

The Hope That Is In Me

by

Gary Wentz

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Preface

This book exists to show the student (*both the disciple of Christ and the seeker*) the *Who, What, When, Where, and Why* of our existence in this creation, with biblical agreement. It presents a total worldview that persists in the face of attack from secular science, religion, unseen spirits, and even self.

The apostle Peter told us that when we have suffered physically for the gospel, we are finished with sin (*1 Peter 4*). “So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won’t spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.” (*1-3, NLT*)

In my own experience, this shows as knowing God is with me no matter how bad things (*attacks*) get. Sin is suffering. It tears at the soul. But there is no depth to which I can fall where my Lord is not there, willing to restore me and bring me back to Him. I only need repent, worship, and receive His presence and great love for me.

This is not strictly being burned at the stake or beaten and left for dead for the faith. It is the human condition finding the bottom and still seeing God—then not returning to the depths after being lifted out.

By the end of this book, the student will be able to follow Peter’s instruction to be ready to give an answer about the hope they have within them—with gentleness and respect—and know what life is about. (*1 Peter 3:15*)

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Chapter One: 3-Realms of Existence

Near the very end of the Bible, there is a scene that most people read right past. Jesus is seated on a great white throne, about to judge the dead. And then this happens:

"And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide." (Revelation 20:11, NLT)

Stop and look at that. The earth and sky — the entire physical creation — runs. And it is not alone. The unseen spiritual world flees right along with it. Two whole realms of existence, running from the presence of One Person.

That one verse hands us the map of all reality. There are two created realms — the Physical and the Spiritual — and they both come to an end. And there is a Third that they flee *from*: the presence of God Himself. God is His own Realm. He is not running anywhere.

I call this the Three Realms of Existence, and this chapter walks through all three. Get this map into your head and the rest of the book will make sense. Skip it and you'll be lost by Chapter Five.

One housekeeping note before we start. I refuse to use the idea of "dimensions" (beyond our four) to describe reality. There are too many problems with that approach. I know only of the 4 dimensions, and I have yet to be convinced of any more beyond them (or fewer).

The Physical Realm

We begin with where we are right now. The Physical Realm is made of Time, Space, and Matter. That makes it 4-dimensional. Time is the fourth dimension, with height, width, and depth being the other three. Matter is 3-dimensional. Space has 3 dimensions.

"Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities..." (Romans 1:20, NLT)

And here is one of those invisible qualities, sitting in plain sight. I sometimes use this realm to illustrate the Trinity of God. God is presented in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. Likewise, Space is triune. Height is not Depth, Depth is not Width, and Width is not Height. But each is needed to make up the whole.

Time is a trinity also. It takes the Past, Present, and Future to make up our time. Past is not the Present, the Present is not the Future, and the Future is not the Past.

And if you want to go deeper still, Matter is a trinity too. Solid is not Liquid, Liquid is not Gas, and Gas is not Solid.

Simple, yes? It works quite well as a metaphor.

We can call the Physical Realm the "Cosmos", or the "Universe". They are interchangeable terms.

The Spiritual Realm

Less is known about the Spirit Realm, but we can surmise the following from what we read in the Bible.

It is not the Physical Realm. It is different and separate. By "separate" I don't necessarily mean located

elsewhere. The truth is, we just can't really know what the relationship is between the Spirit Realm and the Physical Realm in terms of location — other than separate or distinct.

We also can't really know if the two realms were created at the same time. We'll just have to hold that question for when we see God, I guess.

But here is what we *do* know, because we watched it happen in the scene that opened this chapter: the Spirit Realm ends. When earth and sky flee that white throne, the sky (the heavens, the unseen realm) is fleeing too — and neither finds any place to hide. This happens after Jesus' thousand-year reign on this Earth is done, called "the Millennium".

And anything that ends must have had a beginning. The Spirit Realm is a created thing. It is not eternal.

Beings in the Spirit Realm

The Spirit Realm is the home of the other race of humanoids, known as "angels" or the "angelic race". They seem to be of a higher order than we humans are currently, but the Bible promises us that we will be higher than them once we saints are "glorified" — a term I'll unpack more fully in Chapter Five.

Angels are spirit beings that can have a physical presence when they manifest one. So they can and do pass between the two realms of this creation, physical and spiritual. We cannot, without God doing the transfer. Two men were taken up into the Spirit Realm that we know of: Enoch and Elijah. They will likely be the two witnesses who return to Earth just before Jesus returns.

Chapter One: 3-Realms of Existence

Angels are never shown to have wings, so lose that image in your mind. Neither are they shown to be feminine, so you can drop that too. The only beings in the Spirit Realm that are shown to have wings are the two kinds of "created beings" known as Seraphim and Cherubim.

Seraphim are associated with the temple and throne of Christ, while the Cherubim are shown to be associated with the Holy Spirit on His chariot throne. The Cherubim also were placed on the Earth to the East of the Garden of Eden for a time after the fall of Adam and Eve. Neither of these races is called angelic.

And one more piece of housecleaning: people do not become angels, and angels do not become human. If you are of that fairytale thinking, let it go — really. It is not biblical. It is false.

Space in the Spirit Realm

The Spirit Realm — also called "the grave" or Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) in Hebrew, and Hades (ᾍδης) in Greek — has more than one place to it. Both Heaven and Hell exist in that realm.

Another place that is neither of those is called Tartarus, where the fallen angels of Genesis 6 are sent (see Jude 1:6). It is temporary, like hell and the third heaven are.

But one place is permanent: the Lake of Fire, called Gehenna (γέεννα) in Greek. It was created for Satan and his fallen horde — and since angels are to be judged by saints, that is where the fallen ones may be sent. The Lake of Fire is not hell. It is where hell itself is tossed at the final judgment (hell is not permanent). And since the Spirit Realm vanishes along with the current Physical Realm —

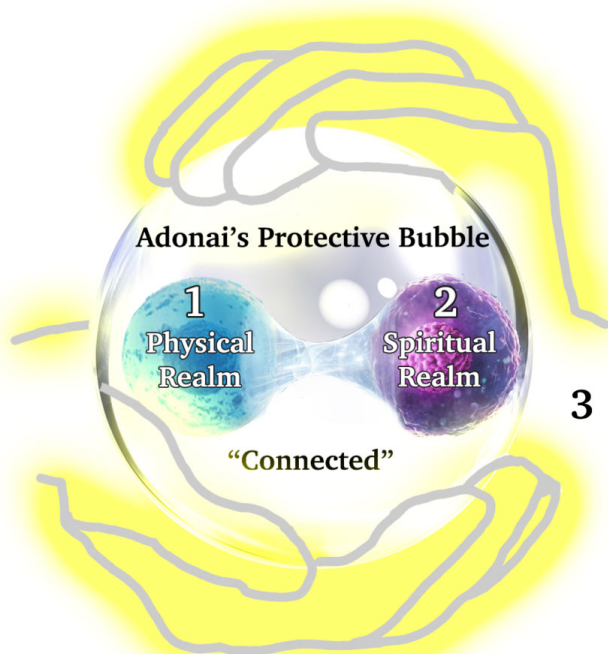
you saw them both flee — I do not believe the Lake of Fire remains in the Spirit Realm. It transfers to the new creation. Chapters Five and Six tell that story, and it is not the story you've been told.

The Divine Realm

The Third Realm is a special place where only God dwells (that we know of). And since God is infinite, His Realm must be infinite too. The Spirit and Physical Realms, then, must be finite — having an end in time and space. We already know they are not eternal; we watched them flee and end. But God's Divine Realm must be eternal. So only God's Divine Realm is eternal and infinite.

How do we know this? There are a few places where God's infinite and eternal nature are described. And He also lives in "unapproachable light" (see 1 Timothy 6:16). That unapproachable light is partly what tells us that no evil may exist in His presence.

Now follow the logic one step further, because this is where it gets big. Since the creation is finite and God is not, we are *inside* of God.



1. Physical Realm 2. Spiritual Realm 3. Divine Realm
The hands are Jesus and Holy Spirit; 3 is Father God

This is key to understanding what the illustration shows. If Satan (the first one to sin) was to remain alive after trying to usurp the throne of Jesus, he would have had to be protected. Ironically, it is Jesus and the Holy Spirit Who are protecting him — and us — from God's righteousness that would consume him and us. Why? Because Jesus and Holy Spirit, being God, can allow us into their presence, while the Father does not. Yes, He is conscious of us and all we do and think and say, but that does not mean His glory, or actual presence, is here. He

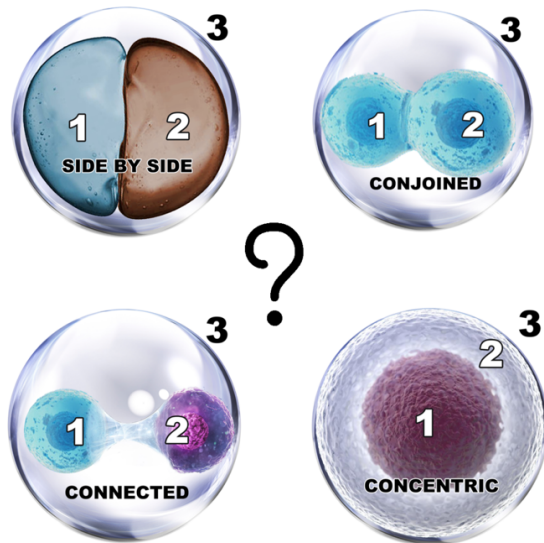
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lives here through His Holy Spirit and Jesus — parts of Him that do not destroy us because of our depravity.

Or look at it this way: If God is infinite and lives in infinite light, why do we not see His light when we look at the night sky? Answer: we are being shielded from His sin-destroying glory by His "Hands", like a person holding a tennis ball in their two hands cupped around it. And as you can see in the illustration, His "Hands" are Jesus and Holy Spirit. Just as much a part of Him as your hands are of you.

Now that white-throne scene makes sense, doesn't it? Two finite created realms — running from an infinite Person they exist inside of, finding no place to hide. There is no place. He is all the places.

I hope this helps you to understand both the creation and the Creator (if you were in doubt).



Other possible arrangements or configurations
of physical and spiritual realms

Humans Are Triune Too

Since we are "made in the image of God", it makes sense that we are also triune beings — made of three parts.

And while this is not anything new, I am at odds with certain teachers (especially in the Charismatic or Pentecostal movements) who say it differently. I say that we are, at our core — the eternal essence of who and what we are — a soul. And our soul has a spirit, with both being in a physical body. Some say we are a spirit with a soul in a body, but this does not square with John 3:6 and Genesis 2:7. So, until I am convinced, I say I am a soul, with a spirit, that lives in a body (for now).

In my understanding, the soul is a special kind of spirit, different than the spirit part of us — just as the Father is Spirit, but not the same as His Holy Spirit. I am my soul, and my spirit is the connection to the Spirit Realm — like my five senses are to my brain in the Physical Realm. And while everyone (and perhaps all creatures) have this connection to the Spirit Realm, developed or undeveloped, that does not mean we automatically connect with God. That is what John 3:6's spirit birthing is for (in my mind). We call this "regeneration", where the Holy Spirit connects us to Him — with Jesus and the Father — upon faith in Jesus. This is what the Baptists mean by being "born again". Try reading John 3 in this light and see how it lands for you. Baptism is just an act of identifying with this spiritual truth accomplished by God, the Holy Spirit.

Final Thoughts on Chapter One

I have purposefully kept this chapter short and dense (like me) to respect the reader's time. There really isn't a lot of embellishment that needs to go into it.

I'll just add that I have much hope in this fallen creation, despite the challenges and heartaches that are a part of it. Sometimes I feel like an old shirt that has been run through the wringer. But then my God shakes me out and puts me up to dry in the light of His Son. And although the Spirit Realm is much nicer than this Physical Realm, it too has a hellish side (literally, though not for me). Plus, my own being is fraught with inner turmoil and conflict — that's the next chapter.

And so, I have shared the three-fold natures of both the creation and myself. In the fifth chapter I'll show how these are going to change drastically: I lose my own depravity while the creation loses its evil side. And God, in His infinity, might just be taking a "bubble bath" in perhaps thousands to billions of creations. (I don't accept the idea of other worlds in this cosmos — sorry, "ET". But my concept is actually much bigger than that.)

Next, we look into our depraved nature, which is temporary.

Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

In this book, I'll give a quick round of questions at the end of each chapter to help facilitate group discussion and drive home the more important points.

Some Quick Questions

1. Which of the Three Realms of Existence are the whole of this creation?
2. Which of the Three Realms is the presence of God (*the Father*) Himself?
3. Can you describe the Trinity of God (*Father, Son, Spirit*) using the cosmos, and how *Time, Space*, and *Matter* are each their own trinity?
4. What are the three parts of mankind's nature?
5. When does the spirit of man go from merely receiving from the Spirit Realm to connecting primarily with God?

Answers

1. Physical and Spiritual.
2. Divine Realm.
3. Time: Past, Present, and Future.
Space: Height, Depth, Width.
Matter: Solid, Liquid, Gas.
4. Soul with a Spirit in a Body.
5. Upon faith in Christ Jesus.

Chapter Two: DNA

(The Depraved Nature of Adam)

Why do you lie?

Why do you steal? Why do you hate? Why do you lust? Why do you covet what others have? Why do you look down on others with condemnation or judgment? (Some even look up to God with judgment.)

I'm not asking whether you do these things. You do. So do I. Every human being who has ever lived does, and no one had to teach us how. We call these traits "sin". And the question this chapter answers is not *whether* they're in you — it's *where they come from* and *what can be done about it*. Great questions. I'm glad I asked them for you.

