

Is This the Only Day of Salvation?



Is This the Only Day of Salvation?

By Roderick C. Meredith

*What will happen to the **billions** of human beings who have never known the true **God**—who have never accepted **any** form of Christianity? Are they forever doomed to a burning hell or an eternity in outer darkness? What is the **real** answer to these questions?*

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Chapter I

Preparation for Eternity

Your own minister, through no fault of his own, may be *blinded* to the information this booklet contains. This world's ministers, by themselves, do *not* understand—indeed, they *cannot understand*—unless or until they repent of following human tradition and let the inspired word of God fully instruct them on this issue and many other key biblical truths.

But you *can* understand *if* you are genuinely willing to *believe what God says* in His inspired word, the Holy Bible. The real *answers* have been there all along. But Satan the devil is the “god” of this present world or society (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). Satan is described in your Bible as the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now *works* in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan the devil “broadcasts” wrong ideas and attitudes in this world's atmosphere. As seen above, he is the “prince” of this world's atmosphere and influences human society and human behavior *far more* than most people even begin to realize. Satan confuses people about the *plan* and *purpose* of the great God. The Apostle John was inspired to write, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who *deceives* the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9).

And so even the professing Christian world—divided into more than 40,000 sects and denominations—has been *deceived* about the very nature of salvation and about *when* God is truly going to convert the vast majority of humanity.

Think of it!

Think of the *billions* of humans—all made in God’s image— who have *never* believed in *any form* of Christianity. Today, only a tiny handful of the 1.4 billion people living in China profess to believe in Christianity. The same goes for the more than 1 billion people of India. Then consider the 267 million people of Indonesia and the people of Japan, Pakistan, and other heavily populated nations who are all in roughly the same situation! And in the Arab world, *extremely few* people claim Christianity as their religion.

Then consider the untold *billions* of people who lived and died in these and in other nations in earlier centuries who *never even heard* the name “Jesus Christ” during their human lifetimes!

Of course, liberal, modernist preachers and theologians—many of whom do not really believe that Christ was truly God anyway—reason their way around the problem with all kinds of human philosophical arguments about God “saving” these people some other way. But they *cannot* quote the direct words of the Bible to back up their human reasoning, because the Bible itself is *very clear* about who will be granted salvation and eternal life.

God’s Word Is Clear

Speaking about the dramatic healing of a lame man, the Apostle Peter stated that “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is *no other name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10–12). Now, would you not call that a pretty *clear* statement? Does that leave a lot of room for theologians to reason around and say, “Well, if these people from past ages were basically good people who practiced their religion sincerely, then surely a loving God would grant them eternal life”?

Such ideas bypass the whole point—made by the Apostles and Christ Himself—that eternal life is granted *only* to those who have come to the true God of creation through a unique relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Through that understanding and that relationship, they come to understand *who* the true God is and *what* He requires of humans who wish to enter His everlasting Kingdom. *With-*

out that unique understanding and relationship, the people of this world are wandering around in utter blindness and confusion and are **not** at this time fulfilling their ultimate purpose at all. They may be sincere pagans, but they are definitely pagans nonetheless!

Again, notice Paul's inspired instruction to the Ephesian Christians, most of whom may have formerly been sincere worshippers of the local goddess, Diana of the Ephesians. Here is what Paul bluntly told these people: "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having **no hope** and **without God** in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:11–13).

Since the inspired Apostle Paul said that sincere pagans of his time had "no hope," why should we assume that others who have practiced non-Christian religions would have any real hope for eternal life and salvation? **Why?**

Notice now what Jesus Christ Himself said in John 10:1–2: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." Clearly, any who try to obtain salvation some other way are in **big** trouble! Now read verses 7–8: "Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.'" These words of the Son of God make it *very clear* that "all" who came before Christ claiming to be saviors or enlightened ones were frauds or **imposters!**

Again, notice John 6:44: "No one **can** come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." *Only* those whom God expressly calls are able to understand and respond to the true message of Jesus Christ! And Jesus repeats essentially the same teaching in John 6:65: "Therefore I have said to you that **no one** can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

With all these straightforward scriptures in mind, **how dare** any self-respecting minister or theologian teach otherwise? How could they dare to imply or indicate that there is some other way to eternal

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life besides being called by God and *surrendering* oneself to the God of creation through the true Jesus Christ of the Bible?

What Is God Doing Now?

