

## REVELATION CHAPTERS 20-22

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### 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’s 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. For one thing, there’s an ancient, widespread view that could prove to be correct: Just 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 man after six thousand years 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 now we’re up to about six thousand years.)], **(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. 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 (which, when understood in the fullest sense, includes all false religion and all the things men live for in place of God) and every other lie designed to keep men 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's quite significant, but somewhat 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 sense, at the end of Daniel's 70th week. (See the section at the end of the discussion of Rev. 20:1-6 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.") 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 earth is expected. (For many examples of such prophecies, see sections 1 and 2 in the Appendix. In most of those prophecies, 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 elect of the nations will be glorified until after the millennium. And even in the eternal state, which follows the millennium, it seems that there will be a 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.

We'll discuss true Israel under 20:4, but here I'll say a little more about the nations. The peoples of the nations will still be in their natural bodies, and they apparently 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). These people wouldn't be classified as those who had rejected the gospel, after being adequately confronted with it, and they aren't people who had taken the mark of the beast (cf. Rev. 14:9-11). 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 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, 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), 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. Apparently none of those saved from 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 Christians teach that all the saved of the nations become Christians, but the Scriptures, very much including the book of Revelation, seem to teach that the nations will be 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) that enter the millennial kingdom will be converted and submit in faith to God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). And it seems clear that this conversion will take place shortly after God's end-time judgments are completed, in the early days of the

millennial kingdom, or even in the days of transition before the millennial kingdom begins. For more on the nations, and their salvation, see under Matt. 24:30, 31; under Matt. 25:31-46; under Rev. 20:5, 6; and 20:11-22:3; and see the entire Appendix of my 1998 paper.], **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. The following words also apply to “the souls of those who had been beheaded,” not to a different group. 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, *Mid-Week Rapture*.) Those that John sees on the thrones are those members of true Israel who were glorified and caught up to God’s throne and who began to reign 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 beginning of the millennial reign. (The time setting of Rev. 20:1-6 is the end of Daniel’s 70th week and the beginning of the millennium.)

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. I should mention, as I did on page 73 of *Mid-Week Rapture*, that we won’t necessarily literally have thrones; this could be, and probably just is, a symbolic way to speak of reigning.

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 already reigning. See under “thrones were set up” of Dan. 7:9 on pages 72, 73 of *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 *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).] **(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.], 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.” 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 (or transformed) in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week and those who are resurrected (or transformed) at the end of this seven-year period.

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’s very clear that the first resurrection is not limited to the martyrs mentioned in Rev. 20:4. (Those holding the pre-week, mid-week, and end-of-the-week rapture viewpoints agree on this point.) For one thing, as I mentioned, the thrones are already occupied, at least many of them are (by resurrected/glorified saints) before these martyrs are resurrected. And it’s 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. It’s also quite clear that the members of true Israel who will have died before the mid-week return of Christ will be resurrected; their mid-week resurrection certainly is part of the first resurrection. 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. (See under Rev. 22:3-5.) Revelation 22:5 makes it clear that the *reign* of God’s bond-servants (which apparently equates with true Israel) will continue forever.

**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.** Some readers may want to skip this discussion and skip down to verse 7. 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 interesting and important, and I believe it is worthy of our consideration.

This discussion is somewhat brief; I'm not attempting to say everything that could be said on this important topic here. For one thing, some comments relevant to this topic are contained in other parts of this paper (under Matt. 25:31-46; under Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-22:3; and in the Appendix. 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 will be converted to God after His end-time judgment of the world. 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 could 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 the section of this 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 (Gentiles) 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 teach, or at least infer, 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 then 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 (discussed on pages 116, 117); 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's inappropriate for New Testament writers to use these Old Testament prophecies as they use them in these verses. There would be a problem, however, if the interpretation of these prophecies were limited to these particular New Testament applications. The primary reason we're considering these verses is to help demonstrate the apparent fact that the New Testament writers, apart from the apostle John's book of Revelation, don't mention (at least not in a clear way) that the elect of the nations will be converted to God after Christ returns. 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"); 1 Cor. 15:54 (from Isa. 25:8; this important verse from Isaiah is discussed in section 1 of the Appendix); 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 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, which was rather 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. (If some did know it, they didn't share it, at least not in a clear way.) It's interesting and significant, 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) and from what was passed down from the first century church, especially from the apostles.