Here is the short answer, and it will carry us through the whole chapter: our main problem cannot be addressed by us at all. We must turn to God for the solution to our inner pollution. And — perhaps most shocking — religion is useless in activating the cure. Hang tight; this will zoom by pretty quickly. It isn't difficult to grasp.

Where This Came From

One of my early epiphanies came to me about 15 years ago. I was pondering the state of mankind — really, sitting with the question of what is *wrong* with us — when this concept entered my mind in a very clear manner, all at once, the way a light comes on in a dark room. That is how God operates in His Gift of Knowledge to me: through epiphanies. I didn't build this metaphor. It was handed to me. And in my 64 years I have found nothing that works

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better for conveying the need for the cross of Christ to set us right with God.

While not everyone may understand what deoxyribonucleic acid is, almost every adult knows what DNA (for short) is. We know that it is a physical part of our innermost workings that determines our physical appearance and traits.

Hold that picture. We begin with the problem — our depravity. Then we pivot to the cure: salvation through Jesus' death.

Depravity

If this word is new to you, it just means our evil nature — what's wrong with us deep within. "Depraved" is a form of that same word as it applies to the human condition we all share.

Right away, millions or billions of people will push back on this concept of an evil that is inherent in our very structure. I can't help that. I can only explain what I know. But if you deny that you are evil at your core, you have some explaining to do — go back and answer the questions that opened this chapter.

The Origin

If we crack open that dusty old Bible we got from grandma, the third chapter of the Book of Genesis shows us where it started. The first two people, a man and a woman named Adam and Eve, were confronted by a crafty character who is not their God. It told them a lie mixed with some truth. And worse, it convinced them to do the

one thing God had clearly told them NOT to do. Being naïve and vulnerable youngsters, they did it.

That character, of course, is Satan — an angel from the Spirit Realm, guilty of much sin in his own life, and doomed to the Lake of Fire we discussed in Chapter One. He got them to eat of a fruit that gave them knowledge they were not created with: the knowledge of good and evil. Before this, they only knew of good, but had nothing to juxtapose it with. It was just their natural way to be good.

By the way, the lie wasn't that they would know what God knows, or that they would become like Him. That part was true. The sin was disobeying God.

And God, Who expects all His creatures to obey Him — since He alone knows what is best — cursed them with a decree: they would (eventually) die. Interesting. Apparently, they were first created to live on and on, indefinitely. Death was not part of the design. It was the sentence.

"But why?" you might ask. Why did God give humans the ability to turn from Him and His ways in the first place? The answer is simple, and it cuts to the heart of most objections about God: without the ability to turn away from God and His will, the ability to turn toward Him is meaningless. If we were made to automatically obey and love Him, there is no reward for God in that. Love and obedience become useless to anyone — even Him.

So that is key. No ability to sin, no reward in not sinning. No ability to not love? No reward in loving.

But what happened in the garden goes far beyond action. It instantly moved into a *condition of their being* — not just what they did, thought, or said. Adam and Eve, in

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their curse from God, received a new nature — not the one He created for them. It was now tainted and fallen from what it was, pure and good. They became depraved: having a nature of depravity.

I know. This hurts. It hurts a lot — especially for us living now, who weren't the ones who fell into it. We were born into it at our conception. And this is where the DNA analogy comes into play.

I didn't ask for a fallen nature — did you? Of course not. I inherited it from my mom and dad. But neither did I ask for my hair color, eye color, stature, gender, or any of the other facets of my physical self (that micro-habitat, called a body, that my soul lives in and my spirit is connected to). I just am what I am because of the DNA I inherited from my biological parents.

And exactly like the physical DNA that makes me what I am physically, I also inherited a Spiritual DNA that makes me what I am within. That is the **Depraved Nature of Adam**.

This is echoed in the Bible by Isaiah, a prophet of God, who said this about our fallen nature:

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we try to show our goodness, it is like showing God a filthy, bloody, menstrual rag. And like dried leaves that have fallen from a tree, the wind sweeps us away." (Paraphrase of Isaiah 64:6)

Not a pleasant image, is it? It isn't meant to be. That is how God sees our "righteousness" — the very best goodness we can muster. Sit with that a moment before moving on, because everything that follows depends on it.

What This Does to Religion

Can you see what this does to literally EVERY religion, creed, or effort to make ourselves acceptable to God? It obliterates it.

I have to say this plainly, and I'm speaking to you, not at you: the rosary and the tithe cannot touch your DNA. Finding yourself through meditation takes you right back to the self that carries the problem. No amount of submission and observance can remove what is woven into your inner structure — and no deity other than the One Who made you has any solution to offer at all. I am not picking on Catholics or Buddhists or Muslims here. I am saying the same thing to every one of them, and to you: there is NO RELIGION known to man that can make you right with God. Why not? Because your issue is internal, and no amount of outward effort can change what you are made of.

Test the logic on the physical side of the metaphor. Can you, by willing it, change your eye color? Can you, by willing it, change your ethnicity? Can you, by willing it, change your gender? No — and I mean *by willing it*. Whatever the modern world claims it can alter on the surface, no act of will has ever changed what a person is made of at the level of their cells. I am using facts about your physical self to explain a spiritual reality about you: your nature is not subject to your willpower. It is built within you and cannot be removed at all while you are in your physical body. And unfortunately, the effects of your actions and nature will carry over to your eternal state if you do not address it in the now.

Further Ramifications of Man's Sin

One of the oldest and most persistent objections toward God is the existence of evil in this fallen world. But this is missing the point entirely. God did not create sin. Satan and man did that all on their own (first Satan, then he helped man). But why did God allow them to? Easy — He allowed it because they wanted it. His permissiveness is not responsibility. We cannot blame Him for our depravity. We brought that on ourselves, as a race. And though you and I were brought into it at our very conception, we still have performed evil deeds all on our own.

No, the problem is not God's fault — it's man's. And though God did not create the issue, He did create the solution to it. His Word tells us that the entire creation is wailing and moaning until the sons of God are revealed (that's the saints — those who come to God by faith in Jesus). See Romans 8:

"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who His children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (18-22, NLT)

If this is still a problem for you and you have decided to judge the Judge over it, remember that He has provided a way out for you, personally, if you will just accept it. And that is where we go next: the cure.

The Cure

"So what can we do?" you might appropriately ask. The answer is that you, yourself, cannot *do* anything to fix this problem with your very innermost makeup.

You can't give enough money. You can't volunteer enough. You can't lead enough people to God. You can't pray enough (right words or not). You can't join a group, church, mosque, or temple. Forget the cults that claim to hold The Keys to the kingdom of God. None of it can save you. Baptism and circumcision are useless for this too.

This is why I am against all forms of religion. The only religion ever instituted by God is Judaism — the Law of Moses — which, when understood, is no solution at all but the illustration of the need for something else. Just read Paul, trained and appointed by Jesus to share the truth:

"...a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." (Galatians 2:16, BSB)

And this is the point. If I believe that God solved my problem between Him and me (which He did), then I cannot do anything to add to that solution. But if I ignore His solution to my inner pollution and try to fix it on my own — or try to *aid* Him in fixing it — I am no longer under His method. I have made up my own.

Can a baby help dad fix the car? Not really. Can a person in intensive care perform his own life-saving operation? Nope. Can I remove my DNA by doing or saying anything, and still have a body? Not even close. Can I show God my "righteous deeds" and impress Him? Remember what Isaiah said they look like to Him. That's a big, fat no.

Then what?

The Cross of Christ

For whatever reason (which is God's prerogative), He has determined and decreed that a blood sacrifice works to atone for the sinful acts and nature of mankind. I don't make up the rules; I just show them to you.

And He has decreed that the sacrifice must be *perfect*. That's a big problem for literally every person born of Adam and Eve, since every one of us carries the Depraved Nature of Adam. Now we have hit a wall. There is literally NOTHING — including dying for it — that we can do to fix the issue with the tissue.

So here is His ingenious solution: place a perfect human, one who does NOT carry the DNA of Adam and Eve, into the population — and have THAT person be the sacrifice for all people. This person must be of the same nature (soul, spirit, body) but without the toxic inheritance.

Enter Jesus of Nazareth. A perfect Man, who did not inherit His parents' DNA. "But how can that be?" you might ask, since we all inherit it. Excellent question. Here is the answer: His physical body, as an embryo, was placed into the womb of a teenage girl without using her egg or a man's sperm. I'll bet you didn't see that one coming.

This is where I part ways with the Catholic teaching about Mary. They built an elaborate framework around her — the immaculate conception, "the mother of God," prayers offered to her as though she were all-knowing and ever-present. None of it is necessary, and none of it is biblical. The reality is far simpler: Mary was just as depraved as anyone else, and *her depravity never entered the equation* — because her egg was never used. Miss that one mechanical fact and you're forced to invent a super-

person to protect Jesus' perfection. See it, and the whole scaffolding becomes unnecessary. Mary was a faithful, ordinary, depraved young woman whom God honored with an extraordinary role. That is her glory, and it is enough.

Just know this: Jesus had a human body made especially for one purpose — to atone for the sins of all mankind.

Application

Now, how does this atonement (payment) apply to us as individuals? It isn't automatic. The idea of all people being saved by Christ without acknowledging His work simply will not work. That removes all responsibility from the individual, and that is NOT God's way. His way is very simple — easy enough for anyone to grasp.

In order for the death of Jesus to count for you, you need to understand what it is about. Again, nothing to actually *do* here. But you do need to understand it and respond appropriately. So here is the formula, if you will:

1. Acknowledge that you need it (due to the depraved nature you took on at your body's conception).
2. Acknowledge that there is nothing you can add or do to replace or enhance the death He suffered for you. Not one thing.
3. Agree that it is sufficient — and *only* it is sufficient — for the payment. This takes faith.
4. Turn your life over to Jesus, since He paid for it and now owns it. Yes, He owns you from that point on. Don't want to be owned by Him? Then the alternative is to die in your sins and face eternal punishment — though whether "eternal" means

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what you've been told it means is a question I take up in Chapter Six, and the answer matters more than you know. And in Chapter Five, I'll show you a truth from the Bible that is almost never discussed in churches. The truth is not so black and white.

And that's it. Don't add to or subtract from His completed work on the cross. Don't add to or subtract from the faith that God asks of you in His plan. Don't treat His mercy and grace as something that can be sidestepped or avoided. Can you do that? If so, you have HOPE that God will save you.

Faith, according to the Bible, is not something we can generate on our own. It is a gift from God. No, really:

"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

(Ephesians 2:8-9, BSB)

Final words on DNA

I've spent quite a lot of words on this concept to make sure you get it. And here is why it matters beyond your own soul: once you have it, it is the most effective way I know to share the good news with someone else.

Think about what this metaphor does that no other method can do. It removes *us versus them* entirely. You and your hearer are in exactly the same state — because even as a saved person, you still carry the depraved nature. It never goes away on this side of death or glorification. The DNA is in the body of every human being who ever lived, except Jesus. So when you share it, you are not a clean person lecturing a dirty one. You are one patient telling another

patient where the Physician is. There is no ladder to look down from. That is the whole genius of it, and it is why it works where the Ten Commandments approach, the join-my-church approach, and even personal testimony ("well, that's great for *you*, but...") so often fail.

At the same time, this removes nothing good from the life of a believer. Getting baptized is something we are told to do — to show others that the inner change has turned us to God through Jesus, identifying with His death, burial, and resurrection for us. Attending a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, Bible-living church can be a very healthy thing for a family. I don't say to avoid it; I say make sure it's healthy, which a lot of churches are not. And helping someone come to the cross of Christ does not have to include joining your particular group.

I know that last line steps on some toes among the Baptists and Evangelicals. I say it anyway, and here is my authority for doing so:

"Am I now seeking the approval of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10, BSB)

Me too, Paul. I answer to my Savior, not to any group — and He is your Judge too, not me. I do love the brethren, even when we disagree.

DNA — it's what you're made of, not what you think, say, or do. Remember it and use it often — no charge.

Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

Questions

1. What does the term DNA stand for regarding our spiritual nature?
2. Why is this method superior to all others (*in most situations—always follow the Spirit's lead, not mine*)?
3. Why is the Virgin Birth so necessary?
4. Did Jesus' embryo use Mary's egg?
5. What is needed for the cross of Christ to apply to you personally?

Answers

1. Depraved Nature of Adam. Spiritual DNA.
2. It removes all barriers of us versus them. (*Not my exact words in the chapter, but the gist of it.*)
3. Because if Jesus had the DNA of Adam (*through Mary*), He would be imperfect (*depraved*) — just like us.
4. No. Not possible and still be effective.
5. Believe it, receive it, apply it. And give yourself over to the One Who hung on it. *Impossible for you? Wait for the safety net of chapter 5. (Not actual salvation, but better than the alternative.)*

Chapter Three: BPM (The Broken Planet Model)

Foreword

Somewhere out in the darkness, about 4,300 years ago, a rock the size of a mountain was falling toward this planet.

It was moving fast — fast enough to punch through everything in its path. And when it arrived, it would end a world: a world with an atmosphere, soil, seas, and living things unlike anything on Earth today. Almost nothing that saw it coming survived it.

Keep that rock in your mind through everything that follows. Because before I can show you what it destroyed, I have to show you the world it was falling toward — a world you have never been told about.