“Well,” you may ask, “if God is *not* trying to save all peoples of the earth now, then *just what is His plan and purpose* in all of this delay?” *Why* are the multitudes of the earth not being called now?

The *answer* is that God is working out His plan in dealing with humanity over a 7,000-year period. For the first 6,000 years, God is allowing humanity to experiment with various forms of religion, education, government, and culture. Through spiritual emptiness and physical and emotional agony, humanity is now *writing* in human *suffering* the *lesson* that man’s ways always turn out to be *wrong*. Having learned this lesson, humanity will be far more ready to listen genuinely when God does open their minds and hearts to His truth.

Some may say, “How cruel! *Why* didn’t God just send a perfect teacher to show us the *right ways* in a positive and loving manner?”

My friends, He *did* do just that!

God *did* send His Son to this earth as a kind, merciful, loving Teacher who healed the sick, comforted the downtrodden, and taught the *way* to eternal life. Did humanity embrace Him, believe Him, and joyously follow His teachings?

No. Instead, they *killed* Him in one of the most slow, painful, agonizing forms of death ever devised by a depraved humanity under the influence of Satan the devil.

Remember, it was the *religious* leaders who stirred up the masses to ask for Christ’s death. They wanted to preserve the religious establishment of their day. After all, their *jobs* were on the line! Even Pilate, a secular Roman governor, perceived the real issue: “For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of *envy*” (Mark 15:10).

Additionally, God sent prophet after prophet into the world— especially to teach and warn His people, Israel. Were they warmly received? Notice what God said through Jeremiah: “Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers” (Jeremiah 7:25–26).

So—except for calling a comparatively few dedicated individuals in each age to understand His truth and to do His Work— God is indeed allowing humanity to go its own way. And where does that way lead? “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of *death*” (Proverbs 14:12).

Salvation Is Preparation for Eternity

The great Creator, who gives mankind life, breath, and all things, wants *everyone* to be in His Family someday. But being “saved”—and becoming *full* sons of God in His everlasting Kingdom—goes *way beyond* what most people understand!

It is *not* just a matter of “accepting Jesus” in some emotion-filled revival meeting. It is *not* a matter of just “joining a church.” Rather, it is a matter of being fully *surrendered* to the God of the Bible through a personal relationship with the *true* Jesus Christ. It is a matter of a person genuinely *yielding* heart, mind, and will so that the living Jesus Christ—as High Priest—can fully *live* His life inside the individual. As the inspired Apostle Paul tells us, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*).

Through completely surrendering to let the true Christ live within us, we can develop—over time—the very *character* of God! Through Christ within, the true Christian is enabled to “*grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). In that God-ordained manner, the Christian becomes a genuine “overcomer,” for—through Christ living within—Christians gradually overcome themselves, the world, and Satan the devil. Such Christians are *far more* prepared for eternal life in Christ’s Kingdom than if they just “got saved” or “joined a church” in the traditional sense of this deceived world!

The living Christ said that “he who *overcomes*, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father” (Revelation 2:26–27). Again, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the *will* of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). And it is clearly God’s revealed

will that *true* Christians are those who overcome and allow Christ—through the Holy Spirit—to live His life within them, the *same kind* of surrendered, obedient life that He lived while in the human flesh.

In *that way* God’s Kingdom will be populated—*not* by selfish, rebellious, disobedient malcontents who would make *everyone*, including themselves, *miserable* for all eternity, but by individuals who freely responded to God’s call and have allowed Him to build within them *His very nature* and *character*. As the Apostle Peter wrote, God’s promises—including the promised Holy Spirit—enable us to “be part-takers of the *divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4).

God does not just metaphorically say that we are His children. Rather, He puts *His very nature* within us through the Holy Spirit. Then, we can reflect *His* nature in *everything* that we think, say, and do. He can and will build within us a nature and character fit for eternal life in His soon-coming Kingdom!

Building Holy, Righteous Character

How does God build His character in us? He knows that sometimes we will only learn a lesson if we suffer.

If we are tempted to become discouraged by some obstacle that we face, we can keep in mind the words of the Apostle Paul: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

We know from history that true Christians have been persecuted since the very first days of the Church. If we suffer now, it is as preparation for an eternity of joy, peace, and love as a part of God’s Family! So we should not be surprised by suffering—we should welcome it as a tool through which God will build our character and through which we may come to empathize, and even understand in some small measure, what Jesus Christ went through when He suffered for us. The Apostle Peter was aware of this very important point. He wrote, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified” (1 Peter 4:12–14).

