Lamb.” Thomas doesn’t mention any names here.

On page 478 Thomas gives what he considers to be the correct viewpoint, “... ‘the nations’ are composed of saved people who survive the millennial kingdom without dying and without joining Satan’s rebellion and who undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the eternal state. They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (cf. Govett, Seiss). They will be unresurrected human beings who will inhabit the new earth, Paradise restored (22:1-5), throughout eternity. These will be the ones over whom God’s resurrected saints will reign (22:5). Nations, peoples, and men on earth must continue in the flesh as Adam and Eve did before the Fall (Seiss).”

J. A. Seiss, *Apocalypse* [Zondervan, 1980; originally published in 1900]), commenting on Revelation chapter 21, says that the nations belong to “unglorified humanity” (page 501), and on page 492 he says, “There is not a word which asserts any purpose of God to terminate the perpetuity of humanity as an ever-expanding race [in other words the nations will continue to bear children].” I have much respect for this commentary by Seiss (I have learned quite a bit from it); and I respect this much more recent, thorough commentary by Thomas, but I have to (strongly) doubt that the nations will be in the flesh/unglorified humanity and that they will continue to reproduce forever.

I’ll quote part of what Henry Alford (*New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 4 [Baker, 1983 reprint]) says under Rev. 21:24-27, “Among the mysteries of this new heaven and new earth this is set forth to us: that, besides the glorified church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations.... ... If then the kings of the earth, and the nations, bring their glory and their treasures into her, and if none shall ever enter into her that is not written in the book of life, it follows, that these kings, and these nations, are written in the book of life. And so perhaps some light may be thrown on one of the darkest mysteries of redemption. There may be, – I say it with all diffidence [lack of confidence, marked by hesitation in asserting oneself], – those who have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of his visible organized Church.”

I’ll also quote part of what Alford says under Matt. 25:31-46 in Vol. 1 of *New Testament for English Readers*. First he mentions, rightly I believe, that the first two parables of Matthew chapter 25 deal with the judgment (including positive judgments and rewards) of Christians. Then, still in the introduction to Matt. 25:31-46, he says, “We now come to the great and universal judgment at the end of this period [the millennium], also prophesied of distinctly in order in Rev. 20:11-15 – in which all the dead, small and great, shall stand before God.”

Under Matt. 25:34 Alford says (in part), “The Scripture assures us of two resurrections: the first, of the dead in Christ, to meet Him and reign with Him, and hold (1 Cor. 6:2) judgment over the world: the second, of all the dead, to be judged according to their works. [See Rev. 20:5, 11-15.] And to what purpose would be a judgment, if all were to be condemned? [It could be, and the majority of commentators on the book of Revelation think all will be condemned, but I believe Alford probably is right.] And if any escape condemnation, to them might the words of this verse [Matt. 25:34] be used....”

Under Matt. 25:37-40, Alford says, “The answer of these ‘righteous’ appears to me to shew plainly that they are not to be understood as being the covenanted servants of Christ. Such an answer it would be impossible for them to make, who had done all distinctly with

reference to Christ, and for his sake, and with his declaration of Matt. 10:40-42 before them. Such a supposition would remove all reality, as indeed it has generally done, from our Lord's description. See the remarkable difference in the answer of the faithful servants, 25:20, 22. The saints are already in His glory – judging the world with Him (1 Cor. 6:2)... – in this judgment [of Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15] they are not the judged.... But these who are the judged [speaking of the sheep], know not that all their deeds of love have been done to and for Christ—they are overwhelmed with the sight of the grace which has been working in and for them, and the glory which is now their blessed portion. And notice, that it is not the works, as such, but the love which prompted them – that love which was their faith, – which felt its way, though in darkness, to Him who is Love – which is commended.” I believe it goes too far to speak of the “faith” of the sheep.