I call this *The Broken Planet Model*, or BPM for short. It is a key element to *The Hope That Is In Me*, because it dismantles the false backstory of secular science as taught worldwide for many decades now. The science and academic communities have pressed very hard to get God and His Word out of their systems and schools, and they have been successful in turning hearts and minds away from His truth. I want to be careful here: I am not accusing everyone who holds the standard backstory of being anti-God. Most of them are sincere, teaching what they were taught. But there is a force behind that backstory that is entirely anti-God, and the enemy of God and man will use whatever notions he can get hold of to pull God's people away from Him. Sincerity is not the same as being right.

Chapter Three: BPM (Broken Planet Model)

Now, a word about what I am claiming and what I am not. The *structure* of the early Earth that I'm about to show you came to me directly from God, by way of a vision and several subsequent epiphanies about geophysics. On the structure, I do not hedge. But the *measurements* — the depths, the temperatures, the thicknesses — were not handed to me with numbers attached. Where you see me say "my estimate" or "best guess" in what follows, that is exactly what I mean, and I'd rather tell you so than pretend to a precision I wasn't given. The frame is revelation. The figures are homework. Judge each accordingly, with honesty, through the lens of empirical evidence gathered over the last couple hundred years.

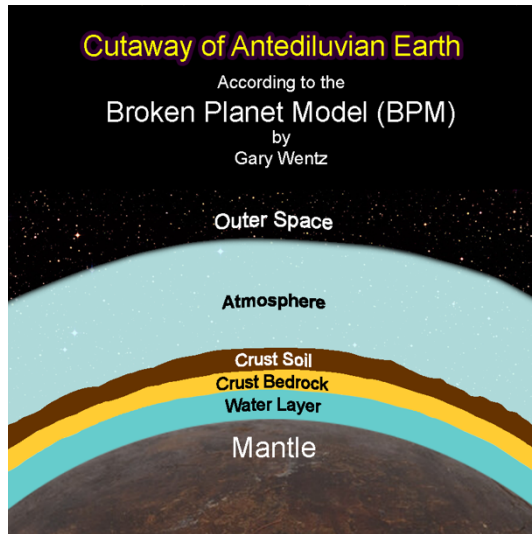
I ask you to forget everything you thought you knew about geophysics and Noah's Flood. This is going to be radically different than anything you've seen before.

Earth's Unknown Structure

For a much deeper dive into this biblical and scientific backstory, I highly recommend my book *The Broken Planet Model*, available for free on my website: GaryTheGospelGuy.com. If it doesn't blow your mind, at least you will not have lost any money reading it.

This structure came to me while hanging out in the garage at home. It took less than 10 seconds for me to see what the layers of the world were as originally created. The vision began as a globe on the workbench, then shifted to a closer view of the layers in a cutaway. Following is what I saw and what I was later taught. This is not coming from my intellect. I'm not smart enough to make this up. It came as a gift of knowledge from the Creator to me—now you.

The 7 Layers of Early Earth



Remember: the rock is falling. Here is what it was falling toward.

1. The Atmosphere

The atmosphere I was shown didn't look any different, sitting above the soil. But as I studied the world to understand what I had been shown, new details came to mind (as epiphanies) about the pre-Flood planet. In an attempt to keep this brief, I'll just hit the highlights.

As you will see later, there was a hidden water layer far below the surface. That water layer was very warm and acted like radiant floor heating for the whole planet, pole to pole. That means the atmosphere was warm and humid, and very uniform globally. And that uniform humidity, temperature, and pressure kept the weather very stable —

without any harsh conditions at all. That means there were none of these meteorological elements:

- Heavy rains
- Snow / sleet / hail / ice
- Strong winds / airborne dust
- Thunderstorms / hurricanes / tornadoes
- Cold temperatures (let alone freezing)

Instead, the atmosphere had these conditions, mostly diminished or gone now in many areas around the world:

- Higher oxygen content
- Higher pressure (which is good)
- Calm cloud cover (no towering clouds)
- Only gentle breezes
- Regular mists or gentle rain

Generally speaking, the atmosphere was like a hyperbaric pressure chamber — like those used today to improve health — enriching the blood, bones, and flesh of living animals and people. It was always healthful and rejuvenating. There were no high terrain areas with low oxygen or pressure. And the combination of higher oxygen and higher pressure works together for a positive effect on the cells of the body.

That perfect sky is the first thing the rock will fall through.

2. The Soil Layer

Under that sky was a deep soil layer — much deeper than our topsoils today. It was thinner than our continents now, but thick enough to hold up gigantic trees and cradle seas, lakes, and gentle rivers. The water bodies could not have been much deeper than the Great Lakes of

North America now. The rivers would likely have been gentle and serene, flowing through low-lying valleys between gentle hills. Some seas may have been huge in area — the size of the United States or China.

Absent were the abyssal (deep) oceans of today. Nothing deeper than the continental lakes of now — deep enough for the largest sea life, large enough for the wide array of life forms that would survive the coming deluge. It was abundant sea life in *freshwater* seas, lakes, and rivers. No salt water anywhere, since salt water is a byproduct of the Flood that wiped out that world.

The soil under forests and seas alike had nutrients, microbial life, and life-giving minerals with a balanced pH. No soil on earth today comes close to its richness. Under the seas were sandy bottoms. At the bottom of the soil layer was gravel, housing the subterranean water table — not like our diminishing water tables today, but thick and globally continuous, lying just atop the next layer: the Bedrock. The soil allowed water to wick up through it while letting water seep down. Fresh springs and geysers could penetrate it from below as well.

3. The Bedrock Layer

Holding up the soil and everything in and on it was the Bedrock Layer — a fairly thin ball of rock (maybe 5 to 10 miles thick, or perhaps 14 km), especially created to allow the passage of water through it while standing firm.

It was saturated with water and surrounded by it, top and bottom: the water table above, the water layer within (discussed next). It had to allow water to percolate through it — colder water going down, warmer water rising up.

This bedrock was not like the rocks we have today. The rocks we see now were once the good soil of the soil layer, turned to mud and baked by and mixed with lava. This bedrock was specially created to do its job. It is one of only two original rock formations from the creation (the other is the mantle). The rest is lava, mud, or both.

And what held the bedrock up? The water layer inside it. Since water can bear more pressure than rock — rock can be crushed, water cannot — the water layer did a fine job of holding up the thin bedrock shell. Water cannot be displaced if there is no escape path, so it just held fast.

Hold on to that phrase: *no escape path*. The rock that is falling is going to provide one.

4. The Water Layer

Between the bedrock above and the mantle below was the water layer. It's gone now — released at the global Flood. But while it was there, it did a few important things.

My estimate is that it was about 15 miles deep (24 kilometers). That is a best guess; no one ever saw this water layer before it came out and covered the world. All we have now is what is known as the Mohorovičić discontinuity, or "Moho" — a global dividing line in the current layers of the earth. The water layer likely sat in this Moho before it collapsed at the Flood.

The water temperature would have been above boiling but not critical — my best guess is somewhere around 300°F. And yet it did not boil. The layer was anaerobic: no air in it at all, sealed off by the water table and bedrock above. That matters enormously, because no air means no boiling, however hot the water was. Allowing

that layer to flash into gas would have been catastrophic. File that away for the Flood section.

The water was in constant motion, swirling around the mantle from the Coriolis force of the planet's rotation, contained inside the bedrock. You might think all that motion would drag the bedrock around with it — but no. The bedrock was held in place by the strong gravitational pull of the mantle and core within, a pull far stronger than the Moon or any other celestial body could overcome. The same holds for the water itself, which moved as a single body of mass; the conservation of angular momentum kept it from bulging on any side.

That steady relationship between bedrock and mantle kept the planet's layers from wobbling relative to each other. And the planet did not bulge at the equator like it does now, because the mantle was still intact and perfectly spherical — and since it was a perfect sphere, the bedrock above was too. I'll discuss the bulge later.

5. The Mantle

Under the water layer, holding everything together with its gravity, was the hot, hot mantle. I was not shown the mantle interior in the vision, but the later epiphanies gave me understanding of it.

Today the mantle is a broken, fractured mess. Without this knowledge from the Creator, we might never have known how important and complex it really was. I say "was" because it is now ruptured and ruined.

But before its ruin, the mantle had a firm and fairly thick shell — maybe as thick as the bedrock above it. That shell kept the water out and the pressure and lava in. Under the shell could have been a layer of crystalline rocks

(crystals form from hot lava), helping to keep heat dissipation down. And under that was the "flesh" of the mantle — a very thick layer of magma doing the heavy lifting of containing the heat, and perhaps replenishing the lava layer within. This flesh of the mantle could have been the thickest part of the earth — up to a third of its radius.

Keep your eye on that shell. Everything depends on it staying sealed.

6. *The Outer Core*

Inside the mantle was the outer core — a layer of liquid lava, swirling from the Coriolis force just like the water layer above. That swirling motion created a dynamo effect. When metals rotate around each other — and this lava was molten iron and nickel, like the inner core below it — they create a magnetic, electrified field. This is where our very important magnetosphere comes from: the shield that keeps harmful radiation from space off our planet.

Unfortunately, the magnetosphere was severely degraded during the Flood. I'll get to that.

7. *The Inner Core*

Inside the outer core was the inner core — a round ball about the size of Pluto, or maybe 70% the size of the Moon, at about the temperature of the surface of our Sun. That's a lot of heat to contain, but the mantle held it in.

I call this core a nuclear furnace for the earth. It was very radioactive — and a very important job of the mantle was to contain all of that radioactivity.

So there is the machine: seven layers, each doing its job, each depending on the others. Sky over soil, soil over bedrock, bedrock floating on sealed hot water, water over a

sealed mantle, mantle containing a radioactive furnace. Irreducibly complex, perfectly balanced, and built with no escape paths anywhere. I don't know if you're impressed by this marvel of creative engineering, but I sure am.

Now the rock arrives.

The Catastrophe

The Impact

"There's no crater on earth big enough for that!" you might exclaim. To which I'd say: you're right. There is no crater from this collision. But we would not expect one — not with a thick water layer under the crust.

Think about it. If you shoot a barrel full of water, what happens? The bullet passes right through the barrel wall (maybe both walls). If that barrel were full of concrete, you'd see a crater. But with water in it, there is no crater. Same with our planet before the Flood.

So we don't look for a crater — we look for a scab. A scab of land sitting on a plume of lava. And one that sits on a huge crack, at that. Can you think of anything like this on Earth?

How about Iceland?

Iceland is the prime suspect for ground zero. It fits. Under Iceland is a gigantic hole that goes deep into the innermost parts of the planet. It sits on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge — a huge crack in the surface of the crust. And it is highly volcanic and still active. And if Iceland is the impact site, then we can look for other tell-tale signs to confirm the hypothesis:

Chapter Three: BPM (Broken Planet Model)

1. The Earth and the Moon have a funny relationship, orbitally. The Moon's orbit is kind of "wonky". That fits this scenario (of Earth being moved). [check]
2. The plume would connect the surface with the inner parts of the mantle. [check]
3. The largest crack in the former bedrock would run through that point and be the primary fissure on Earth, from which all others radiate. [check]
4. The crust would have shifted from the impact, since it sat on a layer of water. The offset between Magnetic North and True North is 23.44° . [check]
5. The extruding lava would have solidified into a large island. A scab. [check]

And then there's the trajectory story left by the plume itself. If you're smarter than me (not a high bar), you might be able to figure out the angle of incidence. If you knew the mass and composition of the impactor, you could estimate how deep it went. And if you're really smart, you could probably tell the world just how far the planet was knocked southward by the impact. Is there a talented astrophysicist out there who'd like to take on this challenge?

The Punch-Through

Now let's follow the rock down, layer by layer. The atmosphere can't stop it. The soil can't stop it. The bedrock couldn't stop it. The water layer didn't stop it. It lodged in the mantle. Let's run through these quickly.

The Atmosphere

When a rock is this big, this dense, and moving this fast, the atmosphere hardly slows it down. It just burns a smoky trail through the sky.

The Soil Layer

The dirt explodes and flies high into the atmosphere in a huge cloud of dirt, smoke, and ash.

The Bedrock Layer

This is where it starts getting interesting. The bedrock is punched through like our water barrel. But this water is really hot — and as soon as air touches that hot water for the first time in history, the water at the impact site flashes to gas on top of the water layer. A huge explosion follows right on the heels of the impact. Water, steam, and whatever else goes flying out the new hole in the crust, reaching the upper atmosphere or perhaps beyond. The hole just got a lot bigger.

Remember *no escape path*? There's the escape path.

The Water Layer

Other than the explosion at the hole, the meteorite passes through the water layer without further event and slams into the mantle. The rock must have been enormous and moving very fast to pass through that much water and still punch through the mantle's shell. But thank God it did. Otherwise, this would have become a water world.

The Mantle

Now the crucial effect of the whole event. When that rock breached the mantle, what came out? Four things: pressure, lava, heat, and radiation.

Chapter Three: BPM (Broken Planet Model)

The pressure gave everything momentum. The lava was superhot, and it did something extraordinary to the water layer: it triggered a *second* explosion of epic proportions at the bottom of the water layer, flashing enormous amounts of the surrounding water to steam. Steam is water in expanded form — and there was no room for expansion. This is a bomb going off, except the size of it makes any manmade explosion look puny. How many nuclear bombs would it take to equal this blast? I have no idea. A lot.

So what had to give? Two things: the bedrock holding it all in, and the mantle shell containing everything within. The bedrock rose up, quickly fractured, and fell back down — pushing scalding water out. Heat poured from the hot water and the escaping mantle. And the radiation escaped too.

The mantle bulges at the equator now because it was decimated. Ruined. Ruptured. Fractured. Blown to pieces. It's a mushy mess. No longer a perfect sphere.