Yes, we know that we may face many tribulations on our way to God's Kingdom (Acts 14:22), but we can welcome these tribulations as opportunities to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (2 Peter 3:18).

God Desires Everyone to Be Saved

Again, God desires *every human being*—all made in His image (Genesis 1:26)—to be in His Kingdom one day. He made us free moral agents—able to **choose** between life and death and between good and evil. God tells us in His word, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose life**, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

In the New Testament, 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God “desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” God does not force all men to be saved. Free moral agency is involved, and there are plenty of scriptures to show that some few, at least, will be cast into the “lake of fire” (Revelation 19:20), which “is the **second death**” (Revelation 20:14).

Yes, some few will **choose** to be extinguished for eternity rather than to love and serve God. How can God reconcile His perfect love with His perfect justice? He cannot allow a rebellious spirit into His Family, but neither is He a sadist who delights in the torment of His creation. He will not condemn to destruction someone who never was given a chance to hear His truth, but He expects much of those who have accepted the truth and the sacrifice made by His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We read in the book of Hebrews, “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26–27).

Yes, if we sin willfully after God has revealed His truth to us, then unless we repent we become His “adversaries” deserving of judgment and “fiery indignation.” What is that fiery indignation? It is the lake of fire described in the book of Malachi: “‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch’” (Malachi 4:1).

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Those who reject God will become “stubble.” They will be burned up forever. They will cease to exist! Who will suffer this fate? The Apostle John tells us in the book of Revelation: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Everyone Will Come to Understanding

God *will not* allow anyone to suffer such a fate without having made a deliberate choice. He will see to it that every individual who was ever born has a chance to be faced with the real *truth* of God’s will and His purpose, for the word “knowledge” used in 1 Timothy 2:4 is translated from the Greek *epignósis*, designating “an overview” of the truth. So, again, *every* human who has ever lived must be clearly presented with this *fundamental knowledge* about God and His plan. Each one must have a chance to either accept or reject eternal life on *God’s* terms. Otherwise, God would indeed be a respecter of persons by allowing *billions* of humans to live and die without ever learning about the *plan* of the Creator God and His Son Jesus Christ.

We learn more about God’s will in 2 Peter 3:8–9: “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God counts time in *thousands of years*, so He is not in a hurry to save everyone before mankind has written indelible lessons in human suffering by going the wrong way. So even though countless preachers have implored their revival crowds to “give your heart to the Lord tonight! This may be your *last chance!*”, the very preachers uttering these words are showing that they have *no idea* of the real *plan* and *purpose* the Creator God is working out here below.

One scripture that ministers have misused in this way for generations is found in 2 Corinthians 6:2, where God says, “‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Does the above scripture mean that this is “the” day of salvation and that there is no other? The answer is simply a *matter of correct*

translation! Scholars acknowledge that the first part of this passage is an exact quote from Isaiah 49:8. This is correctly translated, “In **an** hour of favor I answer you, and on **a** day of salvation I help you” (*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, emphasis added). Applying the principle of Isaiah 49, Paul is, in fact, urging the Church members in Corinth **not** to receive God’s grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). These people were already called—*already* in God’s Church. This passage is certainly not telling us that this is the **only** day of salvation for all mankind; rather, even as many Bible commentaries acknowledge, it is urging the already converted believers to “work out” their salvation to the end (Philippians 2:12).

As we have seen, God wants “all” to come to the knowledge of salvation. But He is definitely **not** trying to save everyone **now**. Otherwise, since most humans have never believed in **any** form of “Christianity,” we would have to assume that God is somehow helpless—**unable** to accomplish what He intends to do!



Chapter Two

Blinded for a Time

A very common misconception—based on a *misunderstanding* of the very subject of this booklet—is that Jesus Christ came to “save” people during His ministry on earth. *But He did not!* Rather, Jesus—through His atoning death—made it *possible* for those whom the Father “calls” to be reconciled to God *after* His death and resurrection.

Near the end of His life in human flesh, Jesus told His disciples, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). Even Jesus’ disciples did *not yet* have the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. They were *not* yet converted! As Jesus told Peter, “But... when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32, *KJV*). And, speaking of Jesus’ lifetime, John was inspired to write that “the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).