Then, under Matt. 25:40, Alford comments on the meaning of the important words, “My brethren,” “Not necessarily the saints with Him in glory – though primarily those – but also any of the great family of man. Many of those here judged may never have had an opportunity of doing these things to the saints of Christ properly so called. In this is fulfilled the covenant of God to Abraham, ‘in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth...be blessed.’ Gen. 22:18.” I believe Alford goes beyond the intended meaning of “My brethren,” which should, I believe, be limited to Christians here. I'm not denying the value of doing good works for non-Christians, and especially if they are part of God's elect of the nations (which equals being part of the sheep in Matt. 25:31-46), but such works aren't mentioned, I don't believe, in Matt. 25:31-46. See the discussion of Matt. 25:31-46 (under Matthew chapter 25) in my paper on Matthew chapters 24 and 25 that is on my internet site.

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

And he [“he” is the angel spoken of in Rev. 21:9, 10] **showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street.** [See Ezek. 47:1-12; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; and 22:17. “Its street” means the street of new Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:21); this street must be quite wide. The water of life here probably symbolizes the Holy Spirit. (If so, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are pictured in this verse.) It’s clear that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of life (e.g., John 3:3-8; 6:63; Rom. 8:2-11; 2 Cor. 3:6; and Gal. 5:25), and it’s clear that the Spirit of God and the life of God can both be symbolized by water (cf., e.g., John 4:13, 14; John 7:37-39; and Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:17). In that this water of life comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb, we again see the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb.] **And on either side of the river was the tree of life** [On the tree of life, see Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24; Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 2:7; and 22:14. I agree with the many commentators who say the word “tree” is a collective noun here in 22:2; there are many trees pictured here. For one thing, they are on both sides of the river. The singular tree may build on the singular “the tree of life” in Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24. Ezekiel 47:12, speaking prophetically of the water that will flow from the temple of God, says, “And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”], **bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month** [The NASB has the word “kinds” in italics since there is no corresponding word in the Greek. In the margin the NASB has, “or, crops of fruit”; I believe this is the idea. The picture here emphasizes great abundance, with the trees bearing fruit twelve times a year. Much of this description is symbolic, as was chapter 21. For one thing, we need not assume that the members of true Israel, or of the nations, will need to eat literal food in order to live/to function.]; **and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** [These words are undoubtedly based on Ezek. 47:12 (quoted above). We shouldn’t understand these words to teach that there will be sicknesses, etc. from which the nations living in God’s eternal kingdom will need to be healed, but we can think of a preventive medicine (God’s eternal life) that keeps people healthy. Revelation 22:3 informs us that there shall no longer be any curse, and the Bible shows that all sickness traces back to the curse that came with sin and spiritual death. Also see Rev. 21:4.

It is probably appropriate, however, to think of an initial healing of the nations as they first enter eternal life at the beginning of the eternal state (cf. Rev. 21:3, 4), and this is especially true for that part of the nations that were recently part of “the rest of the dead” of Rev. 20:5, 12-15 (assuming that the names of some of these people will be found in the Lamb’s book of life, which I do assume). I believe we can say with assurance that all the benefits that come from the tree of life and its fruit come from God through salvation in the Lamb of God, and through the Spirit of life.] **(3) And there shall no longer be any curse** [See Gen. 3:7-24; Zech. 14:11; and Rev. 21:4. This statement applies to the new heaven and new earth, not just new Jerusalem.]; **and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it** [“it” refers to new Jerusalem], **and His bond-servants shall serve Him** [“His bond-servants” refer, I believe, to all the members of true Israel, those who serve Him and reign with Him in a very special, intimate sense, in distinction from the nations, who were

spoken of in 21:24-22:2. Revelation 7:15-17 are an important cross-reference: In these verses we see the just-raptured (in the middle of Daniel's 70th week) saints, all being members of true Israel. In Rev. 7:15 we read that "they serve Him day and night in His temple (or sanctuary)." The same Greek verb for serve is used in Rev. 7:15 and 22:3. The verb serve fits with the idea of functioning as priests, but it's not at all limited to this form of serving. The word "bond-servant(s)" is also used in the book of Revelation (by the NASB) in 1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2, 5; and 22:6. Revelation 10:7 should be added to this list; the same Greek noun is used in 10:7 that is used in these other verses, but the NASB translated "servants" in 10:7. In each of these verses, it is used of members of true Israel.