I can only speculate as to why God didn't fully and clearly incorporate these teachings into the teachings/writings of the apostles and their co-workers before the book of Revelation. 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; and even after the book of Revelation was given, it 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 regarding God's ultimate salvation of the elect of the nations is significant, interesting, and easy to accept; it tends to make Christianity more generous, reasonable, and acceptable. 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; they weren't sent to offer mankind the option of putting off repentance and faith while hoping that they would be saved as part of the nations. One reason this is very dangerous is that to the extent God deals with a person through the gospel, they are obligated to respond in repentance and faith. It's 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). There's also the potential problem that some Christians would abuse this teaching as an excuse to not take the gospel to the world.

It seems relatively clear to me that it was 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 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], **Go 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 *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 that would really want to be part of God’s eternal kingdom, not that they will want the alternative. God knows what’s in the heart of all men, and it’s obvious why He would release the devil for a short time to put such people to the test.] **(9) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth** [The NIV has, “They marched across the breadth of the earth.”] **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 must at least be included here (cf. Rev. 4:2, 3; 5:1, 5-7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; and Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14), but it’s 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). It’s 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’s 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.

(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’s possible that they will go directly to the lake of fire with Satan [Rev. 20:9, 10]); it seems they have adequately demonstrated what’s 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.)

Many Christians who agree that there will be a distinct group called the nations in Revelation chapters 21, 22 (distinct from true Israel) 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 as discussed in this paper, I assume 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). (This point is controversial, and I want to make it very clear that I am not saying that I know for a fact that this point is true. Throughout this

paper I have tried to make that point clear, and I have tried to guard against an abuse of this teaching. Why even mention this idea? Because I believe it's probably true, and we should be looking for the truth—I'm not afraid of the truth.) The book of life here (20:11-15) seems to play a larger role than just the negative role of 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. 20:1-22:3 on God's ultimate salvation of the nations. (See on these verses; see on Matt. 25:31-46 in this paper; and see the Appendix.)

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 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's 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 too far for me here. Universalism is rather widely accepted in our day in Christianity, but it isn't widely accepted among evangelicals, and rightly so. (See the quotation from the chapter dealing with universalism under A of section 5 of the Appendix of this paper.) I don't see how 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 suggesting 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 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 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's 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. It's probably also true that almost all the people from the nations will receive their final judgment at the great-white-throne judgment. (Antichrist and the false prophet are two exceptions [Rev. 19:20], and there could be others [cf., e.g., Rev. 20:9, 10].), **and books were opened** [As the following words show, these books contain the deeds/works of those people that are to be judged.]; **and another book was opened, 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. 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.]; **and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds [works]**. [Many verses show that all men 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 they will be judged according to their 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's 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. We can probably say, however, that they did have faith in God in a more general sense, which is reflected in their works. (Using the word faith in a typical Biblical sense, I wouldn't say that these people had saving faith during the time they lived on the earth, at least not most of them.) 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's in the hearts of all men, and He knows what is right and good—He won't make any mistakes.

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). When we speak of the resurrection of the body, we typically speak of the resurrection of the body from the grave. The souls of these people who died at sea are undoubtedly 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!

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's 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 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 that it is “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” in 21:9, 10, we are surely to think of true Israel, the bride of Christ. In Rev. 19:7-9, we read of the marriage of the Lamb to His bride, which is true Israel. 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 we can assume that the members of true Israel from Old Testament days will be included as part of the bride of Christ.

True Israel will have been united with Christ and reigning with Him on the earth throughout the millennial kingdom. But it’s 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’s 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.

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 Himself (cf., e.g., Rev. 21:22, 23; 22:1-5).