So, in a technical sense, *no one* was “converted” during Jesus’ human ministry. *No one* received the Holy Spirit until the first Day of Pentecost *after* Jesus’ death and resurrection (Acts 2). And, though this is surprising to some, Jesus *did not even try* to convert the multitudes during His ministry. Jesus was *not* “trying” to save all humanity back then, any more than God is trying to save all humanity now!

Think.

Many of you were taught in Sunday School—just as I was— that Jesus spoke in parables to “make the meaning more clear.” To this day I can clearly remember my Sunday School class being taught that

since most of Jesus' listeners were farmers, fishermen, or shepherds, He taught in parables using agricultural illustrations so that these common working folks would be able to understand better.

But *what does the Bible actually say?* Exactly the **opposite**, for Jesus told His Apostles, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and **not** perceive, and hearing they may hear and **not understand**; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them'" (Mark 4:11–12). Again, Jesus was **not** trying to "save" these people—*at that time!*

That is hard for many professing Christians to understand, for they have been taught over and over that Christ, the Apostles, and all true Christians are engaged in a sort of "soul-saving" mission! And it is at least implied to them that if people do not "get saved" in this present lifetime, they are "lost" **forever**.

Yet, if you carefully read the four gospels and the book of Acts, it becomes obvious that the **vast majority** of people alive during the lifetimes of Jesus and the Apostles were **never** converted to *any* form of Christianity! Were they all mean and nasty people? Were they all in direct rebellion against God? Are they all "doomed" forever? Was the Work of Jesus and the Apostles a **total failure**?

Of course not!

Just like most of the philosophers with whom Paul reasoned at the Areopagus (Acts 17:18–34), most people of that time never had **any idea** about the true creator God. They just did not know. And God did **not** try to "call" them—*at that time*. Again, it is all a matter of **timing**—a matter of *when* God decides to call these **billions** of people who have lived apart from the true God for these past 6,000 years.

Even Israel Has Been Blinded

As we have seen, God uses Israel as a type of *all* humanity. In several different passages, God's word reveals this **principle**: "First to the Jews, then to the Gentiles" (cf. John 4:22; Acts 20:21; Romans 1:16; 2:9). So Christ and the Apostles first preached to the Jews. Later, in Acts 10, we find the story of how God led Peter to open up salvation to the Gentiles—beginning with the household of Cornelius.

So **why** are the Jewish people—and the vast majority of those descended from the "ten lost tribes"—not all converted Chris-

tians? Because—as with the rest of humanity—God has absolutely **blinded** them so *they cannot understand!*

In the book of Romans, Paul was inspired to explain this about the people of Israel: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Notice, however, that these people were and are “ignorant” of the righteousness of God, for God has *not yet called them*.

Notice Paul’s explanation: “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were **blinded**. Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day’” (Romans 11:7–8).

But has God “blinded” these people **forever**? *Of course not*. As we have explained, God is a just God. He will call each group of people in *His* own time. That is precisely what mainstream Christianity does **not** understand. Here is *God’s* answer to this puzzle: “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob’” (vv. 25–26).

So “all” Israel **will** be saved! As we will show you in a moment, there is a time coming—a “day of **judgment**”—when **all** human beings who have been blinded down through the ages will have the scales removed from their eyes. The old prejudices and old falsehoods will finally be banished. Then they will **see**. They will see and understand clearly, at last, the great **purpose** God has been working out here on earth. They will understand **why** God has let mankind, as a whole, go its own way in spiritual “blindness” for these past 6,000 years.

A Time of Judgment

Remember that Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). And the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). Does this

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mean that the “great” men and women of this world down through the ages have been *doomed* and that they are *not* to be given a chance for salvation?

Of course not!

Again, what about the arrogant leaders of past worldly kingdoms who killed, raped, and abused untold millions of people, *never hearing* of the true Jesus Christ or His Message? Interestingly, Jesus Himself gives us the answer: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you” (Matthew 11:21–22). The “day of judgment”—as we shall see—is *not* merely a time of sentencing. Rather, it is a coming time or age when God will resurrect from the dead these *billions* of people and open their minds and hearts to His purpose. They will *then* be judged by how they respond—once they have a *genuine opportunity* to really understand!

Continuing in Matthew 11:23–24, notice Jesus’ startling statement: “And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.” *Think about it!* Even the sexually perverted of ancient Sodom will find it “tolerable in the *day of judgment*” compared to those Capernians who personally knew Jesus and rejected Him!

How can this be?