Many other verses in the book of Revelation support the idea that true Israel is distinct from the nations, including Rev. 1:6 (they are priests); Rev. 2:26, 27 (they reign); Rev. 3:12 (they are pillars in the temple of God; the name of God, the name of new Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ will be written on them); Rev. 3:21 (they reign); Rev. 5:8 (the word "saints" here, and the other twelve uses of this word in the book of Revelation, always refers to members of true Israel); Rev. 5:10 (they are priests; they reign); Rev. 7:4-8 (this group of 144,000, who receive a special seal, added to the 144,000 mentioned in Rev. 14:1-5, who have the name of the Lamb and the name of the Father written on their foreheads, apparently constitutes the fulness of true Israel); Rev. 12:1-17 (the woman and her seed/offspring constitute true Israel in her fulness); Rev. 13:6 (true Israel is God's tabernacle); Rev. 15:2-4 (the members of true Israel spoken of here are distinct from the nations; in the song of Rev. 15:3, 4, they sing of the nations coming to worship God now that His acts of saving and judging have been manifested, about the time of the end of Daniel's 70th week); Rev. 17:14 (also see 19:14, 19; the raptured saints are with Christ during the second half of Daniel's 70th week); Rev. 19:7-9 (true Israel is the bride of Christ); Rev. 20:3, 4 (true Israel is glorified and reigns); Rev. 21:2, 3 (true Israel is the tabernacle of God and is part of new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, and they are the bride of Christ); and Rev. 22:1-5 (the members of true Israel are bond-servants of God, and they reign). The book of Revelation was written for, and sent to, Christians, true Israel, not the nations. I believe the evidence presented in this paper under Revelation chapters 20-22; under Matt. 24:30, 31; under Matt. 25:31-46 in my paper on Matthew chapters 24, 25; and in my paper titled, *More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations* is sufficient to demonstrate the significant difference between true Israel and the nations in God's eternal plans. (All of the papers just mentioned were originally part of a single paper.) Also see my papers on Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah on my internet site.

"His bondservants." Christians are spoken of as "bond-servants" of Christ (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; cf. 22:6), and as "bond-servants" of God (Rev. 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2, 5), but I believe "His" refers to God the Father here. For one thing, He has the preeminent role in the Trinity. See my papers *Who Do We Worship?*; *Who Do We Pray To?*; *More on the Trinity*; and *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*. Also, the words "they shall see His face" of verse 4 refer to the face of God the Father.]; **(4) and they** [His bond-servants, all the members of true Israel] **shall see His face** [Compare Psalms 11:7; 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 18:10; 1 Cor. 13:12; and Heb. 12:14. God the Father's face is referred to here (cf., e.g., Ex. 33:20, 23; John 1:18; 1 John 3:1, 2; 4:12, 20; and 1 Tim. 6:16). We will also see Christ's face. However, keep in mind that seeing His face then will be far beyond

seeing His face when He walked on the earth, and even far beyond seeing His face in His post-resurrection appearances (where His glory wasn't manifested to any great extent). There was a mild foretaste of His ultimate appearance at the Mount of Transfiguration, but keep in mind that Peter, James, and John were not yet able to handle seeing much of His glory (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2, 3; Luke 9:29); on the glory of Christ, also see John 17:5; Rev. 1:16; 10:1; and especially Rev. 21:23).

All the members of true Israel will have been glorified, living in the presence of God, and reigning with Him since the beginning of the millennium by the time we get to the eternal state pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22. We can probably also say that they will continue in some priestly functions on into the eternal state, though not to the extent they functioned as priests during the millennial kingdom (since the nations will move to a higher state than what they experienced in the millennium). By saying that true Israel will probably still function as priests, I'm not suggesting that the nations won't be permitted to see the Father's face; apparently they will (cf. Rev. 21:3, 4, 22), but apparently there will be a big difference between the relationship we (true Israel) will have with the Father, as we continually, and fully, dwell in His presence as His bond-servants, and the relationship the nations will have with Him.