The Chain Reaction

When the mantle's shell fractured from the explosion on its surface, the cracking let out even more lava into the surrounding water layer, globally. Each time lava touched water, another epic explosion ensued. And so, in a very short time, the entire crust of the earth and the mantle below were blown into pieces.

This isn't the typical Flood story you're used to, is it? Still want to say the Flood was a local event? It was global destruction on an epic scale, like something from a sci-fi movie.

The Flood

Now the Flood itself. There are really two things to discuss: the water gushing out as the earth's crust fell, and the rain that came.

The Bible says the fountains of the great deep opened up. Here is how the New Living Translation puts it:

"When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights." (Genesis 7:11-12, NLT)

Hmm. It looks like the Bible got it right after all. *All the underground waters erupted from the earth.* Moses wrote that thirty-five centuries before anyone had heard of the Moho.

Imagine standing on the planet at this moment. You feel and hear a gigantic earthquake. Then, from horizon to horizon, the earth falls out from under you and everything in sight. No place to run. Even the birds had no place to go — just scalding hot water burning and churning as everything gets swallowed up in mud.

And rain? Oh yes, there was rain. What happens when there's a temperature difference between air and water? Fog. Steam. Now make that water at least 300°F. A LOT of steam and a LOT of fog. If you were watching from the Moon, you'd have seen a green planet turn white before your eyes. You wouldn't even finish your coffee before it was done. Throw in air turbulent beyond measure, a planet extremely hot for hours or days, an already-humid atmosphere now super-saturated with water. Birds would

Chapter Three: BPM (Broken Planet Model)

have drowned in flight. Can you imagine the super-hurricanes — hypercanes — that ensued, planet-wide?

And in the middle of all of it, one wooden box.

Picture it, because the Bible says it was there: eight people sealed inside a hold full of animals, in the dark, riding water that had no shore. Every sound in the world reaching them through the hull — the roar of the fountains, the hammering rain, the groan of a planet coming apart. For over a year. How did the crew and passengers of the Ark survive what I have just described? God's providence — and a double-hulled box (my guess). He shut them in before it started (Genesis 7:16), and everything I've written in this chapter was, to them, a sound in the darkness outside a door that God Himself had sealed shut. That is the scale of what "God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1) actually means.

The Outer Core

Now consider what was happening down in the outer core as the lava was released. When the container is smashed and the contents gush out while still held inside other layers, the lava pours out and water rushes in — debris too. That beautiful dynamo creating all of that electromagnetic energy is now contaminated. Rock and water have entered and degraded its power. There went the magnetosphere's early power.

Back On The "Surface"

Up top, the once-perfect atmosphere is nothing but storm clouds, saturated and dumping water in measures that cannot be imagined. The once-perfect soil is nothing but mud, full of dead things. Entire biomes — some perhaps

bigger than continents today — are swallowed up and floating in the turbulent waters.

The radioactive, super-hot lava is now under and squishing out on top of the falling plates that used to be the bedrock ball. That lava sticks to the tops of the fractured plates and becomes the foundations of what we now call continents — something never before on Earth. The muddy mats of former soil catch on the lava and turn to stone, cooked by the extreme heat. Mountains form as the partly solidified (lithified) mats scrunch up against each other.

Want to know why Africa and South America look like they fit? They were formed by lava and mud pushed in opposite directions from a central point: the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Want to know how the Himalayas formed? That huge mat called India was separated from Antarctica and slammed into what is now called China.

The continents were never joined in a supercontinent called "Pangaea". They were formed by ***fluid dynamics*** — lava and mud moved about by huge forces of water, pushed by falling plates of rock. Don't think of rock pieces drifting around over long periods of time. Think of lava and mud being moved by lots of water in motion. It took 150 days for the continents to begin to peek out from under the Flood waters. The 40 days of rain was how long the atmosphere was dropping massive amounts of precipitation.

Want to know how the one and only Ice Age occurred? It was only possible because of the super-saturated atmosphere. The poles, both North and South, are desert regions, incapable of the snowfall the Ice Age

required. It could only have happened this way. The Ice Age was a single, inimitable (not repeatable) event.

Radiation

Probably the biggest stick used against the Bible's timeline is radiometric dating. It gets presented as settled fact — a perfect clock guaranteeing billions of years of history for this planet and cosmos. The people presenting it are, for the most part, sincere; they teach what they were taught. But sincerity does not make the clock true, and I can now tell you what that "clock" is actually measuring: the dribs and drabs of continued leaking from the core. The entire premise of the perfect clock is a false notion.

In reality, Earth was irradiated in one massive event in the year 1656, anno mundi (year of Earth).

That is why we have the Van Allen belts around our planet. That is why rocks show signs of radiation, called Radiohalos. That is why people, animals, and plants no longer live as long as they did before the Flood and its one-time contamination. And that is why the very DNA of all life shows degradation with each generation.

Want a good clock? Read the DNA in the human genome. It tells us how short life is and how little time has passed since Noah and his boys came through the Flood. Look at entropy, and see the effects of radiation.

Just know this, child of God: radiometric dating is not real. Radiation is real — it came out of the Earth's core 4,338 years ago (as of 2026) and has been seeping out ever since. But the "clock" is fantasy, built on a wrong backstory. Do not fall for it any longer.

Let God be true, and every man a liar.

Conclusion

I don't buy the concept of billions or millions or even hundreds of thousands of years. I say the world is 5,990 years old (in '26). Prove me wrong (and good luck).

Can you see how this gives me hope and faith in God's Word? God showed me — personally, directly — how the world was made, then destroyed and reshaped by the Flood. That is why I am sharing it with you. Now I hope this gives you hope in God's Word too.

I know I'm full of it (hope). How about you?

Chapter Three: BPM (Broken Planet Model)

1. Lava escapes the Mantle



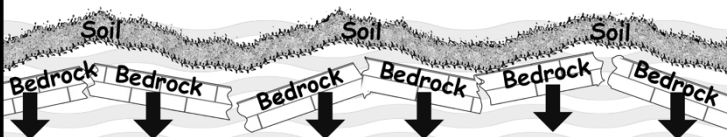
HOT WATER LAYER — fresh water, very deep



SUPER HOT MANTLE — full of lava, heat, and radiation

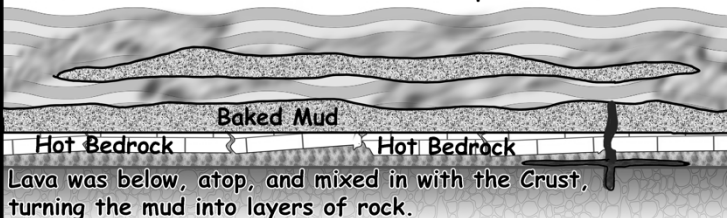
2. Lava + water = blown up Crust Layer.

Bedrock sinks immediately, Soil dissolves into mud

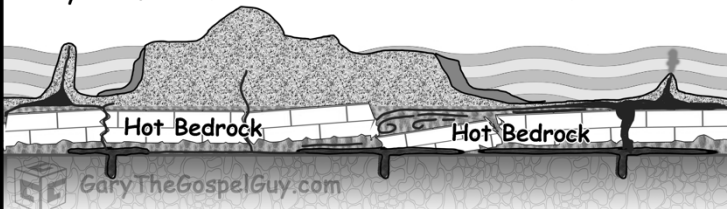


A layer of lava quickly formed on top of the Mantle

3. For a time, all "land" is under water and being sloshed as mud, while the air itself is drowned in vapor, steam, and rain.



4. Within about 150 days, the continents are formed into rock layers of sediment that have been baked hard.



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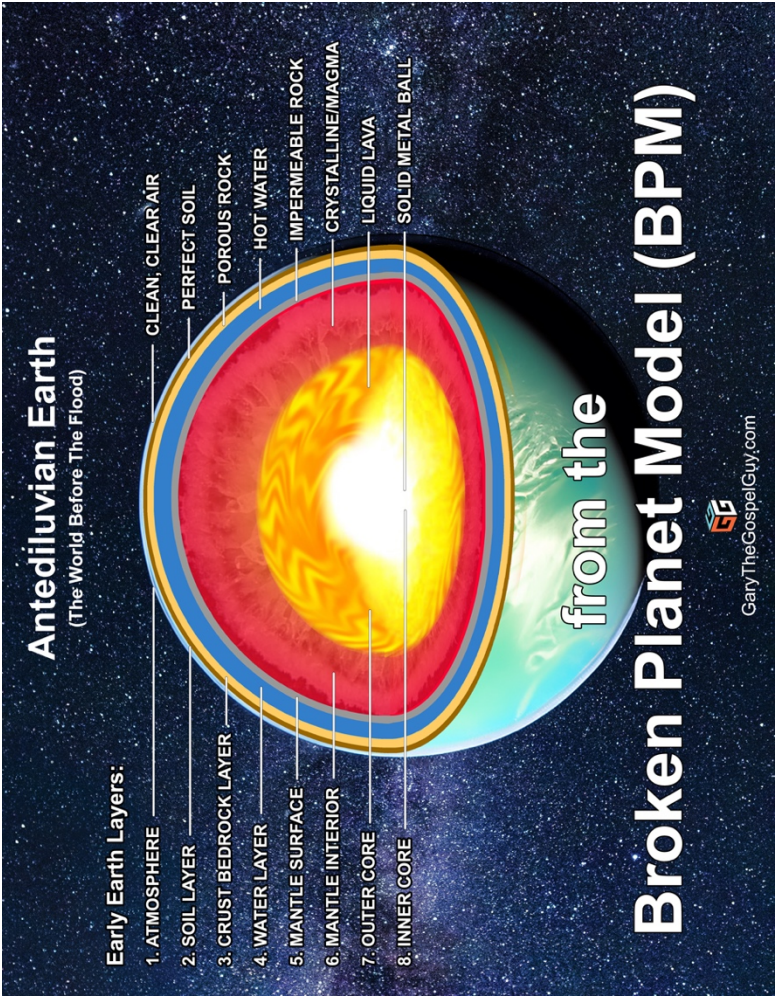
Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

Questions

1. What single object or event sets the whole Broken Planet Model in motion?
2. Before the Flood, what seven layers made up the Earth?
3. What happened when the lava reached the Water Layer?
4. Why can't radiometric dating be trusted, according to the BPM? (*You'll have to connect the dots on this one.*)

Answers

1. A large meteorite punching through to the Mantle
2. Sky, Soil Layer, Bedrock Layer, Water Layer, Mantle, Outer Core, and Inner Core.
3. It flashed the water to steam, shattered the Bedrock, and flooded the world. (*Noah's Flood.*)
4. It assumes a constant decay rate and known starting amounts — both wrecked by the radiation dump of the Flood.



Chapter Four: End Times Made Easy

One day — perhaps within your lifetime, perhaps on the news feed from your phone in your pocket — Israel will be at peace. Actually at peace, for once. And then, with no warning, she will be invaded from every side at once.

Not by just anyone. By a specific coalition, named in the Bible some 2,600 years ago: forces from what is now Iran; from the region of Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya; from Turkey; from the area of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan — with their leader coming down from the North. They will take the land. They will murder, rape, and loot. And somewhere in the middle of it, two leaders will sit down at a conference table, each one lying to the other.

The moment that meeting happens, a clock starts. And from that moment forward, nearly every major event of the End Times lands on a day-count you can write on one page.

That is what I mean by End Times Made Easy. Not easy because it's simple — easy because once you know what to look for, the Bible hands you a watchman's checklist with numbers on it. Most of us have never seen this checklist. By the end of this chapter, you'll have it.

But first you deserve to know why you've never seen it, and why you should trust the man showing it to you.

Why the End Times Became Hard

This part of theology, called eschatology, is perhaps the most convoluted section of all within Christendom.

Chapter Four: End Times Made Easy

("Eschatology" just means the study of the end.) Why so much confusion? Three reasons.

First, seminaries — where pastors and priests are trained — are largely an extension of the colleges, and the colleges have been hostile to God for a very long time (see BPM). You saw in the last chapter what they did to cosmology, the study of the beginning; they have done the same to the study of the end. True science does not contradict God's Word, and neither does true scholarship — but both have been made to seem like they do.

Second, interpretation. When people do not allow the Bible to speak to them plainly — when they interject their own thoughts and feelings into the message — they ruin the purity of it.

Third, shallow study. Some people learn just enough to make their handling of it dangerous. It took me over 30 years of devoted study to reach the point where I actually understand this material and can communicate it. And I had to quit listening to the systems of doctrine put out by the seminaries and just read the Word of God, allowing His Holy Spirit to teach me.

And teach me He does. He has gifted me with what is called Words of Knowledge (see 1 Corinthians 12:8) — a spiritual gift that allows me to receive from Him understanding of whatever He wants to give. I do not control what He tells me; He does. It is a gift, not an ability. It says nothing of my intellect, faith, or depravity. If you do not believe in spiritual gifts, then you have a bigger problem of not believing the Bible, for it was Paul who gave us the teaching on gifts, and there is nothing in God's Word that indicates a ceasing of the Spirit's power. That is

an idea men came up with when they didn't see God moving in power in their own lives. If you do not believe in God's power, He will not show it to you. I do believe, and I do see Him moving.

One more thing you should know: I hold no membership card in any of it. No creed, sect, movement, or denomination — not Charismatic, not Pentecostal, not Evangelical, not Protestant (which comes out of Catholicism), and certainly not Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, or any branch of Orthodoxy. I'm not a pastor, a priest, or a "trained" clergyman. I am just a lifelong believer and student (disciple) of the Word and God. I follow Jesus and His Holy Spirit in all things.

Enough about me.