Again, the answer is that these ancient peoples—*sinful* though they were—had *no knowledge* of the true God or His ways. Christ was not to appear as Savior for hundreds of years. Yet, as we have seen, there is *no other name* whereby we must be saved.

As we have also seen, Satan—the “god” of this age—has *blinded* those who do not believe! Most people in this age *cannot* understand the Bible or God’s plan. They have *not yet been called*.

Again, Satan the devil is the powerful spirit being “*who deceives the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). In His prophecies, God speaks about the veil of spiritual *blindness* that is upon the vast majority of human beings. Then He speaks about a time when He will *destroy* this veil of blindness after Christ’s return to earth. “And He will destroy on this mountain

the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the *veil* that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 25:7–8).

*When will that veil be destroyed? When will the “day of judgment” come for the **billions** over the centuries who never had a **genuine** opportunity to know God’s will and to accept the true Jesus Christ of the Bible as their Savior?*



Chapter Three

The Great White Throne Judgment

The book of Revelation gives the time sequence of prophetic events more clearly than any other book in the Bible. Revelation 19:11–21 describes Christ’s return in full glory as King of kings (vv. 14–16). Then, after crushing the armies of the coming European dictator called “the beast,” Christ casts him and the coming false religious leader into the “lake of fire” (v. 20).

Then, in Revelation 20:1, God describes a mighty angel coming down to earth. “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while” (vv. 2–3). Note that these verses also tell us that Satan has been *deceiving* the nations of this earth!

After Satan is bound, the glorious Millennial rule of Christ on earth will begin. Speaking of that time, Revelation shows that the true saints “lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (v. 4). Then we are told, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall *reign* with Him a thousand years” (v. 6).

True Christians who have been genuinely called by God *understand His purpose*. They know that they are now in training to become kings and priests in the coming reign of Christ on earth—*that they will rule even over angels* (1 Corinthians 6:1–3)! The coming Millennial

rule of Christ and the saints (Daniel 7:26–27) will be a magnificent opportunity to help, to encourage, and to teach the confused multitudes of people on earth God’s true ways.

But, again, what happens to the untold *billions* of “blinded” people who do *not* live on over into the Millennium—who have *never* known the true God and His plan?

Keep right on reading Revelation 20! After describing a relatively brief time when Satan is loosed from his prison and—once again—quickly *deceives* a multitude of people (vv. 7–10), God’s word begins to tell us about the Great White Throne Judgment period. But before reading this, jump for a moment back to verse 5. Here, after describing the thousand-year rule of the saints, God’s word says, “But the *rest* of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”

The “rest” of the dead? Yes! Those *billions* of people from ages past who were *never* called to salvation and therefore obviously had *no chance* to be in the first resurrection.

Notice Revelation 20:11–12: “Then I saw a *great white throne* and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were *judged* according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

A Truly Awesome Event

Here we find described perhaps the most *awesome* event in human history, a time when *all* people—the unknown, the famous, and the infamous—will really come to understand why they were born! These formerly dead people, certainly including many of *your own* ancestors, are seen “standing before God”—obviously in a *resurrection*. Then the “books” are opened. The term “books” here is translated from the Greek word *biblion*, which is the same word translated “Bible”—meaning the *books of the Bible!*

So, finally, these formerly blinded people *from all ages past*—including our own time—have the books of the Bible “opened” to their understanding. The veil that was over them in the past is now *destroyed*. Now, at last, these people have their first *genuine* opportunity to *know* God and to decide whether to repent and accept the true Christ as Lord and Savior or to go their own way.

“And another book” is opened—the “Book of Life.” Paul describes the saints as having their names written in the “Book of Life” (Philippians 4:3). Revelation 21:27 describes the New Jerusalem as inhabited by “only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

The opportunity for eternal life is at last presented to these multitudes of people “small and great.” They are resurrected back to *physical life*, perhaps for a period of 100 years—long enough for a thorough opportunity for them to learn, grow, and be tried and tested as to their willingness to live eternal life *God’s way* (Isaiah 65:20). They will be called and have a chance to *study* and *understand* the Bible. God says that then—and *only* then—these resurrected people will be “judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:12). Now, after being given a *genuine chance* to know and to act upon the truth, these people are judged by how they respond to and obey the teachings of the books of the Bible. James was inspired to tell us that “faith without works is *dead*” (James 2:17–26).