Keep in mind that the book of Revelation was written to encourage and bless (also warn) Christians (not the nations); payday is coming (not that we can earn anything from God, since everything is freely given), and the rewards will be super-great. We shouldn't be ashamed to acknowledge them; that wouldn't be true, Biblical humility. Thinking on the glory of the age to come will help motivate us, and make us faithful and thankful.], **and His name** [I believe "His" refers to God the Father, but, as we will discuss, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will also be on our foreheads.] **shall be on their foreheads.** [Again it seems that all the members of true Israel, but not the nations, are being spoken of. See Rev. 3:12; 14:1; cf. Rev. 7:3-8. Revelation 3:12 mentions that the name of God and the new name of Christ will be written on all overcomers (all true Christians). Revelation 14:1, which speaks of all those members of true Israel who will have been raptured in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, and who will be with Him forever more (cf., e.g., 1 Thess. 4:17), says, "And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His [Christ's] name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." (As we discussed, the one hundred and forty-four thousand is a symbolic number for completeness; the actual number will be much higher.)] **(5) And there shall no longer be any night** [cf. Rev. 21:25]; **and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them** [See 21:23.]; **and they shall reign forever and ever.** [For one thing, true Israel will apparently be reigning over the nations, not that there are any negative connotations with being reigned over by God and His bond-servants. The angels that reign with God in some ways during this present age aren't a threat to us, they're a substantial blessing. What a destiny for true Israel! Amen!] **(6)** [This verse starts the epilogue of the book of Revelation. For one thing, this epilogue serves to further confirm the genuineness and supreme importance of the prophecy of the book of Revelation, as did the first chapter of the book.] **And he said to me** [The speaker is still the angel mentioned in 21:9.], **"These words are faithful and true"** [Cf. Rev. 19:9; 21:5. "These words" apparently refer to all the words of the book of Revelation. I assume that all the words of this verse (22:6) were spoken by the same angel; I would, therefore, move the closing quotation

marks to the end of this verse, with the NIV. The original manuscript would not have had quotation marks.]; **and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place.** [Normally the words “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets” would refer to God the Father, but here they seem to be used exclusively of God the Son, which has the effect of strongly emphasizing His deity. See the discussion under Rev. 21:6 on the emphasis on the deity of Christ in the book of Revelation, and especially in the last two chapters of the book, and see under Rev. 22:9 in this paper. The word “God” is typically used of God the Father in the New Testament as the name Yahweh is typically used for Him in the Old Testament, but “God” is used for God the Son several times in the New Testament (e.g., John 1:1, 20:28; Heb. 1:8) and Yahweh is used for Him several times in the Old Testament (e.g., Zech. 2:11; 3:2), but not in a way that confuses the Person of God the Son with the Person of God the Father.

The Bible clearly establishes the deity of God the Son. (See my papers titled *More on the Trinity; Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?; and The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son.* (They are all included on my internet site.) It is significant that Rev. 1:1 and 22:16 both speak of Christ’s sending His angel, which sending is mentioned here in Rev. 22:6. Furthermore, Christ Jesus is very much in the spotlight in the verses that follow (to the end of the epilogue), and His deity is emphasized in these verses, even as it was in 21:22, 23; 22:1-5; and other verses. F. F. Bruce (*New Layman’s Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1979]), commenting on 22:6 says, “Here Jesus Himself seems to be identified with ‘the God of the spirits’....”

In this verse (22:6) the angel who showed John the things recorded in Rev. 21:9-22:5 apparently hands the microphone (so to speak) to the angel called “His [Christ’s] angel.” In some of the following verses (including verse 7), His angel then either speaks for/quotes Christ, or hands the microphone (so to speak) to Christ Jesus, which seems quite appropriate (since he is Christ’s angel). Unlike in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, John apparently doesn’t see Christ as this revelation comes to an end. As Rev. 1:1 (and see 22:16) shows, Christ’s angel was sent to Christ’s bond-servant John to give him (and through him to give to all His bond-servants) the entire revelation contained in the book of Revelation. One major advantage in seeing Christ’s angel come prominently on the scene at 22:6, while the angel mentioned in 21:9 fades into the background, is that it makes 22:8, 9 easier to understand (see under those verses).