Method

My method of Bible interpretation is called "Plain Meaning": I add nothing to and take nothing away from the scriptures. It allows for context — social, biblical, linguistic, any kind — to be evaluated. It says the Bible is a clear teaching and can be understood. When the Word is given as a parable, it's a parable. When it is poetic, it's poetic. When it's narrative, that's the way it's taken. I do not spiritualize what is not spiritual. I do not complicate what is simple or simplify what is complex. And I never interject my own feelings, fears, desires, or misconceptions into the text.

Here are three big words for you to ingest:

- **Hermeneutics** — the method of interpretation.
- **Exegesis** — a hermeneutic that takes the word as-is.
- **Eisegesis** — a hermeneutic that adds or takes away.

So my hermeneutic is called Plain Meaning, which is exegetic, not eisegetic. I take it as it comes, no matter how difficult to swallow. I don't soften it when it's hard or harden it when it's soft.

Clearing the Ground

Before the timeline, two disputes have to be settled, because getting either one wrong makes the checklist unreadable.

The Millennium

As believers in Jesus, we should all believe that He will return — if one does not believe this, they should not associate themselves with Him at all. The real conflict is over the *timing* of His return relative to the Millennium: the thousand-year reign of Jesus on this earth told of in Revelation 20. Three main ideas float around the churches of the world:

- **Premillennialism** says Jesus returns *before* the thousand-year reign. This one makes sense.
- **Postmillennialism** says He returns *after* it. This one makes no sense at all.
- **Amillennialism** spiritualizes it and says the millennium is something else entirely. Senseless.

I discuss these in greater detail in my other two End Times books, *End Times Made Easy* and *Sheep To Nations* (same names as this chapter and the next — all free on my website, GaryTheGospelGuy.com). Having a correct understanding here matters to *The Hope That Is In Me*: if my hope is in a false teaching, it is no hope at all. Same for yours.

The Rapture

Even within premillennialism there is a stark divide over the timing of the rapture. First, definitions.

The **resurrection** is the raising of the dead in Christ at His return — one of Paul's pet teachings, argued hard in his letters because not all his contemporaries believed it.

The **rapture** is the catching up of the *living* in Christ at His return. Resurrection for the dead; rapture for the living.

Today the friction isn't over whether these happen, but *when*. Five positions exist, mapped mostly against the 7-year tribulation (which we'll get to):

- **Pretrib** — rapture before the tribulation (false)
- **Midtrib** — halfway through it (false)
- **Prewrath** — before God's wrath begins (false)
- **Posttrib** — after the tribulation (true)
- **No rapture at all** (also false)

The dominant teaching in American churches is Pretrib, riding on the system the seminaries have taught for years, called Dispensationalism. The late John MacArthur taught a great deal of End Times material from within that system, and nearly all of it was wrong — not because he lacked sincerity, but because the system says what people's "itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3): that believers will not be in the horrific time called the Tribulation. It sounds great on the surface, right up until the Word of God is consulted. If you follow this teaching, you are in for a shock. It is eisegetic, not exegetic—imposing man's will.

You Will Be Here For It

A person might argue that there is nothing hopeful about the tribulation. I'd agree — except for the timing of

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it. If we do not have this terrible time of warfare and torture and persecution, we do not have the return of Jesus. And if you refuse the Posttrib view simply because you don't *want* to go through such a time, consider this: persecution is part of being a follower of Christ. Paul and Jesus promised it to us. If you are not persecuted, you are not a follower of Christ. Don't want to believe this?

"...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12, NLT)

"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you." (John 15:18-20, NLT)

Want more? There're plenty: John 16:33; Matthew 5:10-12; Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:9; Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12-14; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4.

So don't be a coward. God does not like cowards. Don't believe me?

"But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars — their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Revelation 21:8, NLT)

Did Jesus shy away from His persecution in a torturous death on a cruel cross? Are you more precious than Him? Wake up and smell the blood. If you turn from persecution, He will turn from you.

The Hope That Is In Me

So yes: believers will absolutely go through the Great Tribulation. Now let's get you ready to recognize it. Here comes the checklist. I'm going to give it to you as it comes, without arguing every point as we go — the full arguments are in my books, free on the website. Fair enough?

The Timeline

Ezekiel's War — the First Thing to Watch For



Remember the invasion that opened this chapter? Now you get some more details, because the details are how you'll know it when you see it.

It's called Ezekiel's War because it is primarily given in the book of Ezekiel (chapters 38–39). It begins

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with a surprise invasion while Israel is enjoying peace — for once. The antichrist, called Gog, leads a coalition of Muslim nations attacking from all sides at once while he comes down from the North. And here is your checklist, because *any other attack will not be it*. Only these nations, plus his, will be involved:

- **Persia** — now Iran
 - **Put** — the area of Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya
 - **Turkey** — called Beth Togarmah, and Gomer
 - **Cush** — the area of Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan
- Gog himself will come from the area called Magog

— now the Caucasus, the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, spanning parts of Southern Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. We do not know which of those countries he will be from, but he is NOT from anywhere else on earth — only those five candidates. He will be a relatively unknown political figure at first.

This coalition will invade Israel and successfully take the land. They will murder, rape, and loot. Then they will leave. But before leaving, there will be a conference-table meeting between the two leaders.

That meeting is when the clock starts.

Day Zero: The Conference Table

"Seeking nothing but each other's harm, these kings will plot against each other at the conference table, attempting to deceive each other. But it will make no difference, for the end will come at the appointed time."
(Daniel 11:27, NLT)

Now, full disclosure, because I owe you my usual honesty about what is revealed and what is reasoned: this meeting being the starting point is surmised, not expressly given. It is a guess — the best guess I know of, and the one that makes the most sense. If there is another time for the clock to start, I'd like to know what it is, because there is no clear teaching on it in the scriptures. So pick your best guess. This is mine. And all we have are guesses.

But before we count a single day, I have to clear away a very annoying teaching that gets thrown at anyone who counts anything. Here is what Jesus said about the timing of His return:

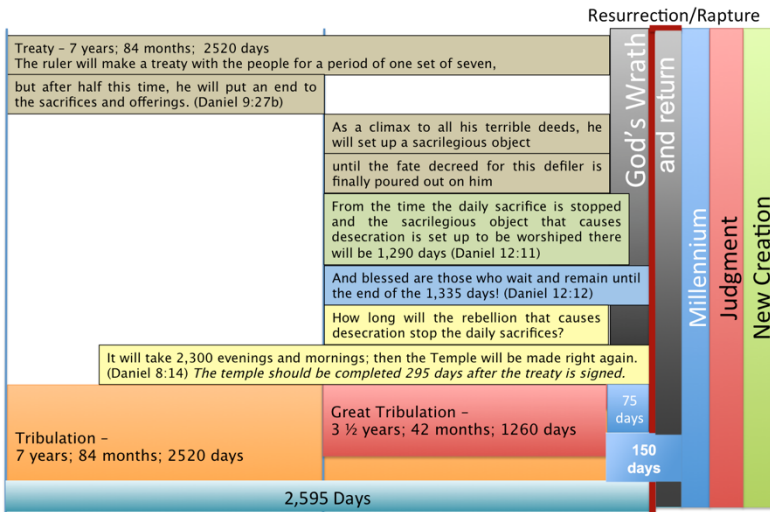
"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows." (Matthew 24:36, NLT — not all manuscripts include "the Son Himself")

Notice what He actually said. No one knows the *day or hour* — and no one *knows*, present tense, at the moment He said it. Unfortunately, this has been twisted into "no one will ever know anything about the timing of the whole thing." Some people get really upset about it, too (another clue that it isn't from God). Day or hour is precise language. It is literal. A good hermeneutic keeps it that way; a poor hermeneutic makes it something else. Nothing in the checklist below names a day or an hour of His return — you'll see that for yourself when we get there. And we *DON'T KNOW* the *day or hour* of the attack—it's a surprise attack! Let God's Word be true and every man a liar. I hope you're getting this.

Now. Let's count some days.

The Days of Daniel

Daniel's Timeline



Here is the whole countdown on one page. Some of these numbers sit right on the surface of the text. Three of them you will rarely — or never — hear taught: day 295, day 2,595, and the 150-day length of the wrath itself. And where those last two meet is something I have never heard taught at all. The digging is below the list.

- **Day 0** — The conference table. The clock starts.
- **Day 295** — The temple in Jerusalem is completed. (A number you will rarely hear taught; derived below.)
- **Day 1,260** — The halfway point of the seven years. The sacrifices in the temple are stopped. The Great Tribulation begins.

- **Day 2,520** — The seven years (2,520 days) end. The Tribulation is over. Jesus appears in the sky "immediately after the tribulation" (Matthew 24:29-31), and God's wrath begins — 150 days of it.
- **Day 2,595** — Day 75 of God's wrath: the resurrection of the dead in Christ, immediately followed by the rapture of the living. The glorification of the saints. (Also derived below — this one is not quickly seen either.)
- **Day 2,670** — The wrath — which includes the battle of Armageddon within it — ends. Then Jesus takes His throne on Mount Zion.

From Daniel we know the Tribulation period is one "seven" — seven years. Now, before you reach for a calculator: Daniel consistently uses a 360-day year, not our 365.25-day calendar year. That's how seven years converts to exactly 2,520 days, with each half being a clean 1,260 days. Every day-count in this chapter runs on that 360-day year — keep that in your pocket, or none of the arithmetic will check out. Daniel says that at the halfway point the sacrifices in the temple are stopped (Daniel 9:27). Which means there must first be a temple. So when is it built?

That was a tricky one, and it took me a bit of study — but I found it. And the same calculation that produces day 295 produces day 2,595 along the way; the two numbers come out of one piece of digging. Three verses, one calculation:

1. Daniel 8:14 says the temple will be *made right* after **2,300 days**. Made right how? I say it is when the saints are glorified — because the saints are the temple of God now, and the Jews

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performing sacrifices in that rebuilt building are not saints and don't even acknowledge them.

2. Daniel 12:12 says, "blessed are those who wait and remain until the end of **1,335 days**." That count begins at the halfway reset — day 1,260. And *those who wait and remain* being blessed is the rapture: the living, caught up. So the glorification lands on $\text{day } 1,260 + 1,335 = \text{day } 2,595$ from the conference table.
3. Now work backward. If the temple is *made right* (the saints glorified) 2,300 days after the temple is *completed*, then the temple is completed on $\text{day } 2,595 - 2,300 = \text{day } 295$.

That is how we know it takes 295 days from the conference-table meeting for the temple to be completed. Like I said, not straightforward — but once you see it, you can't unsee it.

So there are your buried numbers from that one dig: day 295 for the temple, and an actual day-count for the resurrection and rapture — day 2,595. That is beyond the 2,520 days of the tribulation — which is fine; it is what it is. It lands 75 days into God's wrath.

Now the third thing you will rarely hear taught: the length of the wrath itself. The wrath has exactly one timestamp associated with it in all of scripture: the 5 months (150 days) of the locust attack in Revelation 9. No other wrath event carries a time signature, so I use it for the whole. Argue if you like, but you will have a hard time convincing me this is not correct. (The Flood had a 150-day meter too — how long it took for land to begin peeking out

from under the waves. God seems to favor that number for judgment.)

Now set the two findings side by side — because what they show, as far as I know, is taught nowhere at all. Daniel's counts put the glorification of the saints on day 2,595. The wrath begins when the tribulation ends, on day 2,520 (Matthew 24:29), and runs 150 days. So Daniel's day lands 75 days into the wrath. And 75 is exactly half of 150.

Now let me be careful about what is scripture and what is me, because the difference matters. Neither Daniel nor John says one word about a "midpoint of God's wrath." No verse asserts that the saints are glorified at the wrath's halfway mark. The counts are scripture's; the midpoint is my observation of where the counts fall. I use that observation for two things and two things only. First, it locks down the timing of everything that follows: resurrection and rapture on day 75, wrath complete on day 150, and then — with Armageddon concluded — the throne, and the Millennium. Second, it is where my rapture doctrine gets its name: mid-wrath. Of all the positions on the rapture, mine is the one named for where the numbers actually land.

So: the resurrection and rapture occur on day 75 of God's wrath, executed by Jesus while in the air over a rebellious world. First the resurrection, then the rapture.

And notice: none of this violates Jesus' words. As a stickler for details, I say His actual *return* is when His foot touches ground at Bethany (or what's left of it), and that exact day or hour cannot be known at this time. Even His appearing in the sky is not precisely fixed — all we're told is "immediately after the tribulation." The day-counts run

from a human event nobody can schedule in advance. The Father's calendar remains His own.

If you are one of those who insists on willful ignorance about the timing of these things, that is your right. I don't go that way. I like to know things. And God shows me much through His gift of knowledge.

Armageddon

Ask any ten people what Armageddon is and you'll likely get ten different answers — most amounting to "the end of the world." Here's my two cents.

Armageddon is a battle, not a war. The war is Ezekiel's War, which began with the invasion that opened this chapter. Armageddon is the end of it. It takes place in the Valley of Megiddo in central Israel, after the Great Tribulation and not part of it — during the 150 days of God's wrath. As many as 200 million soldiers are wiped out at that time and place.

Armageddon is the last event before Jesus takes His throne on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

God's Wrath

Honestly, I don't want to take the time to get deep into God's wrath in this book — I've covered it extensively in *End Times Made Easy* (it's the longest chapter). I'll just characterize it quickly. God's wrath is shown in the book of Revelation through seven Trumpets and seven Bowls. Basically, the Trumps herald the Bowls, while the Bowls complete the Trumps (though not consistently). Jesus is the One Who metes it out at His return, just after the Tribulation. As already shown, it runs 150 days and, along

with Armageddon, is the last thing before He takes His throne.