Make no mistake; *if* these untold billions of formerly *blinded* individuals were merely judged by the works they did in their former lifetimes—many of them as thieves, prostitutes, dictators, and false prophets—then they would *all* surely *perish* in the Lake of Fire, for in their past lives they did *not* accept the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved. They did *not* truly repent (Acts 2:38) of their wrong ways, *surrender* their life to Christ, and allow Him—through the Holy Spirit—to fashion them, mold them, and help them to “*grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

God does *not* have a double standard! These countless individuals deserve to have a *real* chance—and to be judged on what they do *after* they have known the truth of God! Yet countless theologians and ministers, themselves deceived, try to imagine that God will somehow save many of our unrepentant friends and relatives—and multitudes from ages past—*without* them ever coming to *real repentance* and true *surrender* to the living Christ. These theologians *could not be more wrong!*

May God help you, however, to understand the truth about the “unsaved” *billions* of Buddhists, Shintoists, Muslims, and others of this age and of ages past. They *never* had a real opportunity to accept

Jesus Christ, nor did all the additional *billions* of people from both the present and past who, while they may have known about a *false Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:4), never *really surrendered* to let the Christ of the Bible *rule* their lives!

No other explanation for this *religious dilemma* truly makes sense! And the answer has been in *your own Bible* all along. This is *not* talking about a second chance. Again, we are only talking about a *genuine* opportunity to learn about and obey the truth that a *fair* and *just* God is going to reveal to these multitudes of peoples in His time.

The Valley of Dry Bones

Another key scripture that explains this part of God's plan is found in Ezekiel 37. Here we read the famous story of the "dry bones." But *wait just a minute*—this is *not* just a "story." Rather, this is describing one of the most moving and *awesome* events in human history.

Let us understand.

Although this passage of scripture is no doubt referring *typically* to the ten lost tribes of Israel being restored and later *re-united* with Judah (vv. 15–22), it is also speaking literally about what is going to happen to the *untold millions* of people of the house of Israel. Realize it or not, these modern-day descendants of the lost ten tribes are now the American and British-descended peoples and the democratic nations of Northwestern Europe. Be sure to obtain and *study* our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy* for *proof* of these national origins. As is *all* of our literature, it will be sent absolutely *free* upon your request.

What happens to these people—most of whom have been *deceived* down through the ages?

First of all, remember a *key principle* defining the way God works, one mentioned several times—in different ways—in the Bible. Notice Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew *first* and also for the Greek." Note also Romans 2:9–10, which says the same thing. And read verse 11 carefully: "For there is *no partiality* with God." The *King James Version* translates this verse, "For there is *no respect* of *persons* with God." Therefore, in *His* time, God must give *everyone* a *genuine* opportunity for salva-

tion if He is to be fair and is to be *no respecter of persons*. It is only a matter of *timing*.

In Ezekiel 37, God reveals that the countless millions of Israelites formerly *blinded* to His truth will be in a *special resurrection*—*not* to condemnation, but to receive God’s Holy Spirit and then be able to *understand* and *obey* the truth. Study Ezekiel 37 carefully, verse by verse. Note that God gives Ezekiel a vision of a massive valley of “dry bones.” Ezekiel is asked, “Son of man, can these bones *live*?” (v. 3). God then begins to answer this rhetorical question by stating to these bones, “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall *live*” (v. 5). Then God continues, “I will put *sinews* on you and bring *flesh* upon you, cover you with skin and put *breath* in you; and you shall live. Then you shall *know* that I am the LORD” (v. 6).

God deals *first* with the Israelites—His chosen people—as a *type* of how He will deal with *all* humanity, for, again, God is *not* a *respecter of persons*! God is obviously planning to *resurrect* the blinded Israelites and give them a real chance to know Him and His great plan for humanity.

As these vast multitudes are resurrected in this momentous vision, they are described as “an exceedingly great army” (v. 10). And *who are they*? God Himself tells us: “Son of man, these bones *are* the *whole house* of Israel” (v. 11). So this army of dry bones must include not only those formerly blinded people of the ten lost tribes of Israel, but also the *Jewish* people who have likewise been blinded to the message of the *true* Messiah and the magnificent plan that He and God the Father have for all mankind.

All these Israelites have been sinners—as has *all humanity* (Romans 3:23). So in this resurrection, they are at first afraid and feel guilty: “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off” (Ezekiel 37:11). But God says, “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put *My Spirit* in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall *know* that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it” (vv. 12–14). As a *type* of all humanity, these uncounted *billions* of people will then be given a *real* chance to *understand* and *obey* their God, to be *converted* and be filled with *His Spirit*.