It’s significant that Rev. 21:3 speaks of “the tabernacle of God.” True Israel is the *tabernacle* in which God 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 *Mid-Week Rapture* on Rev. 13:6); Eph. 2:19-22; and 1 Peter 2:5.

I recommend the reader now read Note 3 on pages 338-341 of *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’s 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 *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. 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 the Appendix of this paper.

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.

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’s 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’s clear that true Israel will continue to reign in the eternal state (e.g., 22:5).

Assuming that the nations are the peoples spoken of in 21:3, 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 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. On these verses from Isaiah, see under 1 Cor. 15:54 in this paper, and see in section 1 of the Appendix. (These verses are discussed in some detail 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,” dated August 2000.) (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** [I believe that God the Father is referred to here, but we could certainly think of God the Son being with Him on the throne. See under Rev. 20:11.] **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” (21:5) refer to the words just spoken by God the Father; however, as I mentioned, the words spoken by God 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. In Rev. 16:17, at the pouring out of the seventh, and last, bowl of wrath, we were told, "It is done." That is, in this bowl the judgment of God is completed. The seventh bowl apparently extends to cover the destruction of Antichrist and his forces, who were gathered to Har-Magedon (Rev. 19:17-21).] **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. (With Rev. 1:4, which [along with 1:8] also speaks of the Father as "Him who is and who was and who is to come," it would be very difficult to not see Him in Rev. 1:8. See Rev. 4:8; 11:17; and 16:5. It seems that God the Father is in view in each of these verses. It's true, however, that the words "Him who is and who was and who is to come" are appropriate for the Son of God too. I believe we can say, in fact, that He is the primary One who comes at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet.) It's 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.

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 triune God with God the Father and God the Spirit, as often in the New Testament); 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); 5:12-14 (Christ is worshiped with the Father, which would be blasphemous if He weren't deity with the Father); 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; 20:28; and other places; also see under Rev. 22:9); 19:13 (He is called "the Word [Logos] of God," which denotes deity, based on John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:1, 2); 21:22, 23 (the things said here regarding Christ would be blasphemous if He weren't deity with the Father); 22:5 (the words "Lord God" here apparently embrace God the Father and God the Son; see under 22:5); 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 22:13. **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.] **(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 *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 *Mid-Week Rapture* on this verse]). We can undoubtedly say that the elect of the nations can be considered sons/children of God, 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. 21:27; 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 may 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’s a strong contrast presented 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’s 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’s 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. 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 was.], **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. 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.] **(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. It's quite possible, even probable, that the city won't literally measure fifteen hundred miles.

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's 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 *Mid-Week Rapture*, including Note 13 (on pages 187, 188). 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, chrysoprase; 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, 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. 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's 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] won't be there at the beginning of the millennium. And 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's not 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's 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, 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 that 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 (at least none of them are permanently 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 washed 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.]

A Few 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's clear that all such people met 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's 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 assume, however, that it's the elect from "the rest of the dead" that 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 (at least not most of them), to 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 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 this 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 [Rev. 20:11; 21:1]. 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."

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 this paper.

## 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. 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. 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’s 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). I believe we can say 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's 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); 2:26, 27 (they reign); 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); 3:21 (they reign); 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); 5:10 (they are priests; they reign); 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); 12:1-17 (the woman and her seed/offspring constitute true Israel in her fulness); 13:6 (true Israel is God's tabernacle); 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]); 17:14 (also see 19:14, 19; the raptured saints are with Christ during the second half of Daniel's 70th week); 19:7-9 (true Israel is the bride of Christ); 20:3, 4 (true Israel is glorified and reigns); 21:2, 3 (true Israel is the tabernacle of God and is part of new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven); and 22:1-5 (the members of true Israel are bond-servants of God, and they reign). These verses from the book of Revelation were written for, and sent to, Christians, true Israel, not the nations. I believe the evidence presented in this paper (under Matt. 24:30, 31; under Matt. 25:31-46; under Revelation chapters 20-22; and in the lengthy Appendix) is sufficient to demonstrate the significant difference between true Israel and the nations in God's eternal plans.