The Millennium

The Millennium is the one-thousand-year period when Jesus is here with us on this planet, ruling from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. By then His new millennial temple will be built, and His saints will have been glorified and be ruling with Him.

This timing matters enormously for the next chapter, where I discuss the two judgments in the Millennium — and neither of those judgments is for the saints. Understand this: by the time the Millennium begins, the number of the saints has already been filled, never to be added to.

And notice something in Revelation 20:7-9: at the end of the thousand years, Satan is released from confinement and fools people into rebellion. Who? Not the saints — saints aren't ruling themselves, and glorified people don't rebel. This means there are two kinds of people in the Millennium: glorified, immortal saints, and regular, mortal nations. More on this — much more — in the next chapter.

The Millennium will be heaven on earth, literally. There will be death for the mortals, but their bodies will be kept young by the Water of Life and fruit from the Tree of Life; some who are judged at the beginning and allowed to stay will still be alive at the end of it. It will be just what this earth has always wanted: long life; a God Who is seen and heard; just rule; happy times. What could be better?

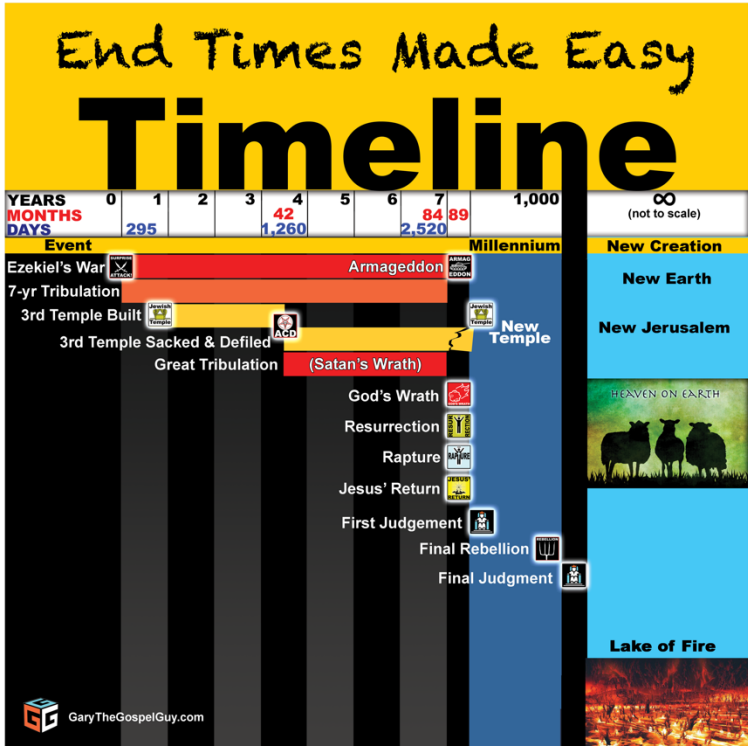
Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

Questions

1. When does the Tribulation begin?
2. When does God's Wrath begin?
3. When does the Millennium begin?
4. When is the resurrection and rapture?
5. Who reigns with Christ over the nations?

Answers

1. When Israel is invaded by antichrist. A surprise invasion on a day or hour not known.
2. Immediately following the Tribulation.
3. Immediately after God's wrath and Armageddon.
4. Halfway through God's wrath, on day 75.
5. The glorified saints.



Chapter Five: STN (Sheep To Nations)

We have arrived at the chapter I hinted at twice back in the DNA chapter. I promised you a safety net — something for those who, for whatever reason, never came to the cross. I told you it was not salvation, but better than the alternative. Now I'll make good on that promise.

But first, a warning. What you are about to read is probably not what you've been taught. In fact, I'd be surprised if you've ever heard it at all. For two thousand years, people have read the passage at the center of this chapter and forced it into whatever system they already believed. I did the opposite. I let the passage say what it says, followed the timeline God laid out, and accepted where it led — even though it led somewhere strange.

So hold your objections until the end. Let the Bible speak first.

Where This Sits

In the previous chapter, I left you standing at the threshold of the Millennium — the thousand-year reign of Jesus on this earth, ruling from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. I told you there were two kinds of people in it: glorified, immortal saints, and regular, mortal nations. I told you the number of saints is already full by then. And I told you there are two judgments in the Millennium, neither of which is for the saints.

This chapter is where I prove all of that from the Word.

It's drawn from my full book, *Sheep To Nations*, which lays out every argument in detail and answers every loose thread. Here, I'm giving you the core — the spine of it — with the verses that carry the weight. If you want the rest, it's free on my website (*GaryTheGospelGuy.com*).

The Olivet Discourse

I always anchor end-times study in the same place: the Olivet Discourse. That's the teaching Jesus gave His four closest friends — Peter, Andrew, James, and John — on the Mount of Olives in the week before His death (*Mark 13:3*). It runs across Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and it is the most complete end-times timeline in the whole Bible.

We've already walked the timeline (*or ran through it*). So I'll skip straight to the end of it — the part that almost nobody handles correctly. The separation of the sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed

Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You...?' And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...'

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (BSB)

That is not an allegory. It is not a parable. Jesus places it as future fact (*narrative*) — what He will actually do. Read it that way, because that's how He gave it.

The Timing Is Everything

Most of the time, timing in the Bible is a side issue. Not here. In this study, timing is the whole ballgame. Get it wrong and you'll never see what's sitting in plain sight.

Look at the very first line: "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory...*"

Take Him at His word. This judgment happens when He returns in glory. It is one of His first official acts as the new King of the Earth — early in the Millennium, not at the end of it. Hold that thought, because it's the hinge everything turns on.

Now look at what happens *just before* this judgment: the glorification of the saints. For that, we step over to Paul.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever." (NLT)

There it is. The resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of the living in Christ — happening together, with no gap between them, while Jesus is still in the air during His return. Together, these two events are what we call the glorification of the saints.

Paul nails down the order in his letter to Corinth:

1 Corinthians 15:22 "Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when He comes back." (NLT)

All who belong to Christ — raised **when He comes back**. Not before the tribulation. When He returns. And that glorification immediately precedes His taking the throne over the Earth.

What Glorification Actually Is

Before I go on, you need to know what glorification means, because it's the key that unlocks this whole chapter. Paul spells it out:

1 Corinthians 15:42 "Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised

to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies... For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies." (*NLT*)

Glorification is the enhancement of the physical with the spiritual, the mortal becomes immortal. It makes a person sinless and indestructible — a body that will never die. I call it the upgrade from Humanity 1.0 to Humanity 2.0, an upgrade straight from the Manufacturer. More on that in a bit.

Here's why it matters right now: the saints are *already glorified* before the sheep-and-goats judgment happens. That's not my opinion. That's just the order the Bible gives. Paul puts glorification at Christ's return; Jesus puts the sheep-and-goats scene right after His return. So by the time the King sits down to separate the sheep from the goats, the saints are complete. Finished. Standing with Him. Which means the people being judged in that scene **cannot be the saints**.

It is not possible.

Who Are the Sheep?

So if they aren't saints, who are they? The answer is right there in the passage we opened with.

Matthew 25:32 "All the **nations** will be gathered before Him..."

This is after Jesus has taken His throne in Jerusalem. The previous seven-and-a-half years have

brought the tribulation and then God's wrath. So the people standing before Him — both the sheep and the goats — are *survivors* of the apocalyptic events that just ended. A remnant.

Isaiah 24:13 "Throughout the earth the story is the same — only a remnant is left, like the stray olives left on the tree or the few grapes left on the vine after harvest."
(NLT)

These are not glorified people. They are unglorified — mortal humans who lived through the worst time in history. And since glorification comes only through faith, **not one of them is a believer**. Not the sheep, not the goats. If they had faith, they'd already be standing behind Him as glorified saints, not in front of Him awaiting judgment.

They are called *the Nations*. The word means exactly what it means today: groups of people with a shared heritage and land. They were in the nations before the judgment, and they'll go on living as nations after it. The difference is that, from here forward, the ones who remain have been hand-picked by Christ to stay in His Kingdom — ruled by Jesus and His saints (*Revelation 20*).

This separation of the sheep from the goats is the **first judgment of the Millennium**.

Judged by Behavior, Not by Faith

Now watch how Jesus decides who stays and who goes. It's right there in the text — and it's the part that proves these are not saints.

Whoever was kind to His brothers and sisters gets to stay. Whoever was not gets sent away. "*Whatever you*

*did for one of the least of **these** brothers of Mine, you did for Me.*" I picture Him on the throne, pointing His thumb back over His shoulder at the saints standing behind Him as He says it. Two groups: "**you**" and "**these**".

Notice: that has *nothing to do with faith*. It's all about behavior — works, if you like. And the same measure condemns the goats: their behavior, not their unbelief.

This is the clearest possible sign that the sheep are not saints. Because saints are never saved by behavior. Saints are saved by faith — period.

"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

And there are plenty more: *John 3:18; Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16; John 3:16; Romans 10:9*. The whole New Testament hammers it. Salvation is by faith, not deeds.

So when you see people being judged by deeds, you know immediately: these are not the saved. The saved don't stand in this line at all.

Now, the Hard Part — Doesn't This Break the DNA Chapter?

I can already hear the objection, because it's a good one. Back in the DNA chapter, I told you — flatly — that no religion, no good deed, no effort of any kind can make you right with God. Your problem is internal. It's the Depraved Nature of Adam, and only the cross removes its penalty. Faith alone. I meant every word.

Chapter Five: STN (Sheep To Nations)

So how, now, can I say a whole class of people are welcomed into Christ's Kingdom *by their behavior*, with no faith at all? Isn't that exactly the works-salvation I spent a whole chapter demolishing?

No. And the distinction is the most important thing in this chapter, so don't skim it.

Entering the Nations is not salvation. The sheep are not saved. They are not made right with God. They are not glorified. They still carry the Depraved Nature of Adam in their bodies, every one of them. What they receive is not sainthood — it is *continued mortal life* on the earth, under Christ's rule, by His grace. That's all. It is a reprieve, not a redemption. Call it the safety net under the trapeze.

Salvation — being made a saint, being glorified, becoming Humanity 2.0 — is still by faith alone. Nothing I said in the DNA chapter has moved an inch. The cross is still the only thing that makes a soul right with God, and faith is still the only way to receive it.

Then why is the sheep-and-goats judgment based on behavior instead of faith? Because of the timing. Once Jesus is physically, visibly present on the earth, faith has lost its power. Faith is *"the conviction of things not seen."* When everyone can see Him on His throne, there is nothing left to believe — He's right there. So faith is no longer the test, because faith is no longer possible the way it was. For these survivors, the only thing left to measure is how they treated His people during the darkness. That's the standard for *who keeps their earthly life* — not for who gets saved. That window closed when He returned.

So hold both truths at once, because both are true:

- **Sainthood** (*salvation, glorification, eternity with God*): by faith alone, the cross alone. Always was, always will be.
- **The Nations** (*mortal life in the Millennial Kingdom*): by grace, measured by behavior, *after* faith's window has closed.

Two different outcomes. Two different doors. No contradiction.

Two Forms of Humanity

So the Millennium opens with the human race split into two groups — and they will live side by side for a thousand years (*and beyond into eternity*).

The immortals are the saints, glorified before the Millennium began. The mortals are the surviving Nations and the children born to them afterward. Both are descendants of Adam. But from here, their lives could not be more different. Saints are God's *children*; Nations are God's *people*. Like a king's family versus his subjects.

The Saints — Humanity 2.0

The saints don't just live in the Kingdom. They *rule* it, sharing the throne with Christ Himself.

Revelation 3:21 "Those who are victorious will sit with Me on My throne, just as I was victorious and sat with My Father on His throne."

This is no child on daddy's knee. This is shared authority over the whole earth — a real, working government. And it will be the first and only true theocracy the world has ever seen: a government of divine beings,

ruling with perfect justice and no corruption, because corruption will be *impossible* for them.

Psalm 89:14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne. Unfailing love and truth walk before You as attendants."

I call this elevated state Humanity 2.0 — the upgrade from the Manufacturer. Right now we're all Humanity 1.0: mortal, fallen, corrupt. Glorification fixes the bad code and removes the glitches, yes — but it's more than a repair. It adds abilities. Jesus modeled them Himself before He left: appearing inside a locked room, knowing men's thoughts, and more. He promised His followers would do the same works He did, *and greater* (John 14:12).

So picture it. Judges who don't have to investigate, because they simply know the truth. Bodies nothing can injure or destroy. The capacity to move from place to place by thought, to know without being told, to do what only Jesus has done. We've tasted a few of these in the smallest measure now. In glory, it will be on a new level entirely. I personally can't wait.

The Nations — Humanity 1.0 Lives On

Not everyone gets the upgrade. The Nations missed it — they never came to the faith that alone unlocks it. But their life is not punishment. It's something this earth has wanted since Eden.

Isaiah 65:20-23 "No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young!...

In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards... They will not work in vain... For they are people blessed by the Lord." (*NLT*)

These people are mortal — just like us now. But death only comes to those who let corruption rule them, and even then, never young. They live long enough to have every chance to repent. They eat from the Tree of Life and drink the Water of Life, which keeps their bodies strong, so that some may live indefinitely.

War is gone. Nation no longer fights nation. Hunger, crime, and disease are finished. Even the animals stop killing each other — *"the wolf and the lamb will live together... the lion will eat hay like a cow"* (*Isaiah 11:6-7*). Justice is instant: wrongdoers are found out at once and answer at once, so no one's life is put on hold in a prison cell. This is what we've always meant by "heaven" — and it will be right here, on this earth, for as long as it lasts. And then it will exist on a New Earth in a New Cosmos.