Awesome Blessings Through God's Plan

Most of us have a loved one, a friend, or an “old Uncle Joe” who perhaps was an alcoholic, regularly took God’s name in vain, and seldom went to Church. These “Uncle Joes” or “Aunt Millies” were often very friendly and helpful people, but perhaps they made no profession of Christianity whatsoever. Are they *doomed* forever?

Think about it!

As you come to a full understanding of God’s truth, you will increasingly grasp the fact that even most professing Christians have very little idea of what *true* Christianity is all about. Along with the rest of humanity, they are simply *writing* the lessons of human experience during their lifetimes. They will truly *need* this special resurrection during the Great White Throne Judgment to actually *learn* these lessons they have been writing in human suffering and experience.

Perhaps you have heard the joke about the religious fellow who called his friend who had “dropped out” of church: “Come on back to church, George. Everyone still likes you and you might even enjoy some of Pastor Boring’s sermons.” But George makes excuses and then says, “I don’t want to go back and fellowship with all of those *hypocrites!*”

“Oh, that’s all right,” his friend answers him, “there’s always room for one more!”

We may laugh at the truth of this story. But, deep down, most of us *know* that a whole lot of churchgoers and professing Christians are, in fact, *hypocrites*. They just attend church as a social convenience, because it is another tool to help them get ahead in their business or profession, or for some other non-religious reason. And their lives do *not* reflect the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit at all.

Yet God’s inspired word tells us, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is *not* His” (Romans 8:9). Such a person is *not* a true Christian!

Are all of these often-hypocritical individuals “lost” *forever*? The only way most religionists can try to think their way around this dilemma is to come up with a solution that directly *contradicts* the plain words of Scripture. But an understanding of the awesome plan of God—involving this truth about the Great White Throne Judgment—is the *only* solution that makes sense both logically and biblically. That is because it happens to be the *truth*.

Perhaps most touching of all, think about the *countless millions* of people down through the ages whose lives were cut short by senseless tragedy—*never* having fully understood the Gospel of Christ or having a genuine opportunity to learn the truth of God’s word, to *repent* of their sins and accept the *real* Jesus Christ of the Bible as both Savior and Master. Are all of these darling little children, mentally impaired individuals, or others with various handicaps or mitigating circumstances *cut off* from eternal life?

No way!

These people will be granted a genuine opportunity for salvation in the Great White Throne Judgment period. They will then be given real *understanding* of God and His awesome *plan*. The vast majority of them will no doubt choose to obey their Creator and accept eternal life on *His* terms when they have this opportunity.

Senseless Tragedies or Learning Experiences?

My friends, we need to be realistic. The word of God makes it clear that most people have *never* been “called” during this age—even most people in our so-called “Christian” society. Millions may know *about* God. But they do not truly “know” God, for God tells us, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). And again, “But *why* do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Millions of people in the United States, Canada, and Europe *talk* about God. But they do not remotely *do what God commands*. Jesus Christ commands, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, *love* your enemies, *bless* those who curse you, *do good* to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43–44). Yet most of the world’s horrifying wars and butcheries have been launched *in Europe* over the past several hundred years. *Why?* Because—even in the “heart” of so-called “Christendom”—people really do not “know” the true God of the Bible.

Literally *hundreds* of illustrations could be used to prove this point. But one very memorable one comes to mind. It is in the form of a personal letter which was later made public and verified to be

authentic. Some of you may have seen it before. This letter was written by a German soldier to his clergyman father during the Battle of Stalingrad, in which almost 91,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner by the Russians (only 5,000 survived to return to Germany) in January 1943:

In Stalingrad, to put the question of God's existence means to deny it. I must tell you this, Father, and I feel doubly sorry for it. You have raised me, because I had no mother, and always kept God before my eyes and soul.

And I regret my words doubly, because they will be my last, and I won't be able to speak any other words afterwards which might reconcile you and make up for these.

You are a pastor, Father, and in one's last letter one says only what is true or what one believes might be true. I have searched for God in every crater, in every destroyed house, on every corner, in every friend, in my fox hole, and in the sky. God did not show Himself, even though my heart cried for Him. The houses were destroyed, the men as brave or as cowardly as myself, on earth there was hunger and murder, from the sky came bombs and fire, only God was not there. No, Father, there is no God. Again I write it and know that this is terrible and that I cannot make up for it ever. And if there should be a God, He is only with you in the hymnals and the prayers, in the pious sayings of the priests and pastors, in the ringing of the bells and the fragrance of incense, but not in Stalingrad (*Last Letters from Stalingrad*, translated by Franz Schneider, pp. 65-66, 1965).