"His bondservants." Some think "His" (and "Him") here in 22:3 refers to God the Father; some think it refers to Christ, the Son; and some think it refers to both. For a start, 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 Revelation. It would be reasonable to understand "His" to refer to the Father here, and that could be what was intended, but because of 22:4-7 (see under those verses), and what I have said regarding the emphasis on the deity of Christ, I favor the viewpoint that the Father and the Son are both included here in the word "His," which is somewhat ambiguous.

In the book of Revelation (and often in the New Testament), Christians are spoken of as "bond-servants" of Christ (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; cf. 22:6), and as "bond-servants" of God; God the Father is at least included in what "God" means in each of the following verses, and some of them refer exclusively to Him: Rev. 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2, 5; and 22:3. With some of these verses, including Rev. 22:3, there's some ambiguity, perhaps on purpose; this ambiguity may help emphasize the deity of Christ Jesus with the Father in that the writer/Writer of the book of Revelation didn't feel a need to always make it clear whether

God the Father, or God the Son, or both of them (or the triune God) was being referred to. If Jesus Christ weren't deity with the Father, it would be blasphemous to permit ambiguity in some of these verses, including 22:3.); **(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. I'm confident that the Father's face is at least included here (cf., e.g., Ex. 33:20, 23; John 1:18; 1 John 3:1, 2; 4:12, 20; and 1 Tim. 6:16). Also, in line with what I've been saying, we could easily include the idea of seeing Christ's face. However, keep in mind that seeing His face then will be very far beyond seeing His face when He walked on the earth, and 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 true Israel will have with the Father, as they 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 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.) It would be quite reasonable, therefore, to think of "His name" here in Rev. 22:4 referring to the names of God the Father and God the Son.] **(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. Again there is some ambiguity regarding who is meant by "the Lord God," perhaps on purpose. God the Father is certainly included, but God the Son could easily be included, and He probably is. The viewpoint that Christ is included is strengthened by Rev. 22:6-21.]; **and they shall reign**

**forever and ever.** [There can be no doubt that true Israel is at least included here, and it seems rather clear that the nations aren't included. The nations apparently are being reigned over, 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)** [There's widespread agreement that this verse starts the epilogue of the book of Revelation. This epilogue serves as further confirmation of 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 prophecy 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.]; **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, or at least include, God the Father, but here they seem to be used exclusively of God the Son, which has the effect of strongly emphasizing His deity. (On the emphasis on the deity of Christ in the book of Revelation, see under 21:6.) For one thing, Rev. 1:1 and 22:16 both speak of Christ's sending His angel. 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. 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, 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 (cf. 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 all the chapters of the New Testament studied in this paper) for all Christians to always be faithful and fully ready for the return of the Lord. See the next verse.] **(7) “And behold, I am coming quickly** [cf. 1:3; 3:11; 22:10-12, 20]. **Blessed is he who heeds** [keeps] **the words of the prophecy of this book.”** [See 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 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.) 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 under 22:6, 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, I believe it’s clear that “God” here in 22:9 includes Him. He’s worshiped with the Father in 5:14. Also, Rev. 19:10, which I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, has more to add to this topic; let’s look at this verse, “And I fell at his feet to worship him. 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. I’ll reserve comment on the meaning of the word “spirit [Spirit]” in 19:10 for my next paper, which will cover Rev. 14:5-19:21.

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 the triune God, and Him alone.] **(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 (NIV “but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”); Dan. 12:4 (NIV “But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.”), 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. For one thing, there’s no time for sin; the next two verses emphasize this theme. Furthermore, the New Testament (and common sense) 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 (overcomers) are required to be righteous and holy. This verse, and the next one, and much of the Bible, make it clear that we must have more than a legal/positional (forgiveness only) righteousness (by God’s grace/Spirit).] **(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. (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. With *Alpha*, for one thing, we think of God’s 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.] **(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 *Mid-Week Rapture.*], **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....” We could translate “to bear witness” in 22:16 instead of “to testify.”] **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: “shoot...growing from the root, symbolically 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 Beasley-Murray 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.] **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 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 [these two verses could 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. 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.] **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!]