In that these “things must shortly take place,” there’s an urgency (which permeates the book of Revelation and many prophetic passages of the New Testament) for all Christians to always be faithful and fully ready for the return of the Lord. See the next verse.] **(7) “And behold, I [Jesus Christ is the Speaker here (cf. Rev. 22:12, 20).] am coming quickly [cf. Rev. 1:3; 3:11; 22:10-12, 20]. Blessed is he who heeds [keeps] the words of the prophecy of this book.”** [See Rev. 1:3. To heed the words of the prophecy of this book includes hearing/reading, understanding, believing, and doing the things required by the words of this book, including repenting (as required) and staying faithful to God in His truth, righteousness, and holiness (by His sufficient grace).] **(8) And I, John [cf. Rev. 1:1, 4, 9], am the one who heard and saw these things.** [These words from the apostle John refer to the entire revelation of the book of Revelation, which has now been completed except for the rest of the epilogue, and they add to the confirmation of the genuineness and accuracy of this super-important revelation.] **And when I heard and saw, I fell down to**

worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. (9) And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant [or, fellow bond-servant] of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.”

[These words are a little bit surprising, especially with the similar incident recorded in Rev. 19:10. (We’ll look at 19:10 in the following paragraphs, and 19:10 is discussed in my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21.) However, in 19:10 the angel at whose feet John fell down to worship, before he was instructed not to do so, was one of the angels with the seven bowls (cf. 17:1), whereas here the angel apparently was Christ’s angel, who is mentioned in Rev. 1:1; 22:6, 16. As I mentioned, Christ’s angel apparently comes into the spotlight at 22:6. This angel (who is so closely related to the Lord Jesus Christ) was undoubtedly even more spectacular and glorious than the angel of 19:10 (all of this glory comes from God, and He must receive all the glory). It’s clear that John was awestruck and overwhelmed by this entire experience.

With the emphasis on the deity of Christ in the book of Revelation, and especially in the last two chapters of the book, and with verses like 22:6 and 19:10, I assume He is included in the word “God” here, but (assuming this is the correct interpretation here and 19:10; cf. 22:6) that makes the use of the word “God” quite unusual in these verses. Even though the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is totally established in the New Testament, the word “God” is typically used for God the Father. Also, when the word “God” is used of the Lord Jesus, typically He is clearly distinguished from God the Father, as in John 1:1-3. We’ll discuss Rev. 19:10 in the next two paragraphs.

I’ll quote Rev. 19:10, “And I fell at his feet to worship him [him who was the angel mentioned in Rev. 17:1, who was one of the seven angels who poured out the seven bowls of the wrath of God]. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant [or, fellow bond-servant] of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus [in other words, they testify (from their hearts, and with their lives) to the fact that Jesus Christ is their Savior and their Lord, and that all that the Bible says about Him is true]; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ ” For one thing, it is required of bond-servants (whether angels or men) that they be faithful to their Master, which includes directing the attention to Him and making sure He receives *all* the glory.

Regarding the translation of Rev. 19:10, it would probably be better to translate “the prophecy,” referring to the book of Revelation. (The definite article [the] is included in the Greek before the word prophecy. Also note “the prophecy” in Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, and 18. Revelation 22:7, 10, and 18 have “the words of the prophecy of this book.” Revelation 22:19 has, “the words of the book of this prophecy.”) The message of the book of Revelation centers in Jesus Christ (as does the message of much of the prophecy of the entire Bible). The last sentence of 19:10 tends to force us to see some emphasis on worshipping Jesus, God the Son. He is included in what the word “God” means in 19:10, as in 22:9. For more details on the interpretation of Rev. 19:10 see on this verse in my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21, which is available on my internet site.