The Final Rebellion — The Clue That Cracked It Open

Here is the detail that, more than any other, convinced me this doctrine is right.

Revelation 20:7-9 "When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations — called Gog and Magog — in every corner of the earth. He will gather them together for battle — a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore. And I saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people and the

Chapter Five: STN (Sheep To Nations)

beloved city. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them." (NLT)

For years I read this while assuming everyone in the Millennium was glorified. And it never sat right. How could a perfect, sinless, glorified saint rebel against the Lord? It made no sense. A saint *can't* sin against Jesus — that's what glorified means (perfection).

The answer is that the rebels are not saints. They're the Nations — mortals, still carrying the Depraved Nature of Adam, still capable of being deceived. After a thousand years of paradise under Christ's own hand, Satan is loosed one last time, and a multitude of mortals still follow him. That's only possible if there are unglorified people there to follow him.

(By the way — this "Gog and Magog" is not the same Gog and Magog from Ezekiel's War. That Gog was a man, killed at Armageddon, and a man only gets one life. John is simply borrowing the old term as a picture of the new rebellion's size and severity. An analogy, harkening back to Armageddon, nothing more.)

Why does God allow it at all? My best guess: it's the final weeding out. For all of history, man has had the devil whispering in his ear. This is the one time we get to see how mortals behave with him gone — and then, at the very end, what they do when he's let back for a moment. It's the last skimming of the dross off the top of the crucible, so that no one at the final judgment can claim they never had a fair test.

The Second Judgment — The Great White Throne

That rebellion brings us to the end of the Millennium and the *second* of the two Millennial judgments. The first decided who lives on into the Kingdom. This one decides who lives forever — and where.

Revelation 20:11-15 "And I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from His presence... I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done... The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead... Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire." (*NLT*)

Notice two things. First, this is personal — each person judged one at a time, by name, by what they did. Second, the earth and sky are *gone*. The Physical Realm and the Spirit Realm both vanish at this point (*compare Revelation 21:1*). Whatever comes next is a new heaven and a new earth.

And here's a distinction most believers have never been taught: **hell is not the Lake of Fire**. They are two different things.

Hell — *Sheol* in Hebrew, *Hades* in Greek — is a temporary holding place for the souls of the dead. It is not the final punishment. Revelation 20 says plainly that death

and Hades *gave up their dead* and were then *thrown into* the Lake of Fire. You can't throw hell into the Lake of Fire if hell *is* the Lake of Fire. Hell is emptied, judged, and destroyed.

The Lake of Fire — what Jesus called *Gehenna* — is the real and final “hell”: eternal, irreversible, the second death, prepared for the devil and his angels and all whose names are not in the Book of Life (*Revelation 20:10, 14-15*). That, and only that, is forever. And what “forever” actually means there — and does not mean — is the business of the next chapter. Don't assume you already know.

So everyone who has been held in hell through the whole Millennium is brought out, resurrected, and made to stand before Jesus. They are judged — and sent either to the New Earth or to the Lake of Fire.

Another Hope — A Lesser One

Now I want to share something I hope is true. I am labeling it clearly, up front: this is *hope*, not dogma. I will not build a doctrine on it, and neither should you. But I think the Scripture leaves the door open, so I'll tell you what's behind the door.

The hope: that some at the final judgment may yet repent. Think about it. If the dead in hell are dragged out only to be marched straight into the Lake of Fire, what was the trial *for*? Why open the books? Why a hearing at all if the verdict is automatic? A judgment that allows no possible outcome but one isn't really a judgment. So I hope — I don't claim — that for some standing there, hell will have done its slow work and produced a change of heart.

And here's the thread that ties it to everything above: faith is for *saints*. But maybe, at that final hour, *repentance alone* — turning, finally, from the evil that one had clung to — might be enough for entry into the Nations of the New Earth, even where full saving faith never came. I can't prove it. I hope it. After all, Jesus is fair. And He was pretty forceful about forgiving those who repent. So why wouldn't He? Think about it.

Lake of Fire

Where is the Lake of Fire? The depth of this point is made more fully in *Sheep To Nations*, the book, and I am writing another that will cover it more, called *Their Worm Does Not Die*. For now I'll just flag it as a possibility I lean toward, not a settled teaching.

Hold it loosely. The *dogma* is only this: heaven and earth as they are now will be replaced by a new and better heaven and earth, and the Lake of Fire is the eternal end for all whose names are not written in the Book of Life.

I believe that the Bible shows the Lake of Fire being on the New Earth, near where people are coming and going from the New Jerusalem (*on the New Earth*).

“For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will endure before Me,” *declares the LORD*,

“so your descendants and your name will endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.

“As they go forth, they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm will

never die, their fire will never be quenched, and they will be a horror to all mankind.”” (*Isaiah 66:22-24, BSB*)

So — What Did I Just Do?

Stop and think this through with me before you decide what to make of it.

Did I invent a new theology? Redefine words?

Twist a passage to say what it doesn't?

No. I took Matthew 25 exactly as it was given — as future fact, not parable. I followed the timeline from Jesus to Paul to the prophets to Revelation, and I let the Bible interpret itself. And the moment you do that honestly, one thing becomes unavoidable: by the time Jesus separates the sheep from the goats, the saints are already glorified. That's not speculation. It's just the order the text gives. So the people in that scene can't be the saints. They are mortal survivors — the Nations — judged for their treatment of Christ's people, granted earthly life by grace.

That's not theological gymnastics. It's plain, immovable logic. I didn't argue with the text. I let the text have the last word.

The honest shock isn't that this view is radical. It's that so few have ever taught it. For two thousand years people forced these words into their systems. I let the systems fall away and followed the Scripture instead.

So if it feels new, ask yourself: is it really new — or have we just been missing what's been sitting in plain sight?

And here, at last, is the hope I promised you back in the DNA chapter. The cross is still the only door to salvation, and faith is still the only key. But for those who

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never walked through it, the God who made them has not run out of mercy. There is a Kingdom coming, and a grace in it wide enough to surprise us. That's *The Hope That Is In Me*.

“The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.” (*Psalm 145:8-9, NLT*)

“Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just.” (*Revelation 16:7, NLT*)

A Word About Worship

Here is a secret to the meaning of life and how to have a wonderful existence: ***Worship God.***

Worship Him with others. Worship Him alone. Worship Him when you're happy. Worship Him when you are miserable. Nothing can keep you from doing this.

There is no height, no depth, no wall, no amount of space, no power in heaven or on earth that can keep you from worshipping your God.

When we worship God, He shows up. He enters our world and blesses us in ways we may not even think of. He gives us good health. He shows us the truth. He showers us with love, peace, and joy that transcends anything that we could encounter or imagine.

Don't focus on the problems before you. Focus on the goodness of God. Tell Him that He is wonderful—because He is. Tell Him that He is magnificent—because He is. Tell Him that you are thankful—because you are.

Chapter Five: STN (Sheep To Nations)

Tell Him that you love Him more than even yourself—because you do.

When you do this and it's real, you have entered into the most beautiful life possible—a loving relationship with the Creator of all life (*even yours*).

Worship God every day, as if your life depends on it. Because it does. Not your existence (*you're already alive*), but the quality of it (*being really alive*).

And in case you missed it, there can be nothing and no one that you hold higher than Him. Not people, not nature, not religion, not yourself. Do this, and hope will live in you in a most powerful way. Do not do this, and you will miss out on being a true child of God. Obedience is great. But worship is greater.

So when I say, “give yourself to Jesus”, I mean in total surrender and complete worship of Him above all things. For this is the secret to life, liberty, and true joy that cannot be diminished. Serving Him and others is good, but worship is what matters most.

Personally, it is the foundation of *The Hope That Is In Me*. Upon worship all other things can stand and last. And do not worship a concept of God, worship *Him*—Father, Son, and Spirit. It's personal. It's intimate. It's the very essence of love. So express it right now—and every chance you get, not just every day.

Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

Questions

1. Who is a saint, and how does a person become one?
2. Who are the "sheep," and what do they receive?
3. Who are the "goats," and where do they go?
4. How can the sheep be admitted by behavior when salvation is by faith alone?
5. What are the two judgments of the Millennium, and what does each decide?

Answers

1. Someone saved by faith in what Jesus did on the cross — a believer. Salvation is by faith alone, never by works.
2. Mortal survivors of the tribulation who were kind to Christ's brethren. They receive continued life in the Kingdom — not salvation.
3. Mortal survivors who were not kind to the saints. They are sent to the Lake of Fire.
4. Because admission to the Nations is not salvation. It's earthly life by grace, measured by behavior *after* faith's window closed at Christ's visible return. Sainthood is still faith alone.
5. First: the sheep-and-goats separation at the start, deciding who lives on into the Millennium. Second: the Great White Throne at the end, deciding the New Earth or the second death.

Chapter Six: The Second Death

It's time to turn up the volume on the hope I offer to you, as given in the Word of God. This chapter addresses what is likely the greatest complaint against God — His judgment, and an eternal state of punishment for many.

And I know who may be reading this chapter. Maybe you've sat in a pew at a funeral for someone you loved who, as far as you know, never came to Christ — and somewhere in the back of your mind was the teaching you'd absorbed all your life: that the one in the casket is in torment at that very moment, and will be forever and ever, without end, and that this is somehow part of the good news. Maybe you walked away from God over it. I have written this chapter for you. Stay with me to the end of it.

I'll try to keep this as brief as I can without losing the meat of the message. But honestly, this is growing into its own book by the title, *Their Worm Does Not Die*.

"Eternal Punishment"

I was raised in the Church from infancy — probably being nursed in one of those special rooms for only mothers with babies while the sermon was ongoing. The church was as fundamental as they come, where the binary idea of two fates for mankind was offered often, if not weekly.

The idea was you get either heaven or hell, and they are forever and ever. It's like good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. Sound familiar? It should. That's about as standard as it gets from Christianity (or was, anyway). Maybe it's been softened up a bit since then —

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not sure. Well, I have already shown you in the last chapter how there are two options for folks to live on with Jesus in His kingdom (read *Sheep To Nations*).

This is going to keep going from there and discuss the Lake of Fire. The goats.

As you know from that earlier chapter, hell itself goes into the Lake of Fire. John wrote that "the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared" (Revelation 21:1, NLT). He also wrote, "Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death." (Revelation 20:14, NLT)

And so, what I am going to do here is present the idea that something about the Lake of Fire may not be as permanent as we have been led to believe. Hold on! Don't throw the book away just yet. Hear me out first.

I am not in the camp called "universalism", where they say that anyone and everyone can and will be saved and that faith in Jesus is not needed. I've already shared that I believe whole-heartedly in salvation and punishment. I'm just going to show you something that I think has been glossed over. And I promised you at the end of the last chapter that "forever" was going to get a hard look. Here it is.

Forever Does Not Necessarily Mean Eternally

When we read verses that use the words for "forever" (either Hebrew or Greek), we should pay attention to their context and grammar. Do they really mean forever as we use the word today? Or could it be something else — something with a limit on it?

Start with the word's ordinary range. In Exodus 21:6, a person can enter into service with a master for life. (This is not like the slavery of Africans in America in the 18th and 19th centuries — it's an arrangement that is voluntary for the "servant".) The verse says he "shall serve him forever." The Hebrew word for forever is *olam*. It means for life, or permanently, or words to that effect. "Eternal" is not the word used in English — or it shouldn't be. We serve God eternally, not each other. So right away, *olam* can mean "as long as the arrangement lasts."

And here is one you can check with your own eyes. Isaiah 34:9-10:

"The streams of Edom will be filled with burning pitch, and the ground will be covered with fire. This judgment on Edom will never end; the smoke of its burning will rise forever."

Same word: *olam*. But you can go to that spot today — the region of Edom is in modern Jordan — and see that the smoke is gone. The judgment stands permanently; Edom never rose again. But the burning ended. Permanence of result — not endless duration.

Now the third witness, and read this one carefully, because it teaches something the other two don't. Jonah, praying from inside the fish:

"I sank down to the very roots of the mountains. I was imprisoned in the earth, whose gates lock shut forever. But you, O LORD my God, snatched me from the jaws of death!" (Jonah 2:6, NLT)

Be careful what you take from this — it is easy to misread. Jonah is not saying he passed through those gates and came back out. He was sinking *toward* them, and God

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snatched him before he went all the way in; the fish was the rescue, not the prison. So this verse is not about anyone's escape. It is about the gates themselves — and Jonah calls them gates that "lock shut forever." That is *permanence-of-place* language: gates that, once shut on a man, do not reopen. And yet those gates belong to *this earth* — and you already know from Chapters One and Five what happens to this earth and its unseen realm: they flee from the face of Jesus and are found no more. The sea gives up its dead. So even the most absolute "forever" in the Old Testament — gates that never unlock — is bounded by the lifespan of the thing it describes. The gates are forever. The earth that holds them is not.

The Greek has the same issue. That same idiom (figure of speech) from Isaiah 34:10 is used by John in Revelation 14:11:

"The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night, for they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name."

That one uses what seems to be emphatic language: forever and ever. But it's a figure of speech — the very one Isaiah used of Edom, where the smoke has demonstrably stopped. And John uses it again in Revelation 19:3: "And again their voices rang out: 'Praise the LORD! The smoke from that city ascends forever and ever!'" (NLT)

Notice what that last verse attaches the "forever and ever" to. The smoke from that *city*. And that is where I'm going with this.