What profound hurt that professing Christian minister must have felt when he read his son's letter: "God was *not* there. No, Father, there *is no God*" (emphasis added). If that young man had understood the truth about God's plan, he would at least have realized that all those around him butchering one another were spiritually *blinded*. The professing ministers and priests who blessed them and sent them into battle were also probably *blinded*. Later on, in a special resurrection, they will be given a genuine chance—their *first* real chance—to know God and to *do* His will!

As we think of the *billions* of men and women down through the ages who died tragic, seemingly senseless deaths, it should be extremely comforting and even inspiring to realize that those tragic deaths at Stalingrad, in Hitler's concentration camps, on the "killing fields" of Cambodia, in the Sumatra earthquake and tsunami, and in millions of other gruesome situations were *not* the "end" for those involved.

The God of total love and understanding has awesome plans for those countless millions of human beings made in His image. He is *not* going to forget them. But, again, He is *not* going to "sneak" them into His Kingdom through some "side door" apart from *real repentance* and a genuine acceptance of the true Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. Rather, in the magnificent Great White Throne Judgment, they will have their eyes opened to the transcendent *purpose* God has in mind for all of humanity.

The suffering these people have gone through, the experiences that have broadened their vision, the *lessons* they have "written" through those sometimes traumatic experiences—all of this will *not* have been in vain, for they will *live* again. They will *love* again. If their hearts are right, they will experience *joy* again. An inspiring scripture comes to mind, one that certainly applies to this "special" resurrection just as surely as it does to the first resurrection: "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54–57).

God's Purpose Stands

If Hollywood and the music industry would *truly* portray the enormous wave of *joy* and *exaltation* felt by these multitudes as they finally come to life again and come to *know their God*, it would really "knock your socks off," as is said in the vernacular! Songwriters could write absolutely *thrilling* songs of *praise* and *rejoicing* about this most stupendous event in the long saga of mankind. And someday, perhaps, in the Kingdom of God, *they will!*

So there you have it!

God Almighty is **not** trying to save everyone now. Rather, God is allowing humanity to go its own way for these 6,000 years of human history—under the evil influence of Satan the devil (Ephesians 2:2). God now intervenes occasionally, when He wishes to, in order to bring about His major purposes in the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms. He also intervenes to call certain individuals to be part of His Church—the “little flock” (Luke 12:32)—and to prepare them to be the kings and priests under Christ in the coming Kingdom of God on earth (Revelation 2:26–27; 5:9–10).

But the vast majority of all humanity has been **blinded** by God Himself. They *need* the opportunity to learn by human suffering *that their ways do not turn out well at all!*

In His time, in the transcendent Great White Throne Judgment, God will bring them back to physical life, call them to spiritual understanding, and fill with His Holy Spirit those who are willing to receive it. Finally, He will grant them salvation in the Kingdom of God. Yes, I suppose God *could* have done it another way. But most people must learn by *hard human experience* that man’s ways are **wrong**. Then, when the opportunity for true understanding comes, they can appreciate **God’s ways** infinitely more.

After describing how God is going to finally convert “all Israel” in His time (Romans 11:26), the Apostle Paul was inspired by our Creator to tell us, “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (vv. 32–36).

Frankly, only God’s *true* Church understands this profound truth—and many other fundamental truths to which this world’s professing Christianity is “blinded.” The Living Church of God, which publishes the *Tomorrow’s World* magazine and all our booklets, is dedicated to restoring *original* Christianity. You can find friendly people to worship with, people who believe in and try to practice the full truth of the Bible. But you will need to write us or call us about this if

you are interested. If the great God is opening *your* mind, be sure to check us out. “**Prove** all things” and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, *KJV*).

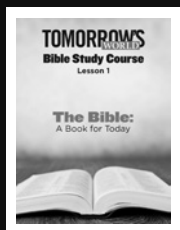
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But for *your* sake, we hope you will **act** on the truth. If God is opening your mind, there is *no reason* why you have to go through the Great Tribulation and the seven last plagues, or why you need to lie in the grave for the next thousand years awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment.

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