These verses (19:10; 22:8, 9) make it clear that Christians must not bow before any angel or other person/being to worship. We are to bow before and worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Period!) **(10) And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.** [Contrast Dan. 8:26 (“but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.” NIV); Dan. 12:4 (“But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.” NIV), and Dan. 12:9. The

repeated mention of the nearness of the Lord's return in the book of Revelation (e.g., Rev. 22:6, 7) emphasizes the need for all Christians of all generations to make it a top priority to always be faithful and ready for His return (see Matt. 24:36-51, for example; these verses are discussed in my paper on Matthew chapters 24 and 25). For one thing, there's no time for sin; the next two verses emphasize this theme. Furthermore, the New Testament makes it clear that we cannot wait for signs of Christ's coming to get ready for His coming.] **(11) Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.**" [These words emphasize, in very strong terms, the nearness of the return of the Lord and the attendant day of judgment. In emphasizing the nearness of the Lord's return, this verse seems to say there isn't time to repent, so don't bother; this helps dramatize the nearness of the end and the need to be ready now; however, it's clear that this overstates the overall message of the book of Revelation, which issues a powerful call to repent (e.g., Rev. 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:2, 3, 15-20; and 22:17). All true Christians are required to be righteous and holy. This verse, and the next one, and much of the Bible, make it clear that we are called and enabled to have more than a legal/positional (forgiveness only) righteousness (by God's grace/Spirit through faith). See my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ.*] **(12)** [Christ begins to speak here, and apparently He speaks through verse 16. The NIV takes it this way, but the NASB doesn't take verses 14, 15 as the words of Christ. I would, therefore, change the quotation marks inserted in these verses by the NASB to reflect this viewpoint.] **"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.** [On the judgment of all mankind according to their works, see under Rev. 20:12. The "reward" here includes positive and negative rewards. It would be preferable to translate this Greek noun (*misthos*) with a word more suited to include the negative "rewards" idea (some never use the word reward in a negative sense); the word "recompense" would be better. The NRSV has, "to repay according to everyone's work." We must live in the light of the fact that payday is coming (not that we can earn what God has freely given us at a very high cost to Himself and His Son). (Cf., e.g., Rom. 6:22, 23; Gal. 6:7-10).] **(13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**" [Christ is also called "the first and the last" in Rev. 1:17; 2:8. These words strongly emphasize His deity, and all the more so since God the Father is called "the Alpha and the Omega" in Rev. 1:8 and 21:6. On the emphasis on the deity of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation, see under 21:6. (Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.) With *Alpha*, for one thing, we think of God's initial work of creation; with *Omega*, we think of His bringing this age to a close, which includes His work of judging and of bringing forth His eternal new creation, which is full of His glory.] **(14) Blessed are those who wash their robes** [In other words, they are forgiven and sanctified through the blood of the Lamb of God. See Rev. 7:14; 19:8, 14. Revelation 7:14 is discussed on pages 154, 155 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. These verses are discussed in the papers on Revelation chapter 7 and Rev. 14:6-19:21 on my internet site.], **that they may have the right to the tree of life** [Cf. Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 19. This is a symbolic way of saying that those who wash their robes will be able to partake of eternal life in God's eternal city.], **and may enter by the gates into the city.** [To enter the gates of the city of new Jerusalem is to come into the presence of God and the fullness of His eternal life.] **(15) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the**

immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. [Those who love their sin won't repent and submit to God and His gospel of salvation from sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. They are "outside" of the city and separate from God and His eternal life. The point isn't that they will have access to the area just outside the city, but not to the city itself, but rather that they are excluded from the blessings just mentioned in 22:14. The book of Revelation makes it clear where they will be (cf. Rev. 20:15; 21:8), and the lake of fire won't be just outside of new Jerusalem, or be part of God's new heaven and new earth.] **(16) "I, Jesus, have sent My angel** [Rev. 1:1; 22:6] **to testify to you** [This "you" is plural in the Greek; it refers to all Christians, not just John.] **these things for** [concerning] **the churches.** [Revelation 1:1; 22:6, 8 demonstrate that this angel communicated/showed the prophecy of the book of Revelation to John for all of Christ's bond-servants (Christians). (Revelation 22:3 shows that we're also bond-servants of God the Father.) Here, when it says he was sent "to testify to you these things," it apparently includes the idea that this angel (who, to say the least, was no insignificant angel, not that God considers any of His bond-servants to be insignificant, whether angels or people) testified [for Christ] to the genuineness of this prophecy (cf. Rev. 22:20; 1:2; the same Greek verb for testify is also used in Rev. 22:18). John 3:11, 32, which use the same Greek verb translated testify here in Rev. 22:16, help show the meaning in 22:16. In John 3:11 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen..." And John 3:32 has, "What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness..." I'll quote part of a sentence from John Walvoord (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Moody Bible Institute, 1966], pages 336, 337), "...the Lord Jesus Christ had sent His angel to testify the truth of this book to John and to deliver the book to the churches."] **I am the root and the offspring of David** [Christ is the "offspring of David" in that He was born in the lineage of King David (cf., e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 9:6, 7; Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 22:41-46; Luke 1:32, 69; Acts 13:22, 23; and Rom. 1:3. Most commentators understand "root" here in the sense given by the BAGD Greek Lexicon under the Greek noun for root (*riza*): "that which grows from a root...descendant..." See Isa. 11:1, 10; Rev. 5:5.], **the bright morning star.**" [See Rev. 2:28. Under Rev. 2:28, G. R. Beasley-Murray (*Revelation*, revised edition [Eerdmans, 1978] says (in part), "The morning star is Venus. Lohmeyer has shown that from Babylonian times Venus was the symbol of sovereignty. In Roman times it was more specifically the symbol of victory and sovereignty, for which reason Roman generals owned their loyalty to Venus by erecting temples in her honour (e.g., Sulla, Pompey, Caesar), and Caesar's legions carried her sign on their standards."

Beasley-Murray goes on to say that "the morning star was the sign of conquest and rule over the nations..." Then under Rev. 22:16 he says (in part), "By declaring that he himself is the morning star, the risen Son of God claims that in his acts of redemption and judgment he fulfills the biblical hope of Messiah's rule and gives actuality to the pagans' notion of the sovereignty they ascribed to the gods. The sole Lord of history is the crucified and risen Christ, in whom the dawn of the new age of righteousness and peace has already broken and whose coming is to bring the world the full glory of the day of God." Beasley-Murray also mentions that Christ fulfills the prophecy of Num. 24:17. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:19.] **(17) And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come."** [On the bride, cf. Rev. 21:2, 9. The Spirit is very much involved with the bride of Christ and concerned for her welfare, even to the point of interceding for Christians (cf., e.g., John 14:26; 16:7-16; and Rom.

8:26, 27). Revelation 22:20 helps confirm that the word “Come” is addressed to Christ Jesus. In agreement with the Spirit and being part of the bride, I say, Come Lord Jesus! I trust my readers agree.] **And let the one who hears say, “Come.”** [I assume this refers to the ones hearing the prophecy of the book of Revelation as it was read in the congregations (or to the ones reading it [cf. 1:3]). They add their personal request for the Lord to come. It is only “he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it” (Rev. 1:3) that are ready for His coming.] **And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.** [Here John adds his exhortation for all those who are thirsty and have a desire to join the bride of Christ through submitting (in faith) to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 55:1; John 7:37-39). These words apply to those who can’t really say “Come” because they haven’t yet become part of the bride of Christ; they aren’t ready to stand before Him.] **(18) I** [Apparently the speaker/writer here in 22:18, 19 is also John.] **testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.** [Compare Deut. 4:32; 12:32. This is serious business!] **(20) He who testifies to these things** [As in Rev. 1:2, this speaks of the testimony given by Jesus Christ Himself to the authenticity and importance of the revelation of the book of Revelation. I’m rather overwhelmed with the testimonies regarding the book of Revelation contained within this book (by God the Father, Jesus Christ, Christ’s angel, the angel of 17:1 and the angel of 21:9 [it is possible that these two verses refer to the same angel], and the apostle John), and with the warnings not to tamper with it in 22:18, 19. I’m even more overwhelmed and very much impressed with the content of this prophecy, the book of Revelation. This is a very special book of the Bible, and it’s especially important for the Christians of the generation in which Christ is to return, which apparently is our generation.] **says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.** [The words of 22:21 would be blasphemous if Jesus Christ weren’t deity with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. He is! Amen!]

May the will of God be fully accomplished through this paper and His people be edified!

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