When God makes the Lake of Fire, it is a place where smoke rises forever. The *place* has smoke forever

and ever. This does not automatically mean that the torment of *each individual* is everlasting. It means that the place is everlasting.

Why Is It Called The Second Death?

I used to think that "second death" meant a continuation of the "first death" — like the next level of the person's condition. But we need to unpack this part too.

What is the first death anyway? That's the one we have now in this creation. When the physical body here dies, the eternal soul separates from it and goes someplace else — the Spirit Realm. There, the soul and spirit (the spirit goes wherever the soul goes) are what we call "disembodied" — without a physical body. That's pretty straightforward, isn't it?

But look at what we already covered when we saw the Physical Realm and the Spirit Realm flee from the presence of Jesus on the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11; 21:1). The first death goes away with them. Death and the grave are themselves thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). So the first death is just as temporary as this physical and spirit realm are.

The second death is not like that. It is permanent. The PLACE, the CONDITION, is permanent. It will never be abolished the way the first death is abolished.

So when we see a second death mentioned, we see that it is permanent and does not go away. Now, does this mean that the person in that permanent place is there permanently? Mmm, maybe. But maybe not. We are discussing the condition of the second death — the place of it. What the second death itself *is*.

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And why is it called "second"? I think it is merely that it is the new kind — permanent, not fleeting — and comes after the first one. It is a new kind of death, different from the first. The name distinguishes the two. Make sense?

Notice that this does not agree with what is called "annihilationism", which says a person in the second death simply ceases to exist. This is not that. So I am not being a universalist (that everyone is saved, no matter what), and I'm not being an annihilationist (who says the second death is non-existence). I'm just going with the Bible, not necessarily what others have said or taught about it. I take the Word as it comes. I'm not adding to or taking away from it.

Who Goes In — and How

You already know from Chapters Four and Five what glorification is and when it happens, so I won't run that whole lap again. Here is the one piece of it this chapter needs.

There are two resurrections. The first is Paul's — "Christ the firstfruits; then at His coming, those who belong to Him" (1 Corinthians 15:23, BSB) — the resurrection to glorification, where the perishable is clothed with the imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:53). That's the saints: immortal, like the angels, neither marrying nor given in marriage (Matthew 22:30, BSB).

The second resurrection is for judgment: "The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended" (Revelation 20:5). These stand before the Great White Throne, the books are opened, and anyone

whose name is not found in the Book of Life is thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:12, 15).

Now here is the detail that matters for the second death. The people of the second resurrection are raised *mortal* — Humanity 1.0, not 2.0. We know this because the New Earth is populated by mortals: Isaiah shows them having children, building houses, growing old, and — for the cursed — dying (Isaiah 65:20-23). And what is death for a mortal on the New Earth, where the first death has been abolished? It is the second death: being cast into the Lake of Fire. And this time there is no separation. The body and the soul and spirit do not part ways like they do in the first death. The person goes in **whole**.

That is the second death, mechanically: whole persons, in a permanent place.

Where Is the Lake of Fire?

Now, keep your bearings, because at the judgment the scenery does something strange: it disappears. When the Great White Throne convenes, the earth and sky flee from His presence and no place is found for them (Revelation 20:11). And the New Creation has not been shown yet. We are all in limbo, including the Lake of Fire. So where is the judgment itself held? We are not told. There is no habitat left to point to. The throne, the resurrected dead of both kinds, the angels condemned and unfallen, the books, the Lake of Fire — all present, all real, and all in a setting the Word simply does not describe. Nor does scripture narrate the handoff from the old order to the new. I won't invent a scene to fill that silence; the venue of

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the final judgment is a mystery, and I am content to leave it that way.

Here is what we *are* told. After the judgment there is a new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). And on that New Earth, the Lake of Fire turns up again — with at least a neighbor, if not an address.

Isaiah is the one who gives us the neighbor. The landmark is the New Jerusalem — the city where Jesus reigns, and where all humanity now comes to worship Him. And in describing that worship traffic, Isaiah drops a little hint that you might miss if you are not reading carefully:

"From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come to worship before Me," says the LORD.

"As they go forth, they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm will never die, their fire will never be quenched, and they will be a horror to all mankind." (Isaiah 66:23-24, BSB)

Folks, this is not the heaven you have heard about — vapid, without detail, sitting on a cloud with a harp in hand. This is the New Earth, where the throne of God is located. And right outside the gates of His city, where people are coming and going, they can SEE the place of torment. Since His city is a huge cube — just like the Holy of Holies — with three gates on each side. I see the Lake of Fire as a kind of moat of lava around it. I mean, what else could it be, if everyone sees it on their way out? This is how I see it, anyway.

Is that just macabre, or is it a deterrent for mortals not to sin? I say it's there as a deterrent. And while life on the New Earth is wonderful and great, punishment still

exists for those who do wrong. It has to be that way. No one wants to live in a world where evil goes unpunished.

But how *long* does any one person stay in that moat? We've already loosened the word "forever." Now let me tell you what I hope.

Another Hope — Similar to Chapter Five's

In the last chapter I gave you a hope I labeled clearly: hope, not dogma — that some at the final judgment may yet repent at the very threshold of the Lake. This is that hope's sibling, and I'll label it the same way. I will not build dogma on it, and neither should you. But I do name it. I call it Second Death Mercy (SDM).

The hope: that for some who go *into* the Lake of Fire, the stay may not be endless. That it may function as a kind of prison — a terrible one — where a person learns, at last, what the alternative to their God actually is. And that maybe (just maybe), after a time known only to God (a thousand years? a million?), some will have learned it, and be restored to the society of the Nations on the New Earth.

Why do I allow myself this hope? Three reasons, all of them already on the table. First, the word: you have now seen that *olam* and "forever and ever" describe permanence of place — a servant's lifetime, Edom's ended smoke, gates whose "forever" is bounded by the earth that holds them — not necessarily endless duration for every soul. The permanence of the Lake is dogma; the endlessness of every sentence in it is interpretation. Second, the placement: God set the Lake within sight of the city gates, as a deterrent — and a deterrent teaches, and teaching implies someone who might yet learn. Third, the Judge: His judgments are always

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fair (Revelation 16:7). He gives people a very long time to turn — on the New Earth, only the cursed die as young as a hundred. A God that patient before the sentence is not a God I can imagine being wasteful after it.

Now see the siderails, because they matter as much as the hope. This is not universalism — faith in Jesus is the only door to sainthood, and nothing here changes that; the saints' number was sealed before the Millennium began. This is not annihilationism — no one ceases to exist. And this is not a promise — Scripture does not state it, so neither will I. It is one man trusting that Jesus is fair, and refusing to claim more than the text gives me in either direction: neither an endlessness the words don't require, nor a release the words don't promise.

Two doors of the same mercy, then, from the same fair Judge: Chapter Five's hope at the edge of the Lake, and this one beyond it. Hold both loosely. But hold them.

Is there horror? Yes. Is there still hope? Yes.

And on the New Earth itself, the life waiting on the other side of that fairness is quite nice and wonderful. I say that all people are good to each other — that the prevailing attitude of all humanity is loving and kind. There are no invisible demons making people do things they don't want to; Satan is put away in the Lake of Fire too. And all people know their God personally. He is with them at all times and answers their prayers as they make them. Read this:

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in

my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in [New Jerusalem] no more.

"No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young! In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed. I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain [New Jerusalem]. I, the Lord, have spoken!" (Isaiah 65:17-25, NLT)

No death? In New Jerusalem. No tears or pain or worry or any of that? New Jerusalem. The guarantee of perfection is for the saints — the immortals in the New Jerusalem. The others — the Nations — still have these things. BUT at least they live on in a utopian world. No more mystery about Who God is, or what His will is, or what happens when you "die" (the second death). It is all out in the open for all to see.

The Warning

One big taunt that is used against God by mankind is this: how does a good God create or allow suffering?

That's a valid question to ask. But it is answered in God's Word. The truth is that He is not responsible for our suffering; we are. How can this be? It's actually pretty simple. Read this in the Proverbs:

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12, BSB)

What is this saying? Two things, actually. It's like a pitchfork, or a double-edged sword.

As people learn about justice and being nice to each other, they think they've got it all figured out. Then they learn that God has a hell and a Lake of Fire for people who do bad things. This violates their sensitivities, and they lurch and push back on it. So the first prong of the pitchfork is that those who judge the Judge by what *they* think is right are in for a shock. The way seems right to them to judge Him for what they don't fully understand.

The second prong is just as devastating. It is for another group, who react differently. They say they can do all the "good" stuff and be a great person, worthy of God's favor and grace — not realizing what grace or mercy actually are. To really grasp this, we go again to Isaiah 64:6:

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind." (NLT)

Did you get that? "Righteous deeds" are the very best performance, works, or goodness you have to offer — and in the eyes of the perfect God, your best is a rag fit only for discarding. You met this verse back in the DNA chapter. It has not softened since.

And so, no matter which way you go — judging God to be evil, or yourself to be good — you have missed the plot. The "right way" of either way will get you into trouble with Him Who knows your innermost thoughts, feelings, and secret sins.

Like Jesus said, it's better not to judge at all. Because when you do, your own measure of judgment will be used on YOU. Matthew 7:1-2: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged."

What does this mean? That you are the one who condemns yourself. And it comes through your own judging of others.

So we cannot blame God for our fate. It is all on us. How did we get into trouble in the first place? Why do sin and suffering exist? Because God is so permissive. He always (always) lets us do whatever we want. That does not mean there will be no reckoning. There will be. It will come in the time after your life is over — unless you come to Him in faith through Jesus before you die, that is. That is what the judgment is all about. But there is no judgment for those who believe and follow Christ (John 3:18).

This is significant. It means that it is not God Who puts us in chains, fire, or misery. It is us, working on our own volition and free will. WE put ourselves into hell

and/or the Lake of Fire, not God. He is only doing what is good and right. And it means that sins and suffering are due to our depravity — in one way or another.

Satan put himself there. Antichrist put himself there. And YOU will put yourself there by the judging that you do (either of God or others). And you know that you judge. God knows too. He never misses a thing.

The Hope

So, my hope for you is that you will accept the sacrifice of Christ to count for you, while depending completely on that and not trying to add to or take away from it. And that all of your judging, which you do, will not count against you either. But this is not a free pass to act however you want all the time. It is just the way that you can be freed from your sin. And know that if you do not completely give yourself over to Jesus and His will for you, through having sorrow for your evil nature and deeds (by turning away from them), you have not learned a thing. You must pay attention to Him and follow His lead.

God wants a relationship with you, not your religion. He doesn't care for religion. The only religion He instituted was the Law of Moses, which was to show us that it doesn't work — just read Paul on that. And the only religion He accepts is caring for widows and orphans (James 1:27). If you want to approach Him with religion, He will allow it, but the payoff is far less than through faith. And you'll be married to acting it out forever. Humanity 2.0 is going to be a lot better than Humanity 1.0.

And if you are the reader I named at the start of this chapter — the one who buried someone and was told to

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make peace with their endless torment — here is what I can honestly offer you. Not a promise; I don't make promises God didn't make. But this: the words of Scripture do not require the endlessness you were taught to picture, the Judge is fair beyond anything we can conceive, and the God who waited so patiently for you is not less patient than you are with the ones you love. Grieve with hope. It's allowed.

So, I hope that my hope has inspired you to look more deeply into the Book of God — His written Word. And that you will give yourself over to Jesus, His Living Word.

And I highly encourage you to read the other books mentioned here. They go deeper into these things than this quick primer does. The New Earth and New Jerusalem are far more beautiful and full than what you are likely aware of. Only through my gift of knowledge have I been able to pick up on some details that are just mind-blowing.

God has a plan for us, and for you personally. Ask Him about it and He'll lead you into it. His New Earth will be nothing short of amazing. And the New Jerusalem (heaven) is far more than anyone really knows.

Your servant in Christ,

Gary

Group Discussion and/or Personal Reflection

Questions

1. In the Bible, does "forever" (*olam* in Hebrew) always mean eternal as we use the word today? Give an example.
2. What exactly is permanent about the Lake of Fire — the place, or the length of each person's stay in it?
3. How is the second death different from the first death?
4. Where is the Lake of Fire located, and who can see it?
5. What is the author's hope about the second death?

Answers

1. No. Exodus 21:6 has a servant serving his master "forever" — meaning for life, not eternally. Isaiah 34:10 says Edom's smoke rises "forever," yet that smoke has ended. Context decides.
2. The place. The Lake of Fire itself is permanent and its smoke rises forever and ever. How long any individual remains in it is up to God (after they repent).
3. In the first death, the soul and spirit separate from the body and go to the Spirit Realm. In the second death there is no separation — the person goes in whole. The first death is temporary and ends with this creation; the second is the new, permanent kind.
4. On the New Earth, just outside the New Jerusalem — visible to all humanity coming and going from the city (*Isaiah 66:23-24*). It stands as a deterrent.

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5. That it may not be endless for every soul. This is not universalism nor annihilationism, and it isn't eternal conscious torment — it is trusting that Jesus is fair. That makes it a new category in theology. A fourth option.

Ponder this: God is fair. He doesn't want anyone to suffer but we bring it on ourselves by pushing away from Him and His ways and Will. Do you think that He will really leave people to suffer torment for all eternity? I do not. And that is the greatest hope that is in me. I hope you will share it.

Other books by Gary

Sheep To Nations

End Times Made Easy

The Broken Planet Model

This Broken Planet

**The Complete Gospel: A blending of the four Gospels
into one continuous, flowing story**

Rules For Life: According To Jesus

All books are available on Amazon for a small price, or
free on Gary's website: **GaryTheGospelGuy.com**.